

ENG 856: ADVANCED SOCIOLINGUISTICS

MODULE ONE: BACKGROUND TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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UNIT 1: Background

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UNIT 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The sociolinguistic orientation investigates the inter-connections between language and society. Scholars of the late 1950's had discovered that the study of language devoid of society was narrow. Therefore, they propagated the need to examine certain aspects of society which illuminate the study of language. Studies in the relations between language and society have thus gained tremendous ascendancy over the past six decades, thus evolving the field of language research known as sociolinguistics (William Bright, 1966; William Labov, 1972; Richard Hudson, 1980; Ralph Fasold, 1990; J.K. Chambers, 1995; Florian Coulmas, 1997; Miriam Meyerhoff, 2006; Ronald Wardhaugh, 2014, among others.

The word 'Sociolinguistics' comprises two key terms: Socio+ linguistics. 'Socio' stands for 'social' or 'social context' while 'linguistics' is understood as the field that

investigates the scientific study of language. The fact that the prefix ‘socio’ appears before the key term ‘Linguistics’ shows that before ‘Sociolinguistics’, there was mainstream Linguistics. As we already know, Linguistics is the field that explores language at different levels: Phonology/Phonetics, Grammar, Syntax, Morphology, and Semantics. These are recognized as the major they aspects of the scientific study of language. In other words, each field presents a different perspective to the analysis of language as a science. Thus, the term ‘sociolinguistics means the study of language in relation to society.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- i) Have a good knowledge of the sociolinguistic orientation in language studies.
- ii) Understand the motivations for the social/asocial perspectives in linguistics.
- iii) Know the history of sociolinguistics as a discipline, and its beginnings.
- iv) Know the motivations for the development of sociolinguistics in the late 50’s and early 60’s.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Origins of the ‘asocial’ view of language.

The study of language has been of interest to scholars from the Classical period and Roman period to modern day. Linguistic studies before the 1950s focused on what has come to be known as the ‘asocial’ view of language.

What does ‘asocial’ mean?

Linguists in the early 50’s recognized that language was not *homogenous* (having uniformity or being same or similar) or *monolithic* (single, unchanging), but they ignored the presence of variants in language. The founding fathers of modern linguistics like Ferdinand de Saussure espoused the idea that the study of language should be based only on the knowledge or intuitions of the native speaker, rather than the societal input. Linguists of that period thus followed the Saussurian tradition by focusing on the homogenous, monolithic aspects of language while ignoring the social aspect. This is what we have come to understand as the ‘asocial’ view of language - the study of language without a consideration of the social context. The asocial view was thus characterized by de Saussure’s separation of *la langue* (knowledge of the language) from *la parole* (actual use of the language in society). To Saussure, what needs to be studied was *la langue* and not *la parole*

*Edward Sapir (1921) also recognized the difference between an individual’s language and communal variation. But the pressure of the Saussurian tradition forced him and others to focus only on the invariant aspects of language. Noam Chomsky (1957) made the distinction between *langue* and *corpus*. Like others, he argued that*

only language should be studied because it is the idealization of raw data. Later, in 1965, he further made the distinction between *competence* and *performance*. Chomsky's argument is summarized in this famous quote:

“Linguistic theory is concerned with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogenous speech community, who knows the language perfectly, and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as “performance variations”

The paradox in the arguments of all these early scholars is that while on one hand, you accept to study language as a social phenomenon located in the society and used by all people; at the same time, you avoid the reality of variations (features of usage) by all people, in preference for individual usage.

3.2 Sociolinguistics – Definitions

Now that we understand the term ‘sociolinguistics’, we need to examine some of its definitions:

Hudson, 1980:

“The study of language in relation to society”

David Crystal (1985):

“Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics which studies all aspects of the relationship between language and society “

R. Le Page (1988):

“all sociolinguistics is linguistics, and all linguistics is sociolinguistics”

Each of these definitions points us to a unique perspective to what sociolinguistics entails, from the perspectives of different scholars.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Explain the difference between the ‘social’ and ‘asocial’ views of language.

3.3 The Beginning of Sociolinguistics

As mentioned earlier, prior to the 1950s, many linguists had been doing research on language and society in their different countries. William Labov in the United States had been studying *social stratification* in New York. He found that speakers were stratified along social lines in the pronunciation of certain sound patterns. Peter Trudgill in England had been studying *social differentiation* among British speakers. He also found that speakers were differentiated in speech according to their social status/ educational standard. Edward Sapir (1921) had been studying American-Indian

languages. Otto Jespersen (1925), was a European grammarian who was also interested in language and society. J.R. Firth (1937) was a Briton interested in dimensions of language and society. Leonard Bloomfield (1933) wrote the book *Language* which focuses on language and society. A British anthropologist, Malinowski (1923), also did a lot of work on human language within the context of social groups. Uriel Weinreich (1953) did some extensive work on Language Contact and the effect of language in a bilingual context. Eina Haugen had also done some work on the effect of language variation on bilingualism in Paraguay around the same period.

Others are: Basil Bernstein (1971) published the book: *Class, Codes and Control: Theoretical Studies Toward Sociology of Language*. Joshua Fishman (1972) had worked on the Sociology of Language. William Labov (1957, 1965) had also done definitive work on language variation. These were the scholars whose works formed the foundation for the development of Sociolinguistics as a field of study.

The major themes which dominated these early studies were those which were related to the perspectives of the scholars who were studying it. These different scholars introduced new dimensions to the field: Fishman – sociology of language; Gumperz-anthropological linguistics; Labov – language variation; Weinreich – language contact; William Mackey – bilingualism. In view of this multi-disciplinary orientation, a broad definition of sociolinguistics is provided by David Crystal (1985): “Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics which studies all aspects of the interrelationship between language and society”.

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3.4 Why interest in Sociolinguistics Developed.

There are 4 major explanations:

3.4.1. Happenings in Europe and the United States of America.

There were different concerns about language in these two Western societies. Sociologists were concerned about the relationship between *language* and *social disadvantage*. In Britain for example, there were social problems emanating from the difference between *language and social class*, based on speakers' origin. For instance, those who spoke dialects like Welsh or Corkney were regarded as low class, compared

to those that spoke 'Queen's English' otherwise known as 'Received Pronunciation' (RP). At that time, no one could be admitted into the Foreign Service, the Navy or get a job in the BBC if they did not speak RP. Consequently, people who belonged to the lower classes in the British society were socially disadvantaged.

In the United States of America, the social disadvantage had to do with the problem of *language and race*. Black children were considered deficient in language and poor performance in school was ascribed to the blacks. The same was said of the Hispanic (people of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican or South or Central American origin) people in America. Thus, the 'Language Deficit Theory' held sway for some time, until sociolinguists began investigating the trend as a social issue. People from minority groups such as Blacks and Hispanics simply had restricted access to good living conditions, unlike their white counterparts. So the poor performance of such people in schools was found to be a result of *socially disadvantage* and not *language deficient*.

In the case of West Germany and other European societies (France, Paris), people were confronted with the problem of *language and immigration*. People who spoke the main languages - French or German - were privileged, while those that spoke dialects of these main languages were considered inferior because they came from the regions. This is one of the reasons why linguists began to study sociolinguistics.

3.4.2. The growing interest in the discipline called Sociology of Language.

There was an upsurge of interest in different dimensions of sociology, such as Structuralism, and Functionalism; especially the works of Charles Weber and Karl Marx as a result of the development of conflict theories. The sociology of language as an academic discipline experienced tremendous growth in the 60's and early 70's. Following the introduction of the Theory Consensus Paradigm, terms like structuralism and functionalism became two key words in language. Scholars thought that if functionalism was so important to language study, it had to be seen in a social context. The growth of the sociology of language around this time strongly influenced the interest of linguists in socially - relevant topics like: bilingualism, multilingualism, language choice, language policy, language and sex, language and race, language and immigration, as well as a renewed interest in dialects and their importance.

3.4.3. Dissatisfaction with the Ascendancy of Chomskyan Linguistics

At this period, many linguists were getting tired of the dominance of Chomsky's theories and they began to question them. Dell Hymes (1974) questioned Chomsky's *linguistic competence* and replaced it with *communicative competence*.

3.4.4. The Redefinition and Reformulation of Dialectology

There had been some confusion as to the difference between language and dialect. Some even used the terms interchangeably. This opened up studies in dialectology and explanations on the nature of languages and the social impact on

dialects, types of dialects (urban/ rural); dialectal differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc. for example, the difference was between British and American dialects of English. These studies began to throw more light on the social dimensions of language, hence the interest in sociolinguistics.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Briefly explain the motivations for the development of sociolinguistics in the late 50's and early 60's.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our discussion of the background to sociolinguistics is aimed at giving a good insight into the motivations for the advent of the field. The activities of linguists in the late 50's and early 60's were geared towards building a new field that would not only enhance the exploration of the social content of language but one which would validate this social perspective. The past several decades have shown, with considerable accomplishments, that the social perspective in language study is quite rewarding and insightful.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Module, you have been presented with the critical aspects of the advent of the sociolinguistic orientation in language study. The discussion of the asocial/social dichotomy as the main feature of the sociolinguistic direction provides you with the basis of the pioneers' pre-occupation with the quest for a field that investigates the social dimension of language.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Carefully explore the background to the sociolinguistic engagements with language since the late 50's and early 60's.

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Unit 2: **BASIC CONCEPTS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS.**

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UNIT 2

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a first step toward an understanding of the principles of the sociolinguistic perspective, it is necessary to provide some useful explanations of the dominant terminologies which are frequently used to explore the relations between language and society. The concepts to be explained in this section are those usually regarded as the major components of language and society. In other words, they are concepts which are often used to describe the activities of people in interactive situations.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i) Understand the major terminologies normally used in sociolinguistic descriptions.
- ii) Itemise and discuss basic terms in sociolinguistics.
- iii) Explain the social significance of sociolinguistic terminologies.

3.0 MAIN CONTENTS

3.1. Sociolinguistics:

The simplest definition of Sociolinguistics is that it is the study of language in relation to society (Hudson, 1980). Since the 1960s, sociolinguistics has been studied as an interdisciplinary field in linguistics which embraces aspects of the sociology of language, anthropology, ethnography, and more recently, discourse analysis. The early scholars in the field include sociologists like Basil Bernstein (1971), Joshua Fishman (1972), and John J. Gumperz (1964, 1982) who were interested in linguistics. They were later joined by linguists like William Bright (1966), William Labov (1972), John Pride and Janet Holmes (1972), Peter Trudgill (1974), Dell Hymes (1974).

The central focus of sociolinguistics is the study of the use of language by social groups. Sociolinguistics adopts two approaches in the explication of group dynamics in different social settings: these are *micro-sociolinguistics* and *macro-sociolinguistics*. Micro-sociolinguistics takes the individual as its focal point and shares areas of common interest with psychology in general and social psychology in particular. At the micro level, sociolinguistics lays emphasis on individuality, that is, the sum total of the characteristics of an individual which distinguishes him from other individuals. Here, the emphasis is on individual speech features such as *register* rather than *dialect*. Macro-sociolinguistics on the other hand, is more sociological in its emphasis and shares common features with analytical procedures in anthropology. This approach seeks to account for the distribution of language differences through a society in terms of variables like age, sex, education, occupation and ethnicity. (Chambers, 1995). It deals with the correlation of linguistic variables with these demographic features. Thus, individual idiosyncrasies of the individual may be analyzed in terms of the indications of group affiliations. The two approaches may be summarized in terms of the relationship between individual and group features of language. Sociolinguistics takes either the individual or the group as its focal point. The linguistic features of the interaction within (intra) and between (inter) groups may be examined in terms of their dynamics.

3.2. Language:

Many people generally know what Language is, but coming up with an adequate explanation of language will probably begin with the assertion that language is a means of interaction by members of a group or community. In other words, language is what members of a speech community speak. This assertion has implications for society itself. Based on the linguistic composition, a society may be described as *mono-lingual* (using one language), *bilingual* (using two languages) or *multilingual or pluri-lingual* (using many languages).

Linguists generally describe language as a rule-governed system which the members of a group habitually use in their daily interactions. This means that language users from different communities can be described by the language they speak. For instance, English is the language of the people of England and French is the language of the people of France. But of course we know that these languages are also spoken by people in many different parts of the world. In this regard, language scholars, especially those in the fields of sociolinguistics and related fields (like anthropology and sociology of language) explain the view of language essentially as a social phenomenon (Hudson, 1980; Chambers, 1995) because language is domesticated in society. Therefore, it is of necessity, a code. In this regard, we may also recognize the possibility of a *multi-code* which involves moving from one code to another as the situation demands, for instance, code-switching.

Language as spoken by different people in different places thus has varied manifestations since the speakers themselves vary in their social characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, among others. Language is thus described as being socially relevant (Labov 1972; Halliday, 1985; Meyerhoff, 2006; Wardhaugh, 2014). This social dimension suggests that language is defined by the people who speak it.

Moreover, anthropologists have often stressed the view that differences in language may lead to differences in perception of the world. This view is clearly established in the controversial Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis which posits that man's view of his environment may be conditioned by the world view of his language. For instance, while a language like English has only one other word for 'snow' (sleet), a language like Eskimo has several terms for the same concept.

3.3. Society:

The main focus of sociolinguistics is the Society. The perception of language as a social phenomenon includes its existence within a *social structure* and *value system* (Trudgill, 1985) which are critical factors in the establishment and sustenance of human societies. These two factors determine to a large extent, the nature of interactions among members of a particular society. A language society is thus a community made up of a group of people who use language to perform social functions such as greeting, working, buying, selling, teaching, courtship, marriage, marketing, advertising, politics, governance, among other activities common to humans in different communities.

Another distinguishing feature of language is that it is mostly verbal, although some aspects of its use may not be necessarily verbal, as in the case of sign language or non-verbal cues, such as the smell of perfume which communicates a message without a verbal component. The speakers of a given language are people who interact on a daily basis through a recognized set of verbal symbols which have meaning within a specific environment.

The environment of language use is otherwise known as ‘setting’, or ‘social environment’ which is usually a component of society and includes features like ‘home’, ‘school’, ‘neighbourhood’, ‘work-place’, ‘restaurant’, ‘church’, ‘banking-hall’, among others. These aspects of language setting also naturally have considerable effect on the vocabulary used by speakers.

3.4. Culture:

Most anthropologists simply define culture as what everybody has. In other words, culture is perceived as the property of members of the society. This means that culture may be both intra and inter-personal, and can thus be seen as an aggregate of beliefs, traditions and customs of a given society. On the basis of its relevance to both intra and inter-personal knowledge, we may argue that culture is indeed *shared knowledge*. Furthermore, Goodenough (1957) identifies culture as *acquired knowledge*. That is, what a person needs to know in order to function appropriately in society. If culture is indeed knowledge, it may also be studied with the same kind of methods identified with language – introspection, interviewing, experimentation, and observation. This means there must be some relationship between language and culture. Another question arises: If culture is indeed knowledge, is it factual knowledge? The answer is simple: not in all cases, for instance, the existence of superstition, myth, folk tales, etc. Most of language is believed to be contained in a people’s culture. Therefore, sociolinguistics focuses on what is known as *linguistic culture*. This is most exemplified in culture-specific concepts such as: conversation, greetings, kinship terminologies, euphemisms, and taboos.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Carefully explore the interconnections between Language, Culture and Society.

3.5. The Speech Community:

The central focus of sociolinguistic investigations of language is the speech community, and how social interaction is organized within it. It is one of the most significant features of the sociolinguistic orientation. Bloomfield (1933) had described the speech community as: “A group of people who interact by means of speech.” The speech community is thus the basis for the study of language use by a group of people in their daily interactions. Over the years, it has come to be seen as the most comprehensive label for the social universe in which speech interaction occurs. Differences in the uses

and application of language are best appreciated within the context of a speech community which includes considerations such as “shared attitudes and values” (Labov, 1972); “shared socio-cultural understanding” (Sherzer, 1975); “shared language use” (Lyons, 1970); “shared rules of speaking and interpretation of speech performance” (Hymes, 1972).

Linguists are in agreement that a speech community may not necessarily be equated with a group of people who speak the same language. In other words, a speech community may consist of people who speak different languages, for instance, for instance, a husband and wife who interact by distinct languages, while English speakers in Nigeria and London are believed to belong to different communities, even though they share a common language. This underlies the distinction between *speech community* and *language community*. Thus speakers of the same language may belong to different speech communities. Gumperz (1962) thus argues that members of a speech community may be linguistically diverse or heterogenous, as in the case of bilinguals or multi-linguals who belong to different linguistic groups and must be seen as belong to those different speech communities as long as they share common communicative options.

3.6 Speech Norms: These ‘communicative options’ are otherwise known as **speech norms**. These are unwritten procedures or patterns of language use specific to different communities. For instance, while a child is allowed to speak English and his/her native language in school interactions in some societies, only English is allowed in schools in other places. Thus, every member of a speech community comes to recognize acceptable norms of language behavior specific to different contexts and learns to comply appropriately.

Speech Norms also include acceptable forms of interactions across age-groups or social groups in terms of greetings, euphemisms, kinship terms, among others. For instance, while a younger speaker may be allowed to address an older person by name in some communities, this is considered unacceptable in others. Therefore, it is quite important that members of a speech community must be able to share values, attitudes and beliefs about the way language should be used.

A related term is **social norms**. These are unique features of the ways of life of a group of people, or ‘ways of doing things’ which may exhibit marked differences from how things are done in other places. Social norms are thus a set of unwritten but acceptable patterns of behavior which set a group of people apart from others. Norms are thus distinctive and unique to a particular group. They may include ways of greetings, dressing, gathering, eating or generally, acceptable ways of socializing. Social norms can be likened to long-standing traditions or value system that unite a group.

Another important point about *social norms* is that when they are enacted over a period of time, they may be regarded as '*social practice(s)*'. Social practices include: polygamy, rituals, kinship terminologies, male and female circumcision, corruption, lineage practices, among others. While some are progressive others are not. Social practices have significance for the evolution of *social structure* and the establishment of certain *social processes*.

We can also speak of **Social structure** which is the peculiar organization of the components of a society or speech community. It may include *power structure*, *leadership structure*, *communal structure*, as the case may be.

3.7 Mutual Intelligibility:

When members of a particular speech community have shared understanding of the linguistic features of their language, they are said to have *Mutual Intelligibility*. In other words, it is important that speakers of the same language be able to understand each other within a social space.

3.8 Speech Event:

Another component in the consideration of the speech community is the *speech event*. This is basically a recognized social avenue for the use of speech. A speech event is thus any situation that engenders the mutual use of speech among people. Speech events are thus socially constructed and are often an important part of the social structure or social norms of a community. They include: family gatherings, office meetings, community meetings, press briefings, ministerial briefings, religious sermon, advertising, public debates, classroom lectures, among others.

3.9 Speech repertoire:

This is the range or scope of communicative features which are available to members of a speech community or language community. Speech features include slang, monolingualism, bilingualism, borrowings, transfers, alternative codes, among others.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Identify the major differences between:

Speech norms and social norms; speech repertoires and speech behavior; social structure and social practices.

3.10 Language Diversity:

Language diversity, often called *linguistic diversity*, is concerned with the density of language in a given area. It is the concentration of unique languages in a given space, all co-existing as linguistic groups. Language diversity covers features like language families, speech repertoires, social groups and language groups.

3.11 Language Diffusion:

Otherwise called *language spread*, it is the scale and extent of the dissemination of a language across geographical borders. It is often accounted for by wars, socio-political upheavals, natural disasters, displacement, international and inter-continental trade, among other factors. A good example of language diffusion is the global spread of the English language, such that we can now speak of native-speaker English and non-native –speaker English. Diffusion in language often leads to social trends like: language change, language shift, language maintenance, and language death. These are terms that describe the variety of social dynamics which may influence the nature of language due to certain usage situations.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain what you understand by Language Diversity and Language Diffusion.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has focused on the major terminologies normally used in the discussion of sociolinguistics. It is quite observable that the basic sociolinguistic terms provide considerable insight to the dynamics of language and society. It is thus important to be conversant with these terms and be able to apply them meaningfully to issues in language, culture and society. We must note however that while these terms are varied and broad-based, they are by no means exhaustive. More useful terms will emerge as we proceed with the subsequent units.

5.0 SUMMARY

From your understanding of this unit, it should be clear that basic terminologies in sociolinguistics should not be taken for granted. In many ways, they provide us with a useful window into the workings of the components of society. They are also quite important to our appreciation of the relevance of the social dimension in contemporary language enquiry. The knowledge of basic terms will provide you the needed clarity in understanding their relevance in different topics which further explicate the sociolinguistic dimension in language study. In the next Unit, you will learn more about the major orientations in this field.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss any 5 basic terminologies in sociolinguistics, highlighting their relevance to language and society.

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UNIT 3: ORIENTATIONS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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UNIT 3

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The field of sociolinguistics is actually quite massive in terms of the different orientations which have evolved over the years. From a broad perspective, the field is categorized into 2 major areas: Micro-sociolinguistics and Macro-sociolinguistics. Each sub-field addresses a specific scope in the exploration of issues in language and society. Many of the theories currently used in sociolinguistic enquiry may apply to either of these two directions.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i) Identify the major orientations in sociolinguistics.
- ii) Discuss the main focus of the two broad orientations in sociolinguistic

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Micro-sociolinguistics

As the name implies, deals with small-scale explorations of the use of language in specific societies. It involves examining language at different levels- grammar, syntax, phonology- in the context of a speech community. Micro-sociolinguistics addresses locally situated issues like studies in language and dialect, accents, varieties and registers, language choice, language attitudes, and variation studies in specific settings.

3.2 Macro- sociolinguistics

On the other hand, this sub-field deals with larger-scale issues of language use at the national or global level. Macro- level enquiries in sociolinguistics include issues in language policy, education, language planning, trends and developments in language use around the globe. It addresses global -scale issues such as: language contact, language ecology, diglossia, acts of identity in different societies, language shift, language death, language conflict, multilingualism, language and cognitive orientation, second language acquisition, psycho linguistics, among others.

Generally, while micro-sociolinguistics focuses on the social dimensions of language, macro-sociolinguistics deals with the linguistic dimensions of society, otherwise called the sociology of language.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In his brief unit, you have been introduced to the two major orientations in sociolinguistics. The discussion has shown you what kind of studies may be conducted in each of these two directions. The focus of each direction of course, have implication on the nature of data that will be used in conducting research in either of these areas. Therefore, each orientation serves as a useful guide to you in terms of directing the conceptual and theoretical focus of any enquiry.

5.0 SUMMARY

This Unit has presented you with the two broad categories of sociolinguistic orientations. You have seen that each orientation has a specific focus in terms of what

kind of studies may be accomplished therein. The knowledge of these two categories of sociolinguistic orientations are quite useful in helping you to streamline your thoughts and focus your enquiry properly when conducting research in this field. And of course, your knowledge of the two major orientations – the micro and macro dimensions- provides you with a window into the scope of studies which may be done in this field.

In the course of several decades, there have been new trends in the investigations of the social content of language, leading to the emergence of new directions and sub-fields, such as: Pragmatics /Speech Acts Theory (John Austin and John Searle); Discourse Analysis (M.A.K Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, Teun van Dijk); Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Norman Fairclough; Teun van Dijk; Ruth Wodak); Conversation Analysis (Rebecca Clift; Robin Wooffitt; Margaret Wetherell; Stephanie Taylor); Ecolinguistics (S.V. Steffensen; W. Zhou; R. Wei); Cultural Linguistics (Farzad Sharifian), among others.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain the focus of micro - sociolinguistics and macro- sociolinguistics.

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ENG 856- ADVANCED SOCIOLINGUISTICS

MODULE 2: THE POLITICS OF LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES AND DOMINATION

Unit 1 -Variability and Language Theory

Unit 2: The Notion of the Speech Community

Unit 3: Language Differentiations Social Practice

Unit 4: Variety in English: Formal, Usage, Global and Diglossia

Unit 1

VARIABILITY AND LANGUAGE THEORY

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Background to the Variability Concept
 - 3.2 The Nature and Scope of the Variability Concept
 - 3.3 Variability and Language Theory
 - 3.4 The Concept of Idealisation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References / Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hello Students. Hope you enjoyed our previous discussions?

We continue our exploration of the field of sociolinguistics by focusing this unit on the exploration of the subject of Variability and Language Theory. What is Variability? What does it have to do with language theory? Why is the idea of variability so important in sociolinguistic enquiry? We begin this unit by providing a brief background to the concept of Variability, after which we shall examine its relevance to sociolinguistic theory.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

- a) Know the background to the variability concept in sociolinguistics.
- b) Understand the nature and scope of the concept of variability.
- c) Explain the relevance of variability and its importance in sociolinguistic enquiry.
- d) Explain the connection between variability and language theory.

3.0. MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Background to the Variability Concept

Traditional studies in philology (the study of the history and development of language) and linguistics recognised that language is not homogenous. This implies a recognition of language varieties. However, linguists, particularly those in the fields of synchronic and descriptive linguistics, pretended as if such varieties never existed. Instead, they chose to write grammars of homogenous forms. This view, which is often described as ‘asocial’, dates back to the time of Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of modern linguistics, who said in his book, *Course in General Linguistics* (1916): “in separating *la langue* from *la parole*, we simultaneously separate:

- i) What is social from what is individual, and;
- ii) What is essential from what is accessory and more or less accidental”

To Saussure, what needs to be studied is *la langue* (“language”) which he said is social and independent, and not *parole* (“speaking”), which he described as individual, momentary and heterogenous.

Following this tradition, Edward Sapir (1921:157) recognised the difference between an individual’s language and communal variation but the pressure from prominent scholars of that period, mainly the Structuralists and the Bloomfieldians, forced him and others to insist on examining language mainly from the viewpoint of its invariant forms. This was the second blow to the promotion of the concept of variability.

Given these antecedents, it was therefore not surprising when another scholar, Noam Chomsky (1957) came up with the distinction between *language* and *corpus* and argued that the former should be studied because it is the idealisation of raw data. In 1965, Chomsky made a further distinction between *competence* and *performance*, following the same ‘asocial’ tradition. The thrust of Chomsky’s argument was that:

“Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-hearer in a completely homogenous speech community, who knows his language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions

as “performance variations.”

By this, Chomsky, like other scholars before him, strongly demonstrated his preference for the study of competence or *la langue* rather than performance variations or actual uses of language. However, Dell Hymes (1964) criticises Chomsky’s view of language as too narrow and suggests instead, the concept of communicative competence which entails a description of both the knowledge of a language and the appropriate application of the language system in actual communication.

The above arguments form the background to what William Labov, the American linguist, referred to as the “Saussurian Paradox” (1972). According to Labov, this asocial tradition contends that the social aspects of language can be studied through the intuitions of one individual, while the individual aspect can be studied only by sampling the behaviour of the entire population. He also adds that: “the distinction between competence and performance may have its uses, but as it is drawn, it is almost incoherent”.

The paradox therefore, is the fact that while on one hand, you accept language as a social phenomenon, located in the society, used by all people; at the same time, you avoid variations or features of usage by all people in preference to individual usage.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Explain what you understand by the “Saussurian paradox” in language study.

3.2 The Nature and Scope of the Variability Concept

The Variability Concept was introduced into sociolinguistic studies in order to account for differences in language and speech patterns. Speeches are produced in relation to situation. Previously, scholars’ attention had been on both regional and internal varieties within language. But it was soon discovered that the two variety types did not account adequately for differences in language. William Labov worked in this type of variability concept in New York to determine the speech patterns of the blacks.

The variability concept has a *linguistic orientation* and a *sociology of language orientation*. The linguistic aspect deals with analysis of language features in terms of the extent of variation along the various levels of linguistic analysis: phonology, phonetics, syntax, lexis, semantics. The sociology of language aspect focuses on macro issues by examining national issues like bilingualism, multilingualism, language attitudes, language choice, among others.

The linguistic orientation emphasises only on language varieties and speech variation. The linguistic description seeks to do the following:

i) Explain how and in what function language systems are divided. Here, we are concerned with regional varieties, social varieties and functional language variety (standard vs. non-standard varieties).

ii) Explain how speech realisations are evaluated. Here, we are interested in making distinctions like privileged vs. stigmatised variation (e.g. *fuck you!*)

iii) Explain how speech forms change on the basis of such evaluation of the status of words and how prestigious words become stigmatised. Here, the focus will be on re-evaluation vs. devaluation; how things like that can affect standard dialects that were once stigmatised and how they can rise to a state of prestige, depending on their usage.

iv) We can also talk about the behaviour of minority groups whose dialect is either unpopular or not positively evaluated. But there is really nothing wrong with any dialect; it is the evaluation which brings about stigmatisation.

v) Explain the extent to which language systems interfere with one another at the phonological, syntactic, lexical or semantic level. It is the duty of the linguistic orientation to account for this interference.

vi) Explain how language systems are acquired, conserved and modified.

vii) Explain the basis of the relationship of language varieties when they co-exist or come into social conflict. The relationship may be one of attitude or evaluation. For instance, a speaker may feel more inclined to speak a local dialect if he/she identifies with the local speaker.

Generally, the aim of research in the variability concept is to describe and explain the entire social network of speech usage and the complex competence which the speakers have at their disposal for communicative purposes. In addition, the aim is also to be able to correlate the speakers'; competence with the social norms and parameters of speech usage in the community.

Hitherto, it had been possible to classify speech varieties linguistically by examining their linguistic characteristics (phonological, syntactic or semantic features). But this is not enough. It is also important to be able to account for the functions to which these varieties are applied, e.g. language A – official; Language B-unofficial, etc.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Discuss the components of the variability concept in language study.

3.3. Variability and Linguistic Theory

In Section 3.1, we mentioned the major factor which hampered the focus of linguists on the idea of language variability- the excessive focus on the monolithic or homogenous aspect of language to the detriment of the social aspect (See also Unit 1 of Module 1). Consequently, in the early days of language theorising, the description of English and indeed languages in general seemed to be based on the assumption that the object of linguistic theory was a homogenous and invariant entity. Linguists made no attempt to apply any systematic procedures to what we now recognise as varieties of language. Thus the idea of language variability or linguistic variation was totally ignored.

Consequently, many grammarians carried on the assumption that they were dealing with a strictly monolithic phenomenon. Aarts (1976) describes such perspective as the focus on common core grammar; an example of which is Quirk *et al*'s book called: *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (1972). According to Aarts, although such grammars recognise the heterogenous nature of language, yet they basically establish a description of features which all language varieties have in common. This generalised view is observed in the contention that:

However esoteric or remote a variety may be, it has running through it, a set of grammatical and other characteristics that are present in all others. It is presumably this fact that justifies the application of the name English to all the varieties.
(Quirk et al, 1972:14)

Since nobody speaks common core grammar, the approach of Quirk *et al* has been described as **naturally over-simplified**, involving an **idealization of the facts** (Aarts, 1976:239). The principle which informs the idea of common core grammar is basic to what Chomsky refers to as **the primary object of linguistic description** (See quote from Chomsky (1965) in Section 3.1. above). The focus of Chomsky's exposition is to provide an explicit description of the linguistic competence of the ideal speaker-hearer; specifically, to describe the set of rules which enables the ideal speaker-hearer to produce and understand an infinite set of sentences in his/her language. This is what Chomsky refers to as 'the primary object of linguistic description.' The process through which Chomsky's goal may be achieved is what John Lyons (1972) refers to as 'idealisation.' That is the process by which a model is constructed which exhibits the system of regularities that underlie language behaviour and performance. The main unit of description is the sentence which Widdowson (1979) describes as an **abstracted isolate from its natural surrounding in discourse**. This means that it is through idealisation that sentences are related to stretches of actual performance. A similar approach was adopted in Quirk *et al*'s explanation of common core grammar.

Self-Assessment Question 3.3

Explain the relevance of variability in linguistic theory.

3.4. The Concept of Idealisation in Linguistic Theory

The preceding discussion shows clearly that the foundation of the variability concept relied heavily on the concept of 'idealisation'; that is, the process through which competence is achieved by the language speaker. It is the fixation with idealisation that informed the emphasis of the early scholars' perspectives on the speaker's knowledge, without due consideration of the actual use of that knowledge in the 'performance' (social application) of the language. For a better understanding of the concept of idealisation in the theorising of the Variability Concept, therefore, it is necessary to outline and explain how, in the conception of the scholars, the process of idealisation was meant to be achieved.

Idealisation thus consists of three main stages:

i) *Regularisation*: This is the first stage of idealisation where performance errors are eliminated from the speaker's primary data, that is, the spoken language. Regularisation thus involves the removal of such errors like hesitation pauses, slips of the tongue, stammering, unnecessary repetitions, mispronunciation, and speech fillers which normally accompany actual language production. When this is achieved, the stage of regularisation is said to be achieved. This was major weakness of linguistic theory as it implies that language use must be without imperfections or errors. But these errors are actually indicators that language use is a function of human behaviour and is thus *variable* and socially relevant.

ii) *Standardisation*: The second stage of idealisation during which features of language variability are ignored. The standardisation stage is essentially characterised by the imposition of unity or homogeneity on language use. Standardisation naturally affects such aspects of language use characterised by variations in personal and social factors, professional usages, (registers) and special functions of language. All these instances represent variability factors of language. When they are made standard, vital components of the social application of language are lost.

iii) *De-contextualisation*: This is the third stage of language idealisation during which an utterance which is normally context-dependent, undergoes a process called 'filling out' (Allen, 1973). This means that various elements which are normally taken for granted in specific situational contexts (of utterances) are added to create complete sentences and give an appearance of 'regularity' or 'completeness'. But we all know that natural speech is not always made up of complete sentences. For instance, the following utterance is context-dependent: "Tomorrow, after the Inaugural Lecture." This may occur in response to a question such as: "When does the professor leave for the airport?" If we had not taken certain elements for granted in the context of the situation in which the question was asked, the full response to the question would have been: "The professor leaves for the airport

tomorrow, after the Inaugural Lecture.” The process of de-contextualisation thus disregards the crucial difference between a sentence and an utterance. While the ‘complete’ response above is regarded as *a sentence*, the context-dependent version is called *an utterance*. Completed sentences, rather than utterances, are the linguistic elements which linguists referred to as units of description in their theorising of language system.

It is important to note that the important features of language use which were ignored in the idealisation of language data are those that actually characterise normal language production and thus indicate variability of language. Having demonstrated the futility of the early scholars’ conception of linguistic data, it is pertinent to state that the description of linguistic competence or the ideal in terms of the rules of grammar cannot be determined in the absence of performance features of language. (Longe, 1995). Any investigation involving the description of language must begin with the speakers of the language who are the suppliers of original language data. The process of supplying the data itself is evidence of language performance. Therefore, in order to determine language competence (knowledge of the rules of the language system), we must go through performance (the language user’s actual production in context). The variability features of language are in turn exhibited, most vividly, in the analysis of performance.

Self-Assessment Question 3.4

Briefly explain the stages involved in the process of idealisation of linguistic data.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this Unit, we have explored the concept of language variability by revealing the fundamental components of language theory, its nature and scope, and also the explanation of the significant terminologies in this subject. The use of citations from the sixties and seventies strongly indicate the definite nature of the variability concept. Thus, by emphasising the basic tenets of the initial theorising on the subject, you can make the necessary connections with contemporary theory in the attempts at understanding the concept of variability.

5.0 SUMMARY

The essence of the variability concept in sociolinguistics is to establish the fact that language varies according to several factors, chief among which are: the speaker, the setting/context, the topic / subject and the role relationships exhibited by the language users in different speech events. The variability concept provides the sociolinguistic researcher with the necessary tools for the explication, description and analysis of these factors. Furthermore, an essential component of the concept of variability is the way it sheds light on the role of competence in the study of language variability. You will observe that all the scholars who established the first lines of thought on linguistic variability, from Saussure to Chomsky, paid adequate attention to the competence of the native speaker. But the major

weakness of their approaches is the neglect of the process of variability and change which are inevitable components of any language. Critics of these early scholars (Widdowson,1979; Hymes, 1964; Halliday,1970) have argued that the concept of idealisation (manipulation of linguistic data to make it look perfect or 'ideal') itself involves the processes of *regularisation*, *standardisation* and *de-contextualisation* which are aspects of the social processing of language. Therefore, the concept of idealisation itself represents the process through which competence is achieved.

From the fore-going, it becomes clear that although the competence of the language speaker is a crucial part of his knowledge, that linguistic knowledge is incomplete without the social skills that make the use of language meaningful; in other words, the speaker's language performance.

6.0. TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain the term "Language Variability."
2. Distinguish between linguistic variability and language variation.
3. Briefly explain the focus of (a) linguistic orientation and (b) the sociology of language orientation in variability studies.
4. Explain the difference between 'A sentence' and 'An Utterance' in linguistic theory.

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UNIT 2: THE SPEECH COMMUNITY IN SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Notion of a Speech Community
 - 3.2 Leonard Bloomfield
 - 3.3 Charles Hockett
 - 3.4 J.J. Gumperz
 - 3.5 The Speech Community as a Sociolinguistic Fact
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/ Further Reading

UNIT 2

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The idea of the speech community as the locus of study of language in society is the basis of our discussion in this unit. When we talk about the social setting of language study, we refer to what is known as the speech community. In other words, the setting or place where social interaction takes place. If you look again at the list of basic concepts in Sociolinguistics which we discussed in Module 1, you will notice that one common denominator in all those terminologies is what we know as the speech community.

Thus, the concept of a speech community conjures up a wide scope of language-oriented activities that take place among the inhabitants of a particular place. This also points us to the importance of the speech community in sociolinguistic enquiry.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a) Understand the nature of the speech community.
- b) Explain the importance of the speech community in sociolinguistic enquiry.
- c) Highlight prominent scholars' views on the speech community.
- d) Distinguish between a speech community and a language community.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Notion of a Speech Community

Many linguists have come up with various definitions of a speech community. Alongside these definitions are the arguments of the linguists as to the peculiar nature of the speech community and its implications for language study. Let us examine some of these:

3.2 Leonard Bloomfield (1983):

“A speech community is a group of people who interact by means of speech”

This definition posits that there is a community of ‘linguistic interactors’, otherwise called language users. The problem however is: how do we delimit such a community, for instance by race, language, nationality, etc.? The implication of this is that it is possible for people in a speech community to belong to different language groups (Yoruba, Efik, Urhobo, etc.), or different races or nationalities (African, European, Asian, etc.). In other words, members of a speech community may come from diverse language groups, ethnicities, or nationalities. The common denominator is *speech*.

3.3 Charles Hockett (1953):

Bloomfield’s definition is shared by Hockett (1953) who further adds that speech is not enough to bind a set of people as a community. In Hockett’s view, a particular language must act as a focal point for such a group of people. Hockett further argues that members of a *linguistic* or *ethnic group*, who use speech or language to interact, would be deemed to have qualified as a speech community. For example, the Igbo speech community, the Yoruba speech community, the Hausa speech community, the Ijaw speech community.

What do we grasp from Hockett’s viewpoint?

1. The inclusion of 'language' as an important focal point for speech as community practice.

2. The description of speech users as a people who belong to a 'linguistic' or 'ethnic' group.

By this definition, we can describe a community of language users as Igbo speech community, Yoruba speech community, Hausa speech community by virtue of being connected, not only by speech, but more importantly, by a common language.

But there is yet another dimension to this argument.

When we talk of Yoruba speech community, or Hausa / Igbo community, where are they located? Are they necessarily domiciled in the same place or can they be geographically dispersed?

What does this tell us about the linguistic nature of a speech community?

Yes. It is true that you do not have to live in England to be an English speaker. There are people who speak English language fluently who have never been to England. And there are people all over the world who may speak a language without necessarily having visited the home country of that language. Obviously, languages can be as widely dispersed as the people who speak them. Since the language is inherent in the speakers, they naturally carry their language around with them. So when we say that languages come in contact, it is actually the speakers who come together in specific social settings or speech events.

For this reason, it is possible to have: A Yoruba speech community in England or an Igbo speech community in India. What does this mean? We can have a group of Yoruba-speaking people who live in England and use the language as a means of communal unity in a foreign community. Same applies to Hausa and indeed, any other language (Indian speech community in Nigeria, French speech community in Atlanta are some of the numerous possibilities).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Using Bloomfield's and Hockett's views, what in your opinion, separates a speech community from a language community?

3.4 J.J. Gumperz (1962):

Moving further, another linguist, J.J. *Gumperz (1962)* argues that the members of a speech community may be linguistically diverse or heterogenous. This is a departure from the views of Bloomfield and Hockett who have argued about *common language* and *common ethnicity*. Gumperz's view is with reference to bilingualism and multilingualism, in which case, certain speakers can actually be seen as belonging to more than one speech

community. According to Gumperz, bilinguals and multilinguals can be seen as belonging to those different speech communities, as long as they share *common* communicative codes, norms and practices.

This implies that a Yoruba speaker who is also proficient in English can be described as belonging to both the Yoruba speech community and the English speech community. Gumperz's view takes cognizance of the fact that there are no monolingual speech communities in the world. Rather, the reality is that most contemporary speech communities are actually diverse and heterogenous, because people converge from different locations and may become speakers of the language of their host communities with the passage of time.

Indeed, John Lyons (1970) seems to provide an apt summation of these arguments when he observes that: "All the people who use a given language or dialect are members of that speech community."

Sociolinguists are however quick to point out that a number of speech strategies and extra-linguistic cues are involved in most communal interactions. To buttress this point, Dell Hymes (1972) says that members of a speech community must share the rules needed for understanding, that is, *mutual intelligibility*.

William Labov (1972) also says: "they must share values and attitudes." Sherzer (1975) adds that: "they must have socio-cultural understanding and presuppositions about speech."

In our attempts to define a speech community therefore, we must identify a number of intervening variables:

- i) The difference between language and dialect. (Using the parameters of size, prestige and mutual intelligibility.
- ii) The existence of one language which is being used by speakers of different national and ethnic origins, e.g. the world English community.
- iii) The relevance of social norms and speech rules. e.g. Received Pronunciation (RP) is the standard speech norm in most English-speaking communities of the world.
- iv) The existence of 'politically - single speech communities' like Canada which claims to have just one language, but in actual fact, both English and French are spoken as official languages.

In summation, it may be fairly difficult to define what a speech community is, but in our discussion so far, two essential elements which are needed to identify the speech community have emerged: *people* and *language*.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Highlight the main features of J.J. Gumperz's argument on the nature of the speech community.

3.5 The Speech Community as a Sociolinguistic Fact

The speech community is a very important tool for the exploration of language variation. It provides adequate framework for the identification of societal practices that promote language variation in different communities, e.g. accents, dialects, registers, idiolects, etc.

It has become a comprehensive label for the social universe in which speech variation can be studied, e.g. monolingual, bilingual, multilingual, pluri-lingual,

It is also a term which is frequently mentioned in the sociology of language. The concept of speech community helps to unravel the dynamics of social structure and social organizations and their implications for language practices.

On the basis of the speech community, we recognize the possibility of different varieties of language, such as: regional variety, standard variety, social variety, functional variety, among others variety types. We shall discuss these in a subsequent unit in this Module.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our discussion of the speech community in sociolinguistic perspective has provided much insight into the dynamics of language use in society. The notion of the speech community is as relevant today as it was in the beginning of the sociolinguistic orientation. Through the speech community, we are able to understand the scope of the social setting where language use occurs. The intricacies of social interaction at the communal level becomes even clearer to us when we consider the multiplicity of social engagements that are permissible within the ambience of the speech community. Apart from being a linguistic hub that attracts various kinds of people who use language in different but unique ways, the speech community easily lends itself to varying perspectives as a topic of discussion on the dynamics of language use in social settings.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have learned about the nature of the speech community as a sociolinguistic entity. The knowledge of the different views of foremost linguists on the peculiarities of

the speech community have no doubt outlined some salient arguments which can be used to further the discussion of this topic. You have learned that the idea of a community of language speakers is something which has significance for the consideration of the 'social' nature of language in all human societies. The arguments of the pioneer linguists are as relevant in contemporary period as they were in the 60's and 70's. The central ideas in all these scholarly engagements generally center around the issues of *language* and the *people* who speak it in different social settings.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Give a summary of the views of the pioneer linguists on the speech community.
2. Outline the differences between the speech community and language

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UNIT 3: LANGUAGE DIFFERENTIATION AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Language Minorities and Majorities
 - 3.2 Dialectalization
 - 3.3 Criteria for Language Differentiation
 - 3.4 Standardization
 - 3.5 Diglossia
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

UNIT 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit focuses on the social dynamics of language use in social settings. From our discussion of speech communities and language communities in the previous Module, we must have observed that many activities are enacted in the community, based on the kinds of speakers who converge on a particular setting. A major feature of speech or language communities is that speakers may speak the same language but always in different ways. This could be a function of individual or societal factors. This underlies the idea of language differentiation. In this Unit, we shall explore the various societal manifestations of language differentiation and establish specific trends and their implications for the relative status of certain language features over others.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- a) Understand the concept of language differentiation.
- b) Understand the different dimensions of language differentiation.
- c) Explain the sociolinguistic dynamics of language differentiation.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Language Minorities and Majorities

Language communities may be described in terms of the relative population of their speakers. When a particular language has a higher population of speakers than other languages in the same environment or location, such a language is said to be a *majority language*. Conversely, a language with a lower population of speakers than other languages is described as a *minority language*. Majority languages in Nigeria are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in terms of their relatively higher population of speakers. Minority languages in Nigeria include: Kanuri, Ffulde, Ibiobio, Efik, Idoma, Izon, Kalabari, Shuwa, Ikale, among others across the country.

A majority language is a language spoken by a majority of the population in a given location, state or country. This means that a language like Hausa may be majority language in Nigeria, for instance, but still be a minority language in a place like Ghana.

A minority language is one spoken by less than 50 percent of the population in a given place, state or country. Thus, a language like Efik may be a minority language on a national scale in Nigeria, but it is a majority language in places like Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers states.

Language communities exist on the assumption that all minority language speakers are also fluent in the majority language. A good example is Ireland, where virtually everyone is fluent in English, (the majority language) while some members are also able to speak Irish (the minority language), though at different levels of competence.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Explain the sociolinguistic factors that account for language minorities and language majorities.

3.2 Dialectalization

On the societal level, we consider language differentiation in terms of two factors: spatial factor (or distance) and time.

3.2.1. Distance or Separation by Space

This is the case where people are forced to leave their original location and settle elsewhere, far removed from their original location.

Once there is a physical separation of language speakers, each half of the community is likely to develop differently and may eventually be seen to be speaking different forms of the original language. Factors such as natural disasters, war, political upheavals, among others can cause a group to leave their language domain.

If further split takes place, the emerging groups from the original will again evolve differently in relation to the linguistic characteristics of their new environments. The splinter group, therefore, moves to another location, develops a new set of linguistic norms and evolves a new linguistic tradition, which will, of course, be influenced by their new environment. The variety that emanates from such a split is known as a variety caused by space or distance, which is a variety of the original language. The immediate result of this is called Dialectalization.

This is the case with children of Nigerian-born parents who are born abroad and grew up with a different form of their mother-tongues in a new setting. They are likely to speak English as their first language.

3.2.2. Time

Dialectalization as a result of time occurs when a community is separated for a long period of time, often resulting in the springing up a new generation. For example, when a part or section of a community moves to a different location for a decade or more, there will be a change in their linguistic norms and these norms will be transmitted to the younger

generation, depending on the individuals involved. In this regard, we will have any of these three options: *language maintenance*, *language loss* or *language death*.

These three options represent the different ways in which the various splinter groups can emerge as sub-communities and develop differently.

Language maintenance occurs when a community becomes split though time, and the original group retains the original language while the splinter group goes through series of changes in phonology, semantics, syntax etc. They could maintain the original language and pass it on to the next generation by encouraging the children to maintain the original phonology, syntax, etc. although this may be difficult because of the influence of the host community. This is essentially a function of **Time**. The language of the original community naturally undergoes generational transmission over the course of time. In this regard, we observe that the younger generation acquires the language from the older generation in different forms:

i) The language system of the original language may be inadequately or inaccurately transmitted due to wrong comprehension or poor proficiency on the part of the older generation who have been separated from their mother-tongue for some time. This is often observable in the transmission of culture-specific content like proverbs, idioms, euphemisms, songs, etc.

ii) Various innovations in grammar, phonetics and vocabulary may occur over time. These may differ from one splinter group to another. Nigerians in Ghana versus Nigerians in the United States of America. Some of these innovations may or may not be accepted by the older generation.

iii) Differential assimilation of innovative language features may lead to the establishment of gradual differentiation in the forms of the original language spoken by the ach splinter group.

iv) New ways of speaking may evolve entirely among splinter groups, especially the younger generation.

However, if *language maintenance* is not achieved, it may lead to **language loss**. This is because a language is alive only when people speak it. If *language loss* persists over a long period of time, it results in **language death**.

Dialectalization is, therefore, the process whereby an originally unilingual society becomes split into groups, which results in distinct forms of the original language as a result of distance/space and time.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Attempt a discussion of the social motivations for dialectalization.

3.3 Criteria for Language Differentiation

As previously discussed, the idea of language differentiation is an important part of the description of a language system. We also highlighted in the previous Unit, one of the peculiar features of differentiation, namely dialectalization involving space (distance) and time. We now turn to a discussion of the salient criteria for the language differentiation as established by Ronald Wardhaugh.

The sociolinguist, Ronald Wardhaugh, in his 1986 publication, outlines seven criteria which may be useful in explaining how languages can differ from one another:

1. Standardisation: This refers to the process by which a language has been codified in some way. It usually involves the development of such language features as its grammar and dictionary.

2. Vitality: This refers to the existence of a living community of speakers. This can be used to distinguish between “dead” and “living” languages. Language derives its vitality from its speakers.

3. Historicity: This refers to the fact that a particular group of people finds a sense of identity through the use of a particular language. In other words, such people may be able to trace their history through the use of the language.

4. Autonomy: This is the feeling by speakers of a particular language that their language differs from other languages, in terms of form, structure and functions.

5. Reduction: In this case, it is possible that a particular variety may be regarded as a sub-variety of the standard language, rather than an independent entity, e.g. pidgin varieties.

6. Mixture: This refers to the feeling of speakers that the variety they speak may be regarded as one of the marginal varieties of some other standard language.

7. De Facto Norm: It is assumed that there are “good” speakers and “poor” speakers and that the good speakers represent the norms of proper usage.

Self- Assessment Exercise

Carefully outline the principles of language differentiation according to Wardhaugh (1986)

3.4 Standardisation

Another process that occurs in the spatial and time process is *language standardization*.

Again, the transmission of language to the younger generation can take place in two ways.

First, there may be inadequate or inaccurate comprehension of the language by the children. Here, the system of the language becomes muddled and may lead to innovations in grammar, phonetics and vocabulary, where the children develop their own system. Secondly, it may be in form of retention of the original language structure, which may be developed.

The process of standardization involves bringing some form of legitimacy or codification into the language and this can be achieved through legislation or formal recognition of the language, in both written and spoken forms. It often involves legal procedures and political influence. This kind of formalization always has elements of power by people in authority who can legislate on the requirements for attaining a standard form of the language.

Standardization always involves a documentation of a language in a written form. Not all languages have written forms, so a language which has the written form of its phonology, grammar etc. and their rules is *standardized*. We could also say that splinter groups of a language community or speech community could decide to standardize their language as long as there is a cohesive decision.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Briefly explain the process of language standardisation.

3.5 Diglossia

This is the situation in which two functionally different varieties of a language co-exist in a single speech community. The two varieties have separate labels: while one is labelled the High Variety (H), the second is called the Low Variety (L).

3.3.1 Characteristics:

In diglossia, we have one of the varieties being the standard language while the Low variety consists of the local dialects of the same language. The High variety (H) is usually a superimposed variety. It is not usually the widely spoken variety of the language. It is recognized as the superimposed variety because it is the variety that *dominates*.

The High variety is used for writing and generally functions as the language of formal communication. It is usually learned through the school system. It has very high *prestige* value and grammatically, it is different from the Low variety.

The Low variety is usually the commonly used language. It is intended mainly for oral communication and conversation. It is acquired as a mother-tongue, and it is not subjected to any normative control.

3.3.2. Functions:

The High and Low varieties are strictly divided according to their functions.

The High variety is used in broadcasting, public institutions, political institutions, church or mosque, etc. It is used in broadcasting, public institutions, political institutions, church or mosque, etc. The High variety is considered to be the prestige language and consequently superior to the Low variety.

The Low variety is used as a means of interpersonal communication, and is well adapted to informal and unstructured situations.

The High and Low varieties produce a comical effect when they are not used in their appropriate contexts. The difference between High and Low varieties are established in the grammar, lexicon and phonology.

High and Low varieties share one single phonological system. While the Low phonology represents the basic system, the High variety forms a sub-system of the Low variety. Examples are: Classical Arabic (High); Colloquial Arabic (Low).

At the level of grammar, the Low variety has fewer grammatical (morphological) categories and has a reduced system of inflection. e.g.

Adjectives of degree: *Few, Fewer, Fewest*

Number inflection: *Boy, Boys; House, Houses*

Derivation paradigms: *Faith, Faith-ful*

All these are known as morphological paradigms. It is a special characteristic of Diglossic situations that lexical pairs are used situation-specific and the two words in each pair have the same meaning in both High and Low varieties.

Self-Assessment Exercise

What is Diglossia? Explain its salient characteristics.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the fore-going, you must be convinced that the concept of variety in English has several dimensions, each with definite societal implications. Our excursion into these different dimensions has provided adequate insights into this phenomenon. Variety is indeed a crucial aspect of the social determination of language in many societies world wide.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have been provided with the various dimensions of variety as an important of the linguistic environment. While some varieties may be discussed in terms of their formal features (historical, geographical, functional, etc.), others can be viewed in terms of their social functions (as in the case of usage varieties, diglossia), while we may identify another variety category with certain global ramifications. Generally, your study of language varieties is aimed at showing the broad scope of the topic and the meaningful ways in which you can categorise or compartmentalise them for scholarly discussion.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

The concept of variety in English is broad and multi-faceted. Discuss with meaningful illustrations.

7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING

1. Baugh, Albert and Thomas Cable (1997): *A History of the English Language*. Routledge.
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MODULE 2

UNIT 4: VARIETY IN ENGLISH

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1. The Concept of a language variety
 - 3.2. Formal varieties
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 - 3.4. Global Varieties
 - 3.5. Standard Variety
 - 3.6. Criteria for Standardization
- 4.0 Conclusion

- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assessment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

UNIT 4

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language variety is seen in different ways by different scholars. While Hudson (1996) sees language variety as "a set of linguistic items with similar distribution", Fergusson (1972) defines it as "anybody of human speech patterns which is sufficiently homogenous to be analysed by available techniques of synchronic description and which has a sufficiently large repertory of elements and their arrangements or processes with broad enough semantic scope to function in all formal context of communication".

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

- a) Understand the concept of a language variety.
- b) Discuss the various social dimensions of language varieties.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. The Concept of a Language Variety

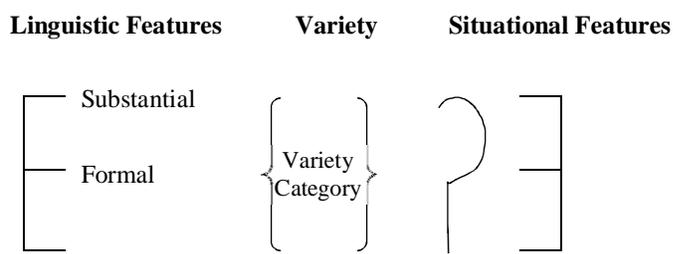
The work of Catford (1965) provides us the needed clarity on this topic. Catford sees language variety in a similar light as Hudson when he defines it as "a subset of formal and/or substantial features which correlates (regularly) with a particular type of socio-situational feature".

The salient terms in the above definition are: *subset, formal and substantial features, correlates and socio situational features.*

A subset is a part of a set or something subsumed under a set. Set, here, is a number of things of the same kind that belongs together because they are similar or complementary to one another. In this context, language is the set, and variety is a subset. It is important to note that members of a set have something in common and naturally, features of the subset will find common ground in the set just like varieties of a language have certain features in common.

The formal and substantial features deal with the fact that language is organized along three levels; the substantial, formal and semantic/contextual levels. The substantial level of language is made up of two elements: phonemic substance and graphic substance. The formal level refers to the internal meaningful structure of language, known as form and it is subdivided into grammar, syntax and morphology. The semantic/contextual level is the meaning realization level, at which the substantial and formal features become meaningful.

To correlate, on the other hand, means to put things in reciprocal relationship or to make things mutually related. In the case of language variety, two things must correlate: linguistic features and situational features. Linguistic features are inherent in language, while situational features are components of situation or context. Therefore, a variety of language is a contextual category which correlates or matches a set of linguistic features with a set of situational features. However, socio-situational features are only determined by the linguistic features, hence, the question mark in the diagram below:



(Longe, 1995: 19)

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Explain the concept of a language variety using Catford (1965)'s definition.

3.2 Language Varieties

At the centre of the study of sociolinguistics is the concept of language variety. To further explain this concept, its typology according to different categories will be explicated in this discourse and they are: temporal/ historical varieties, geographical or regional varieties, social varieties (or sociolects), functional varieties, stylistic varieties, and standard/nonstandard varieties.

Generally, varieties of language are examined along the following criteria:

1. Time- leading to diachronic/historically/temporal varieties like Old English.
2. Space- leading to special varieties like Nigerian English.

3. Style-leading to Stylistic or diatypic varieties like formal English.
4. Social status or societal organization -leading to social varieties like upper class and lower class English.

These varieties are not compartmentalized but are interrelated in varying degrees as will be seen in the discussion below:

3.2.1. Temporal or historical varieties

These varieties describe the development or the evolution of language from one period to another. This category of language varieties are a product of the process of variation (or language change) over time, otherwise known as diachronic variation. In the English language, for example, this variety segments the historical changes in English language into progressive stages: Old English period (450-1150), Middle English period (1100-1500), and Modern English period (1500-present). The Modern English period is subdivided into Early Modern and Late Modern English periods.

This progression is significant for the evolution of English in many aspects – vocabulary, syntax, phonology, spelling. For instance, the Old English period witnessed the constant relegation and repression of the English language under the yoke of invasions by several nations – the Germanic, Romanic conquests. Moreover, the Old English period is also noted for the dominance of Latin and the prevalence of archaisms at the lexical level. Middle English is noted for the Great Vowel Shift in English phonology, as well as the progression of written English from the age of Chaucer to the age of Shakespeare

The Middle English period covered the period of the French invasion of the British Isles, the Norman conquest of 1066 which heralded notable changes in English vocabulary. 1

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2.1

Explore the linguistic features of either Old English or Middle English.

3.2.2. Geographical or Regional Varieties

Geographical varieties are the varieties of language according to the speaker's origin (otherwise called dialects), for example: British English, American English, Scottish English, Nigerian English, Kenyan English, etc.

They are of two types - regional and urban dialects. Regional dialects are spoken in the hinterlands, especially among the uneducated and they do not have elements of standardization or prestige. Urban dialects are spoken by people in the urban centres; they are sophisticated and educated speakers.

Geographical varieties can also be viewed from the perspective of language forms in different parts of the world. For example, the English spoken in Nigeria is quite different

from that spoken in Ghana and the one spoken in India. Dialectologists use maps to divide countries into various geographical varieties and in a particular country; they divide varieties of a language into regional varieties. The lines demarcated on the maps are called *isogloss*. Each regional variety is identified by a specific *Accent* spoken by the people in that region.

Within Accents, we may also identify **Idiolects**. These are varieties which identify speakers by their individual characteristics or personal idiosyncrasies, as in the following examples:

Speaker A: Shut the door

Speaker B: Shut the freaking door!

Speaker C: Kick the door shut

Speaker D: Close the door, will you?

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2.2.

Distinguish between Dialects, Accents and Idiolects.

3.2.3. Social variety

The third category of language varieties is **social variety**, also known as sociolects. Social variety has two dimensions or levels; individual level and societal level. Under the individual level, we are concerned with variables such as generational differences of the individuals involved, socioeconomic status of the individuals in terms of upper, middle and lower classes, depending on the social strata in that society; level of education and the form of occupation. In places like Britain, where social stratification was, and perhaps still is, the norm, uneducated speech tends to be associated with the peasant class, and educated speech with the middle and upper classes. Such social differences carry marked pronunciation differences. Also, words used in Britain could betray or portray one's class, as in the table below:

Table 1

	Upper Class	Lower Class
1	Dinner/supper	Evening meal
2	Sofa	Couch
3	Convenience	Loo
4	My lady	Madam

Social varieties identify the speaker by many different criteria, and each produces a specific kind of social variety. Social varieties are called sociolects when they identify speakers according to their social status or position. Here, we may distinguish upper class and middle class speech. (as in Table 1 above).

Social varieties may also be occupational in which case they identify speakers by their occupation, profession or vocation. These are called *Registers*. Thus, we have the register of law, carpentry, tailoring, medicine, architecture.

Registers are the unique vocabulary of different professions or occupations. If the same or similar words are used in other professions, the meaning will be different. e.g. the word 'morphology' means word structure in English, but in Biology, it refers to cell structure of organisms.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2.3.

Explain the different types of sociolects you have studied.

3.2.4. Functional varieties

These are similar to registers, but more specifically, they refer to language varieties which are used to execute specific functions in social communication. These are varieties according to use, which are classified based particular functions such as advertising, broadcasting, journalism, marketing, law, among others.

3.2.5. Stylistic variety

These are varieties of language according to style. They are similar to functional varieties but the specifically exhibit unique stylistic features which sets them apart from others. For example, the language of drama has unique pattern of dialogue and stage directions; the language of poetry has unique structure of stanzas and rhyming scheme.

Like functional variety, stylistic variety results from differences in subject matter, social context and mode of discourse. Some forms of language which may be classified as stylistic include the language of poetry, the language of speeches, political campaigns, among others which have implications for the analysis of the writer/speaker's style in specific contexts.

Varieties of English which we can identify as a result of differences in subject matter are called **registers**. The relationship between the interlocutors, that is, the social context, results in polarization between formal and informal varieties. Also, varieties according to mode of discourse, or medium, are conditioned by speech and writing as we have in *registers*, where we identify the language of informal conversations, radio or TV commentary, religion, law, cookery, literature, science, and so on.

In this regard, we can say that there are certain usage situations in which we can say that there is considerable overlap between stylistic variety, functional variety, and registers (a sub-set of social variety).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Discuss the different manifestations of varieties in English.

3.3 Usage Varieties

These are varieties of English which are classified according to their usage in communicative situations. These include:

3.3.1. Formal versus Informal variety

Formal English applies mostly to formal situations, while informal English is used for informal communication. Formal language is mainly written, but may also be spoken. In this sense, the vocabulary of formal language is distinct from that of informal expressions. For example:

Formal:	Informal
proceed	go
commence	begin
eliminate	remove
procrastinate	postpone

The vocabulary of formal English derives mostly from Latin, Greek, and French and can be translated to informal English by replacing them with simpler words or phrases. Formal language is the variety normally used in formal correspondence like official letters, business reports, memoranda, and also for writing books, speeches and official documents.

Informal language on the other hand, is the variety used mainly in informal situations. These include writing personal letters and private conversations. There are also some grammatical differences between formal and informal expressions, for example:

Formal: I need a friend with whom I can discuss the matter.

Informal: I need a friend (who) I can discuss the matter with.

Formal: In whose house did she stay??

Informal: Whose house did she stay in?

3.3.2. Spoken versus written variety (variety according to medium):

Some communicative media are more suited to spoken language, such as (radio and television) while others, like newspaper writing, are basically written. There are also some language forms which may be either written or spoken as the case may be. For example: advertising, religious sermon, and speeches.

Written language tends to be formal than spoken languages, such as contracted form, and generally will not allow certain forms which are common in spoken forms (wouldn't,

aren't, can't, isn't, etc.), non-standard forms ('you aint seen nothing', 'how's things?'). Written language is more serious, deliberate and contemplative than spoken language. The grammar of spoken language is much simpler and more constructed. Therefore, it is more prone to grammatical errors. Written language must be precise and accurate in its grammar and syntactic structure.

3.3.3. Polite versus Familiar variety

Polite language is generally reserved for communicating with people with whom we are not familiar, or people of senior status, or people who represent some official position, such as employer/employee, teacher/student conversation.

Conversely, familiar language is used to communicate with familiar people, such as siblings, friends, colleagues, neighbours, etc.

Polite forms in English are often expressed in the form of personal titles like: Mr., Mrs., Dr., Professor., Chief., etc. for example: Mr. Gideon Okeke or Mr. Okeke (not 'Mr. Gideon'); Mrs. Sarah Roberts or Mrs. Roberts (not Mrs. Sarah). Familiar forms are often dropped in familiar language, sometimes replaced with nicknames or shorter forms of personal names, e.g. 'Giddy' for 'Gideon'; 'Lizzy' or Liz for 'Elizabeth.

Furthermore, polite variety may be more formal, using terms like: "Could you?"; "May I?"; "Kindly"; "Please"; "Thank you", not "Thanks" which is less formal/polite.

3.3.4 Standard Versus Non-Standard variety

The difference between standard and non-standard may be linked to formal versus informal language. Standard language is used in formal settings while non-standard is used in informal settings where we are more relaxed and with familiar people, for example standard English versus Pidgin English.

3.3.5. Tactful and Tentative variety

Tactful language is used when it is necessary to avoid hurting or embarrassing others. It is essentially polite in nature. Tentative language is the extreme form of politeness, whereby the speaker may use forms which indicate tactfulness, for example:

Her father died / Her father kicked the bucket
Her father passed on/ passed away

She was booted out / She was relieved of her job.

Can you think of more examples of tactful language?

3.3.6. Literary, Elevated or Rhetorical variety

This kind of usage variety is mostly found in literary writings, especially poetry, and some kinds of advanced prose, such as book reviews, essays, and literary pieces. It is called rhetorical because it makes use of figures of speech, and generally uses vivid expressions. Some speakers or writers often use literary or elevated language to impress or show off.

Sometimes, literary language is used to express the seriousness of the discourse. This is common among orators and public speakers who often use vivid imagery in their speeches. Literary language often contains archaisms or old-fashioned words, e.g 'foe', 'swine', 'handsome' (for a female).

Self-Assessment Exercise

Briefly explain usage varieties in English.

3.4 Global Varieties

3.4.1. English in Global Perspective

The idea of English in global perspective describes the consequences of the contact of English with speakers in different parts of the globe. Today, we have varieties of English which evolved from the rapid expansion of the English speaking community beyond the shores of the places commonly known as the original domains of English. In other words, the English language, which was first spoken in England, has spread steadily to other parts of the world, from Great Britain to North America, from Australia to New Zealand, and other parts of Asia and Africa.

The domestication of English in many contexts outside the mother-tongue locations has led to the classification of such varieties as 'World Englishes', a term introduced by the Indian linguist, Braj Kachru (1982) in his study of non-native varieties of English. Thus, the consideration of the varieties of English which have sprung from different locations across the globe is otherwise called English in global perspective, or World Englishes (English as spoken in different parts of the language world.)

3.4.2. What factors motivated the global spread of English?

The initial factor in the spread of English was *economic*. This was characterized by the early voyages by British sailors to different parts of the World, basically to promote new markets for British products and to procure raw materials during the Industrial Revolution.

Political factors provided a strong stabilization for the economic consideration. The political factor was embodied in the British policy of colonization where most countries

in the Commonwealth of Nations came under the control of the British monarchy. Thus, English in Africa is often described as a relic of colonial administration. Even in the USA, the internal spread of English had political motivation. Germany quickly gave way to English as the language of official communication.

Along with the political consideration was the introduction of the American Peace Corps Programme. This resulted in the posting of British and American military personnel to different parts of the world. The advent of the BBC and VOA as global information dissemination bodies also promoted the spread of English. The flourishing of international organisations like the United Nations, ECOWAS, UNICEF, and others have also contributed to the global spread of English.

The propagation of Christianity and the establishment of churches and schools was another strong impetus for the spread of English. This was most dominant in Africa where English established a stronghold through the institutionalization of the church and the school system.

The quest to connect with advancements in science and technology have also promoted the spread of English. English as the major language of the internet and New Media provides tremendous opportunities for the exploration of new technologies.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4.2

Highlight the factors which influenced the global spread of English.

3.4.3. What varieties of English have emerged from these global dimensions of English?

The global spread of English has resulted in specific varieties in terms of *mode of acquisition* and the specific *social functions* to which the language is applied.

In establishing the global varieties of English, Braj Kachru (1982) put forward the idea of the Three Concentric Cycles of English. This is the tripod upon which we now describe the classification of World Englishes.

The global varieties of English, according to Kachru, are:

1. English as a Native Language (E.N.L)
2. English as a Second Language (E.S.L)
3. English as a Foreign Language. (E.F.L)

English as a Native Language (E.N.L.)

This is the variety of English spoken by the native speakers, otherwise called mother-tongue speakers. Kachru calls this the 'Inner Circle' countries. They are United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. They are also called *Endo-normative* or *norm producing* countries. This group provides the standard or norm for all other English speakers.

English as Second Language (E.S.L)

This group consists of countries where English has a history of colonial experience. Consequently, English has assumed a position of prominence as an official language in both domestic and foreign activities in these countries. Such countries include Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra-Leone, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda. Others in this group are English-speaking countries in Asia and the Far East, such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka.

These countries are known as members of the 'Outer Circle' of English speakers. In these countries, English is spoken based on the norms provided by the native speakers or the Inner Circle countries. They are therefore described as *Norm dependent* or *Exo-normative*.

English as a Foreign Language (E.F.L)

This group consists of countries where the use of English is restricted to international communication. They use their mother-tongue, or another language, for most official communication but only use English to connect with the outside world. Such countries include Egypt, Niger, France and Germany. They are referred as members of the 'Expanding Circle' of English speakers. They are described as *Eso-normative* or *norm developing* countries.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

What do you understand by "World Englishes?" Discuss the varieties in this group.

3.4. Standard variety

Standard variety is a legitimized and institutionalized speech form. It is also described as a 'supra-local means of communication'; that is, a form of communication above the level of everyday interaction. The standard variety has legal backing and acceptability. It is given official recognition and is characterised by certain norms of usage.

The non-standard variety is subordinated to the standard variety. It is not codified, legalized, or legitimized. Ironically, the non-standard variety may be used by a larger part of the society.

This is because the group that speaks the standard language may be the powerful and educated few, who have the political power to take decisions which are not cohesive. The standard form of a language is usually the most prestigious and enjoys an important position as the form used for all official purposes. It marks out its users as educated and enlightened, and gives them a feeling of superiority over those who cannot speak it.

3.4.1. Characteristics of a Standard Variety

It is described as a 'legitimized and institutionalized speech form. It is also known as a 'supra-local means of communication'. It has legal backing and is acceptable, with official recognition.

The standard variety results from various socio-political and power factors. The group that speaks it may be powerful, but educated and have political will to make decisions which are not cohesive. It sometime has a long historical tradition. Its acquisition and use confers special privileges on its speakers, such as prestige or special favour.

It is used in official and social institutions. It is codified according to the norms of usage and used in both oral and written form. It is taught in schools:

- a) as a teaching subject and;
- b) as a medium of instruction.

3.4.2. Criteria for standardisation

There are 3 sets of standardisation criteria:

1. Intrinsic properties of a standard language
2. The functions to which it is applied.
3. Attitudes of speakers

3.4.2.1. Intrinsic properties of a standard language.

The first is **flexible stability**. This means that a standard language may be stable in terms of structure, but it is still flexible in its ability to accept or accommodate other vocabularies and usage, as in the case of the English language.

The second intrinsic property of a standard language is the **degree of intellectualisation** it embraces. By this, we mean to what extent the language is applicable to many fields of scholarship like medicine, the Arts, science, poetry, drama, etc. as well as its use in other professions such as Law, Architecture, Philosophy, etc.

3.4.2.2. The Functions of the Standard Language

The second criteria for standardisation is the functionality of a standard language.

The functions of a standard variety within the context of culture of the speech community are:

- a) Its unifying function: for a standard language to be a unifying tool, it should be able to dominate or control various aspects of social life, and there is no opposition from the people

who use it. It must be capable of unifying speakers from different locations within the speech community.

b) Its separatist function: This is the ability of the standard to set off a speech community as separate from its neighbours who speak another language.

c) Its prestige function: People who possess the standard also have prestige which is a kind of social status.

d) Its Normative function: The standard language constitutes the normative framework; that is, the standard form of the language for other varieties, especially in terms of correctness, and for the evaluation of literary language.

3.4.2.3. Attitude of speakers

The first feature of Attitude is **language solidarity**. This is the speakers' expression of their preference for their own language in relation to other means of communication.

The second feature of Attitude is the **language pride**. The native speakers have pride in their language and this is often exhibited in relation to the prestige function.

The third feature of the attitude is seen in the **social communication network**. The use of the standard language in enacting interaction is also an essential part of the speakers' attitude.

We have come to the end of this last Unit of Module 2.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

What do you understand by a Standard Variety? Outline its salient features.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, you will find that the subject of variety in language is quite insightful in terms of providing us with the salient categories which may be used to establish different dimensions of the subject. The category which you have learned in this Unit-formal to standard varieties - have been established in terms of descriptive explanations of their nature and social significance. An important part of these explanations is to emphasise their overlapping features, as in the case of social/functional/ stylistic varieties. This means that some of these formal varieties are similar in outlook, but you will also find that they are each distinct in their portrayal of the important sociolinguistic dynamics which validate their classification.

5.0 SUMMARY

This Unit has highlighted the different categories of language varieties and their social implications. It is important to keep these categories in mind in order to further your understanding of the different format of language varieties. More importantly, you need to be able to use these categorisations as an enabling tool for a clearer understanding of the notion of ‘differentiation’ in sociolinguistics. While some of the formal varieties provide a window into the evolution of English over the years, we are also able to glen the idea of language differentiation from a social/ national dimension, as well as viewing the subject from a global perspective. Generally, this Module is aimed at presenting you with a detailed view of the subject of language differentiation, otherwise called ‘linguistic differences’- one of the important aspects of the investigation of language in its social context.

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Commented [U4R1]:

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Attempt a detailed exploration of language varieties, highlighting the relevance of the social context.

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ENG 856: MODULE 3

Module 3: LANGUAGE VARIATION AND CHANGE

Unit 1: Language Variation: Linguistic Dimensions

Unit 2: Language Variation: Social Dimensions

Unit 3: Linguistic Determinism and Language Relativity: The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

UNIT 1: LANGUAGE VARIATION: LINGUISTIC DIMENSIONS

CONTENT

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

 3.1 Background to the Variation Theory

 3.2 Models of Language Variation

 3.2.1. Types of Variation

 3.3 Sources of Variation: Internal

 3.4. Sources of Variation: External

 3.5 Levels of Variation

4.0

5.0 Conclusion

6.0 Summary

7.0 Tutor-Marked Assessment

8.0 References/Further Reading

UNIT 1

MODELS FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF VARIATION IN LANGUAGE

1.0 Introduction

Our work so far in this course has focused on sociolinguistics as the study of language in relation to society. As you have seen so far, there are several dimensions to this perspective. Crucially, sociolinguistics maintains that language is not homogenous but variable in many ways: at the individual level, the community level, (micro sociolinguistics) and at the national and global levels (macro-sociolinguistics). Thus the focus of sociolinguistic theory has been the task of facilitating enquiries in language which illustrate or exhibit the variable aspects of language from one society to another.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- a) Understand the concept of language variation and change
- b) Explain the models of language variation
- c) Discuss types of variation in language

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Background to the Variation Theory

According to Edward Sapir (1921: 147): “Everyone knows that language is variable”. The concept of variability thus reverberates in all sociolinguistic enquiries, and for this reason, the field has continued to flourish with interest in various aspects of this variability dimension. However, it is worth noting that while sociolinguistics has largely favoured the idea of variability in language, much of mainstream linguistic theorising had focused mainly on the invariant forms. Variable forms have been treated mostly as “accidental” or “inessential.” Dominant linguistic theories of this century, like the Saussurean theory, The American and Prague School structuralism, and Chomskyan theory- did not prioritize the variable components of language. In other words, pioneer linguists focused mainly on the *standardized forms* of languages, while neglecting naturalistic speech, the more variable forms of language.

The variability orientation was championed by linguists in the field of descriptive linguistics, who came up with the *variation paradigm*, a tradition which emanated from researches and analytical techniques of scholars like William Labov (1966, 1972), as well as critiques of prevailing methods (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog, 1968). The major principle of the variability orientation was the new direction called the *variationist paradigm*.

James and Lesley Milroy (1997: 48) explain that, unlike the previous ‘asocial’ and invariant methods, the variationist paradigm introduced the process of *empiricism*, which relies on the collection of naturally-occurring linguistic data in the form of speech from real speakers. Variationist initially relied on memory-based data collection, and proceeded to the use of tape recorders, following advances in technology. The empirical tradition follows through on full accountability to the collected data, no matter how tedious or tasking the process may be. Variation studies in the past 40 years have followed this tradition, with renewed attention to naturalistic data (data collected directly from language speakers).

The ‘naturalistic’ methodology has greatly influenced the development of the variationist orientation, with advances in many areas of linguistic analysis like *interactional sociolinguistics*, (J.J. Gumperz and others), *conversational analysis* (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson, and others).

According to the Milroys (ibid): “the key difference between the variationist paradigm and other empirical approaches is that the former is focused on understanding variation and change in the structural parts of language rather than the behaviour of speakers or the nature of speaker interaction..... the interest is in what they tell us about varying structures of language, and speakers’ knowledge of these variable structures”

In this regard, the following units will focus on the exploration of the range and depth of language variation, in terms of the linguistic and social (or extra-linguistic) aspects of this phenomenon in society.

3.2 Models of Language Variation

Basically, models are linguistic approaches or modes of explanation which will help us to understand the workings of the variation theory. Explanatory models present us with a clearer view of the implications of this orientation. Our discussion of the notion of ‘model’ will thus outline the several kinds of model, drawing wherever possible from examples of the world-wide variations observable in English.

However, before considering possible models for the description of variation in language, let us examine, in some detail, what the term 'variation' actually entails, and the terminologies which have been proposed for the recognition of its components.

3.2.1. Types of Variation

We shall consider some salient distinctions proposed by Labov (1993 and 1966) which recognizes certain terms which are important to the explanation of what variation entails. These are: *variables* and *variants*. Labov's distinction also recognises three types of linguistic variable - **indicators, markers and stereotypes**.

First, in formal terms, *variables* are distinguished from *variants*. According to Labov, a variable is 'an inconsistency or disagreement that a particular form of language may exhibit from an abstract standard', while a variant is 'a specific value of a variable'. For example, in his work on New York speech, Labov established certain phonological variables which influenced speech in different social class categories. He isolated, among others, the variable (r) as the occurrence or non-occurrence of word final or pre-consonantal /r/ in such words as car, card, fire, fired. He discovered two important variants: a constricted 'r-like' sound and an un-constricted "r-less" glide, [a] or merely a lengthening of the vowel. Hence, a word like *car* might be realized as [kar], [kɑː] or [hɑː].

In addition to having formal values, variables can have different social values associated with them. A variable may act as an **indicator** which has an indexical value correlating with the socio-economic class membership or some other demographic characteristic of the user. Such indicators are recognized by the community at large but are not subject to stylistic variation, i.e. they are relatively permanent characteristics of the speech of certain individuals and groups, which do not change from one situation to another, e.g. the use of centralized /aɪ/ and /a/ diphthongs by some groups on Martha's Vineyard (Labov, 1963).

Markers, in contrast, have indexical value, just as indicators have; but are, unlike them, subject to stylistic variation. In the New York study, (Labov, 1966b), the (r) variable was shown to be a particularly good example of a *marker*, indicating social stratification but being subject to use or non-use as the same informant shifted between his 'casual' and 'careful' styles.

Stereotypes, are the mirror image of indicators, since they do not relate to social factors, in the sense we have been using the term above, but are subject to stylistic shifting. An example of this might be the use of the uvular /V/ in the North-East of England. Most native speakers of English in the U.K., when asked to mimic a 'Geordie' will make use of such /V/ sounds and so will those who live in the area when called upon to tell traditional stories or sing local songs, in spite of the fact that the [b] is, except amongst the elderly in isolated rural areas, extinct. Stereotypes are of considerable interest, since they demonstrate views about the norms of speech which may be quite at variance with the actual facts and

based on recollections of speech habits which were, in fact, common several generations earlier.

Figure 1 below shows the differences between these three types of variables.

Figure 1: Sociolinguistic Variables

TYPE	SOCIAL STRATIFICATION	STYLE SHIFTING
Indicator	+	-
Marker	+	+
Stereotype	-	+

Furthermore, it is equally important to note that the description of linguistic variation who aims not merely at the listing of contrasting forms but at their integration within some schematic model. This we must specify at what level within the linguistic system each variation occurs. In addition, Labov's model indicates internal and external causal relationships between the existence of certain variables and others, and the particular sets of variants typically chosen.

Let us now turn to the consideration of the sources of variation, both internal and external.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Briefly explain your understanding of 'variable', 'variance'

3.3 Sources of Variation - Internal

Internal variation and change was the concern of nineteenth-century linguists whose 'laws' demonstrated how one sound or group of sounds influenced others or were influenced so that change took place. Again, phonological features of language have offered the most visible patterns of variation in language since the 15th Century. The Great Vowel Shift in English, in which 'long vowels' became progressively raised and, where such raising would have led to "the loss of vowel quality entirely, or diphthongized, is a well-known example (Baugh, 1951: 187).

Given the limitation of using a single speaker as the model of speech, and the concentration on the language of the 'ideal speaker-hearer', linguists, for a considerable period, avoided variation and its external causes as far as possible. As the French linguist, Andre Martinet put it: '*seule la causalite interne interesse le linguiste*' (1961 : 81). Linguistic items which did not fit in their systems were therefore termed 'irregularities' or 'loans' and, should the code being described contain too large a number of these, the whole- system would be

dubbed a 'mixed dialect'. This procedure tended to conceal much interesting information on dialectal and stylistic description, and ultimately made bilingual description impossible.

There are however, some instances of internal variations, also in phonology, which are worthy of note, and which indeed form part of the essential data of the sociolinguist. For example, the case of phonologically conditioned allophonic variation has been included in the phonemic descriptions of languages. Received Pronunciation has, for example, two phonetically distinct realizations of the phoneme /l/ - a 'clear' /l/ and a 'dark' [+], occurring in contrasting phonetic environments:

'Clear' [l] occurs initially and medially before vowels in words like: *case, kill, coat*, (initial); *polite, release, belong*, (medial) although not finally and; the 'dark' [+] in the remaining positions: word-finally, never initially but medially before consonants in words like: *oil, kill, clue, clever*. Given a particular configuration of phonemes, one of the two realizations will occur but not the other. This means that the two variants of /l/ typically occur in 'mutually exclusive environment'.

But there are other kinds of variation, which could not be included in linguistic models, for the reason that their causation has been seen to be external to the code in which they occur. We now turn such variations in the next section.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.3

Briefly explain the linguistic factors which may be used to describe Internal Variation.

3.4. Sources of Variation - External

Under this section, there are three more types of variation to be discussed:

inter-personal, intra-personal and inherent variation - all of which derive from sources outside the code.

3.4.1 Inter-personal Variation

The interpersonal dimension simply identifies language features which may be described as being in 'free variation.' These are variants which represent choices from the speech repertoire of speakers which correlate with certain individual characteristics of the user. This means that it is fairly possible to predict, to some extent, which particular variant will be chosen by particular users. Such linguistic predictions made possible based on extra-linguistic features like age, sex, geographical or social origin of speakers.

It becomes clear that any model which attempts to specify such relationships must be *probabilistic* rather than *deterministic* in its approach. Ideally, such predictive language choices are possible, but the concern of the sociolinguist lies more with being able to

generalize about usage norms which are common to a collection of individuals or group, rather than to aggregate the usages of its individual members.

3.4.2. Intra-personal Variation

In some cases, even within the same dialect, we find that there are still certain variations which cannot be predicted. This may be gleaned either from the internal structure of the code (as in allophonic variants), or from the individual characteristics of the user, (like the /æ/ of most American and Northern British English speakers which contrasts with RP /a:/ in words like 'bath').

These seemingly less predictable variations are conditioned, not by linguistic factors, but by dynamic aspects of situated language use. For example, internal and interpersonal criteria will not categorically predict that a particular speaker will realize. pre-consonantal /t/ as [t] or [ʔ]: in the pronunciation of 'fortnight' as [Hotnait], ['fo:ʔnait], ['fottnaiʔ] ; or the contrast between 'bottle' [botl] and [boʔl]. The /t / is absent or silent in the second example.

But this does not mean that the speaker's choice of [t] or [ʔ] is random. Not at all. The conditioning factor depends on the tenor of the discourse. In other words, the degree of 'formality' or 'informality' of the situation in which the utterance occurs: [t] tending to co-occur with the more formal and [ʔ] with the less. Such variations are clearly stylistic rather than dialectal and form part of some kind of system. It is the task of the sociolinguist to describe such patterns in language use.

3.4.3 Inherent Variation

Assuming that all other possible linguistic choices are available, there would still remain variations which were unpredictable and appeared to mark nothing but the inherent variability of language. This means there is still a high tendency that people will speak differently because language is inherently variable, thus no two speakers use language the same way. That such inherent variations exist should not be a matter for concern, indeed they are one of the features which make language the amazingly powerful and flexible tool it is.

Inherent variability has a crucial role in linguistic change, since without it, individual freedom of choice would be lacking. The simple truth is: each form of language is irrevocably tied to some internal or external conditioning factor, thus reinforcing the fact of inherent variability.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.4

Explain the difference between External and Inherent Variation.

3.5 Levels of Variation

So far, our discussion has focused on two broad categories of variation in language - internal or external. A more holistic discussion of variation however, must include the description of variation to differentiate the levels within the structure at which variations occur. In this regard, we shall suggest a taxonomy for ranking variations. The only limitation to our discussion is that we shall only focus on variation in phonology, for two reasons: Firstly, we realize that varieties of the same language differ most noticeably from one another at the level of phonology. Secondly because both variations in grammar and in lexis can be more economically described in terms of a quite different kind of model.

The taxonomy we shall outline here is based on those proposed by Kurath (1939) and Wells (1970) for the description of phonological variation in English dialects. Four levels are suggested - systematic, distributional, incidental and realizational - extending from the most general and 'deepest' differences, to the most specific and 'surface' realizations.

3.5.1 Systematic Variations

The most significant and deepest contrast between two codes - styles, dialects or languages - would be at the phonemic level. The world's languages show wide contrasts in the total number of phonemes in their individual phonemic inventories and "in the distribution within their inventories between vowels and consonants, e.g. Hawaiian has only five vowels and six consonants, while at the other extreme, Abkhaz (a language of the Caucasus) has only two vowels but no less than sixty-eight consonants (Lotz, 1956). Hence, a comparison of varieties of the 'same' language may indicate differences, either in the total inventories, or the same number, but different items within it. Where there are different phonemes, we use the term 'systematic variations' (Wells, 1970), in essentially the same sense as the 'phonemic heterogloss' of American dialectology (Kurath, 1939, p.2). Many Nigerian languages exhibit similar contrasts in their sound inventories. From a more contemporary viewpoint, several varieties of English differ in possessing or not possessing a /hw/ - /w/ contrast in such words as 'which' and 'witch'. Such a variation would be labelled 'systematic' since, it creates a difference of meaning between the two lexical items, in contrast with the variety which has only /w/ in both cases and makes the two items homophonous.

3.5.2 Distributional Variations

Distributional variations occur when there is a difference in the phonotactic privileges of occurrence of phonemes in the systems of the varieties being compared. For example, a major distinguishing feature, which of itself acts as, a fairly clear indicator of regional provenance amongst mother tongue speakers of English, is the occurrence or non-occurrence of the pre-consonantal and word-final /r /, a useful variable which suggests a crude division of English into 'r-full' and 'r-less' dialects. For example, while British English has no final / r / sound in 'car', American English pronounces the same word with a final /r/, called the rhotic /r/.

3.5.3 Incidental Variation

Incidental variation is concerned with the choice of a different phoneme for the 'same' lexical item between varieties. An example from English is the variable (a). We can observe the use by some varieties of the variant /a / rather than /a:/ in such lexical items as 'dance', 'man'. Many varieties of American, Northern British and Australian English consistently choose /æ/ in contrast with the /a:/ of RP, Southern African and some Eastern American dialects. This choice can be partly explained in distributional terms, since the /a / appears before a nasal plus another consonant. However, the occurrence of one variant rather than the other is by no means 100 per cent predictable. RP for example has words like: 'romance', 'random' and several others, with /æ/ rather than the expected /a:/. This is one of those cases where linguistic data cannot be said to be predictable in all cases.

3.5.4 Realizational Variation

Realizational variations ('phonetic heteroglosses' in Kurath, 1939) are caused by the differences in phonetic realization of individual phonemes. This means that even though speakers of the same language or dialect have access to the phonetic inventory, speakers would still demonstrate individual idiosyncracies in sound realisations. Such occurrences tend to validate a fact of language which has been stressed in many of our previous discussions: that every mother tongue user of English in the world pronounces words differently from every other! We however must limit our descriptions of realizational variations to the most distinctive and-phonetically related distinctions. A good example is the 'oil' which is characteristically realized as 'oyel' by speakers from a particular part of the country.

Self-Assessment Exercises 3.5

Attempt an explanation of the different levels of variation.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have studied different aspects of language variation from the linguistic viewpoint. It is clear that this perspective has a lot to do with idea of theory in sociolinguistics. We also realise that although much of the definitive work on language variation were done several decades ago, many of the postulations of the pioneer scholars retain their relevance as operational tools for thinking about the subject of variation ion contemporary times.

5.0 SUMMARY

So far in this Unit, we have explored the notion of variation and its linguistic dimensions. You have been presented with different categories in the description of a variable, mainly with phonological examples drawn from English. This Unit has also shown you the major types of variation which will occur in language and the sources of these variations. We have learned that there can also be a hierarchical approach to the inclusion of variation

within a model of language. The question that comes to mind at this point is: What kinds of models are available to the linguist who feels obliged to handle variation and how is he to choose between them?

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Carefully examine the linguistic components of language variation.

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UNIT 2: LANGUAGE VARIATION: SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

CONTENT

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1. Language variation: What does it mean?

- 3.2 The Social Context of Language Change
- 3.3 Dimensions of Language Variation
 - 3.3.1. Diachronic Dimension
 - 3.3.2. Synchronic Dimension
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assessment
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UNIT 2

LANGUAGE VARIATION: SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Much of our discussions so far in this course have focused extensively on the idea that language use in any social setting cannot be homogenous or fixed. We have examined various dimensions of the heterogeneity and diversity of language in relation to society. To further explore the origins of diversity in language, we focus this Unit on the concept of Language Variation or Variation in Language.

The term ‘variation’ simply refers to the inevitable changes which occur in language over time. Since language is a manifestation of human behaviour, change is inevitable, as the language we speak evolves through time and from place to place.

In a previous discussion, we discussed the subject of language variability and its social implications. Having established that it is the social component of language which makes it variable and interesting, the next step now is to explore the phenomenon known as language variation in closer detail. The point was made in the previous discussion that the aim of an excursion into language variability is to be able to describe and explain the entire social network of speech usage. This is often done with a view to achieving an adequate correlation between the speech patterns and the existing social norms in the community. Our discussion of language variation or change in this unit essentially reiterates this motivation. Specifically, this Unit provides valuable insights into the specific social and historical dimensions of the process of language variation.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- a) Understand the concept of language variation.
- b) Explain factors responsible for language variation.

- c) Discuss the diachronic/historical dimensions of language variation.
- d) Discuss the synchronic/contemporary dimensions of language variation.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Language variation: What does it mean?

Language is a manifestation of human behaviour. Therefore, it cannot remain static or unchanging. As with other aspects of human existence, the idea of change is an inevitable component of language. We all know that the way we spoke or wrote our different languages decades ago is not the same as the languages are being utilised in everyday interactions today. Many things have come and gone in our language practices. Take simple every day greetings for example. Many people, young and old, have added more items of greeting that were not used before. Greetings that begin with the word ‘Happy’ were normally reserved for special occasions like birthdays, weddings, and anniversaries. Today, the ‘Happy’ greetings have become so commonplace in the daily interactions of Nigerians that we often hear people say: “Happy New Month”, “Happy New Week”! Also, in written communication, language users, especially the younger generation, have imbibed new spelling forms which were unthinkable some fifty years ago. The influence of digital technology has brought new currency and popularity to spelling forms like ‘gr8t’ (great), ‘lil’ (little), ‘U’ (you), ‘lol’ (laugh out loud), among others. Similarly, a page from a newspaper in the Victorian period would be unreadable to anyone in this generation because of the archaic spellings and vocabulary that characterise writing in that period. Therefore, the idea of change is quite normal in language as it is in other spheres of existence.

Change in language is so inevitable that only those languages which yield to change have continued to exist till today. The changes in languages are of course, motivated by the users who constantly ‘recreate’ and ‘reinvent’ the language to suit the demands of usage changes in space and time. In fact, it is often said that a language is as vibrant as the people who use it. Therefore, languages which no longer serve the usage needs and purposes of their speakers soon become extinct. This validates the point that it is the users of a language that give life to the language. In other words, language growth is determined by the vitality of its functions in the social interactions of its users.

The change that take place within a language over time and space is called *variation*. This means that language varies from time to time and from place to place, based on the dynamism of its uses. But change does not occur on its own. It is often motivated by events, happenings or developments in the society. Therefore, language seems to be in a state of continuous transition as it is passed on from generation to generation or from one culture

to another. With each transition, language takes on a new elements or redirects the old ones to suit the moment. This is why language is regarded as a living entity.

3.2 The Social Context of Language Change

Some of the changes that occur in Language can be linked to social and political happenings such as wars, invasion, disasters, and others. These events often bring about major changes in the patterns of communication in speech communities.

It is also a reality of language that it must naturally evolve and regenerate as it travels through time. In this case, Language is frequently recreated or restructured to fit into the current usage of different periods (as in the case of Old English, Middle English and Modern English).

The added reality of cultural and generational transmission of language is yet another factor in the inevitability of change. Each generation has to devise ways of understanding the language of past generations. All of these factors affect language at all levels of analysis: phonology, syntax/grammar, morphology, semantics, etc.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain what you understand by Variation in Language.

3.3 Dimensions of Language Variation

Language variation or change can be studied along two dimensions:

1. Diachronic (or historical) and;
2. Synchronic (on-going or contemporary).

3.3.1. Diachronic Dimensions

The diachronic dimension to language variation relates to changes in language which have occurred in the course of time, thus having an historical effect. Diachronic changes in language can be viewed as a consequence of the evolutionary trends or stages in the development of the language.

The English language we speak today is a reflection of many centuries of evolution, from the Roman Christianisation of Britain in 597 which brought England into contact with Latin civilisation; the Scandinavian invasions in the Viking Age which led to a considerable mixture of the two people and their vocabularies; and the Norman conquest of 1066 during which the English language witnessed tremendous subjugation and relegation in socio-political importance.

Similar developments have been recorded in the language as a consequence of the World Wars, the Renaissance and the socio-economic upheavals of the past decades. Each of these periods made significant contributions to the evolution of the English language, in terms of the vocabulary, the grammar, phonology, lexis and spelling. These are well documented in numerous publications (Baugh and Cable, 1997; Robins, 1964; Syal and Jindal, 2012).

For the purpose of this discussion however, our task is to highlight the major areas of historical or diachronic changes as a means of showing the impact of this dimension. Some notable diachronic changes in English are highlighted below:

a) Phonology:

i) The front vowels are not rounded in Modern English whereas most back vowels are rounded. However, in the Old English period, there were front rounded vowels.

Old English	Middle English	Modern English
[r ʷ d]	[r ɔ: d]	[r ɒ ʊ d]
[h ʷ m]	[h ɔ: m]	[h ɒ ʊ m]

ii) The loss of /r/ medially before consonants and finally (unless the next word begins with a vowel) took place in the 18th century although /r/ was retained in spellings like *arm, heard, order*.

iii) Initial /k/ and /g/, followed by /n/, disappeared in pronunciation in the late 17th century in words like: *knave, gnaw, gnat, gnash*.

b) Spelling: The overwhelming influence of the French language during the Norman conquest led to massive changes in English spelling, in the following examples:

- i) The sequence ‘e o’ remained in spellings but became a monophthong as in ‘people’
- ii) ‘y’ was often used to represent ‘i’ in words like: ‘mythe’ (might), ‘wys’ (wise).
- iii). The advent of the Modern English period witnessed reforms in spelling, such as the dropping of final ‘e’ in many words.

c) Vocabulary: Many significant changes in the English language are attributed to changes in vocabulary. This occurred in many ways:

i) **Lexical change:** the meaning of a word may be changed based on repeated use in a specific context. The change may be only in the meaning of the word while it retains its original form. Such change in meaning may be informed by the fact that the object it stood for had undergone change, e.g. the word ‘pen’ originally referred to ‘feather’. But when

the word feathers came to be used for writing, as in 'quill pen', the word 'pen' acquired new meaning.

ii) **Meaning Extension:** A large number of English words have had their meanings extended over time. An example is the word 'journey' which originally means 'a day's walk/ride'. Similarly, the word 'journal' referred to a periodical that appeared 'every day.' Now, a 'journey' refers to a trip that takes one away for at least a week, while a 'journal' in present-day English would refer to a weekly, monthly, or half yearly publication.

iii) **Conversion of proper name to common noun / word.** This process is a prominent example of lexical change. For example, the word 'boycott' is derived from a certain Englishman named Captain Charles C. Boycott (1832 – 97) who was a land agent of Lord Erne's estate. In an attempt to get Captain Boycott to reduce rents, citizens reduced patronage of his business, and this came to be termed "boycott", after his name. A similar example is the word 'dunce', coined from the name of a medieval writer, Duns Scotus, who fell into disrepute. Consequently, anyone whose writing did not please the public was referred to as a 'dunce'. Other examples are:

- The word "Odyssey" coined from the war exploits of the medieval Roman soldier, Odysseus, who travelled for many years and led his troops to several conquests.
- The expression "Achilles' heels" meaning 'weakest point' (of a person), coined from the tragic story of the valiant Roman warrior, Achilles, who could only be killed by an injury to his heels;
- The expression "waterloo", meaning point of defeat or nemesis, coined from the place where the battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815. A French army under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte, was defeated by English troops at Waterloo, a place in present-day Belgium, then part of the United Kingdom.

iv) **Euphemism:** This is a means by which speakers seek to disguise the actual nature of an unpleasant word or expression by substituting it with an alternate, inoffensive word. Many lexical changes have occurred in English as a result of such usages. For example, the use of words like: 'bathroom', 'restroom', 'convenience', 'ladies' room' or 'Gents' for 'toilet' or 'latrine; and the word 'private part' for male and female genitals; and the word 'intercourse' as a replacement for 'sex'.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Assess the contribution of the Historical or Diachronic dimension to the development of English.

3.3.2. Synchronic Variation

The Synchronic dimension refers to changes in language which may be described as on-going, contemporary or changes currently in progress. Synchronic variation or changes usually result in different varieties of language which may be due to language contact, dialects and differences in registers used by various groups in society. Synchronic variation thus involves three major directions which we shall now discuss in detail:

3.3. 2.1. Varieties Influenced by Language Contact:

A major feature of present-day language practices is the inevitability of contact between speakers of different languages. Many factors are responsible for the language of language speakers. These include travel, trade, academic pursuits, social integration, or international relations. As a result of constant interactions of people across borders, language speakers of different origins coexist in modern speech communities while borrowing items from one another on a daily basis. When this continues over time, we are bound to have the evolution of language varieties called “transplanted”, “nativised”, “domesticated”, or “indigenised” varieties. This means that when different languages co-exist for a long time, the contact may result in the development of new varieties which may be described as having features of borrowing or interference from the interacting languages.

When a language, like English, has been subjected to widespread use and application in non-native terrains, it develops features which depict its new environment, thus it is said to have been “transplanted” or “nativised” based on the level of its application in the new environment. Varieties based on language contact thus gives rise to contact varieties like Indian English, Ghanaian English, Nigerian English, and others. Contact variation also gives rise to Pidgins, Creoles and Esperanto.

Contact languages which develop through this process include Pidgins and Creoles which are globally recognised as the result of cross border uses of language. A Pidgin is a special language with a very limited vocabulary and grammar which is restricted to informal usages. Most pidgins evolve as a result of trading activities and socio-economic relations between two groups of people. For this reason, such pidgins are also called “bazaar “languages. Common pidgins include Cameroonian pidgin (“plenty man”/ I go go market”/ I will go to the market); Chinese pidgin (“I chow chow”/I eat); and Melanessian pidgin (“plenty man”/ many men), and Nigerian pidgin (“I never chop”/I have not eaten).

Creoles develop when pidgins have been in use for so long that it evolves a distinct vocabulary and structure. By reason of its extended vocabulary, a Creole may command wide usage although it may still be confined to informal settings. Examples are Jamaican Creole and Haitian Creole.

3.2.2.2. Varieties Influenced by Dialect

One of the reasons for the initial lack of interest by linguists in the exploration of the social aspect of language was the inadequate understanding of the important difference between language and dialect. Synchronic studies of language however distinguish language from dialect in terms of relative number of speakers, prestige and mutual intelligibility. In this Unit, it suffices to tell you that the description of language according to the user’s social and geographical background is known as Dialect. In other words, a dialect identifies a speaker in terms of where the speaker comes from; his/ her geographical origin. The recognition of dialect functions on the assumption that language may vary on the geographical plane from one region to another. This is the basis of geographical varieties

of language (see Unit 4) and their regional components. Thus, we have within British English, many varieties representing regions of England where varieties of English are spoken such as the Scottish dialect, Welsh dialect, Cockney dialect, Lancashire dialect, and Yorkshire dialect, among others. American English has similar regional varieties.

Apart from the regional criteria, dialectal variations in language may also be determined by social hierarchy and social class. An example of variety by social hierarchy is the fact that in London, the variety of English used by aristocrats differs from that used by members of the lower class. While members of the upper class characteristically speak the standard variety known as Received Pronunciation or RP, the less privileged speakers use a less sophisticated and enlightened variety. Although RP is now accessible beyond its social and regional boundaries, it is generally considered the dialect of the educated and the aristocrats. Dialects may also be determined by religion and caste system, as in the case of the Hindu dialect, where dialectal differences are conditioned by caste, even within the same religion.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that within a given language, we may have a number of dialects, each with its distinct grammatical, lexical and phonological differences, while they still share the same core system with the main language. For instance, many books have documented the major differences between British English and American English at different levels of the language system. Some of these differences are highlighted below:

1. Phonological Differences:

	RP	General American
Last	/ la : st/	/ læst /
Dance	/ da: ns /	/ dæns /
Direct	/ darrekt /	/ direkt /

2. Vocabulary (lexical differences):

British	American
Biscuit	Candy
Freeway	Highway
Bonnet	Hood
Jelly	Jam
Petrol	Gas

3. Morphological Differences:

British	American
Sneak / sneaked	sneak / snuck
Dive / dived	Dive / dove

4. Graphology (Spelling):

British	American
Programme	Program

Foetus	Fetus
Colour	Color
Realise	Realize

5. Syntax:

Fill in (a form)	Fill out (a from)
Different from	Different than
Talk to somebody	Talk with somebody.

3.2.2.3. **Variation based on Register**

Register variations are determined by differences in the situational uses of language. Language use according to the situation is called Register. Registers are commonly associated with the usage peculiarities of certain groups in society, such as professions (medicine, law, journalism, academia,) Registers may also be viewed as distinct situational usages such as the language of classroom interaction, the language of family life, the language of legal documents, the language of medical diagnosis. These different situational categories are said to have distinct sets of vocabulary which clearly distinguishes each from others. These differences in vocabulary constitute unique registers for each subject or field. Registers may be formal or informal depending on the nature of the situation in which they are used. For instance, a student will use a formal register when speaking to a professor in his school, but an informal register will be preferred for a discussion with his family members in a home setting.

In order to understand registers in more detail, we shall now examine their contextual features by discussing their classification as components of *Field*, *Mode* and *Tenor* of Discourse.

a) Register according to field of discourse: Field of discourse refers to the subject matter or topic of communication. In some cases, it may also be viewed as the Purpose of communication. This means that every field of human endeavour has a unique register which includes the vocabulary items which identify or describe the field or subject. Here are some examples of subject registers

The Register of Law: *The defendant shall forthwith and in accordance with the extant provisions of Section 12, Sub section 5 of the Constitution, herewith, accordingly witness this declaration.*

The Register of Religion: *Oh Lord, Heavenly father, King of Kings, we worship you, we adore thee and pray thee, have mercy on our souls.*

The Register of Science: *Equal volumes of all gases, under similar temperatures and pressure, contain molecular value of specified elements.*

The Register of Journalism: *Senate Passes Anti –Grazing Law in 36 States- Police to Arrest Offenders.*

b) Register according to mode of discourse: Mode of discourse refers to the specific medium through which communication is enacted. Mode of discourse is generally categorised into Spoken and Written Media. Each medium specifies a wide range of communication possibilities which may define the discourse. Spoken medium includes telephone conversation, radio or television interview, dialogues, radio or television news broadcasts, a classroom discussion, office meetings, lunch –hour fellowships, speeches, among others. Most spoken media have the feature of immediacy and less formality than written variety. Written medium includes letters (formal and informal), job application, student essays and projects, books, novels, reports, memoranda, legal documents, among others.

c) Register according to tenor of discourse: Tenor of discourse refers to the style of communication or mood of communication. It involves a consideration of the role relationship between the interlocutors or participants in a discourse, otherwise called the Addresser and the Addressee. The specific tenor of the participants' relationship determines the nature of the discourse, that is, formal, informal, casual, colloquial, intimate, friendly, hostile or frozen, as the case may be.

4.0. Conclusion

In this unit, we have explored the concept of variation in language and highlighted the two major dimensions of the phenomenon. While the Diachronic Dimension explores the historical underpinnings of language change across generations, the Synchronic Dimension focuses on the various manifestations of contemporary usages in terms of the social functions to which language varieties are applied. Generally, the concept of language variation rejects the idea of language as a monolithic or homogenous entity and embraces the view of language as a heterogenous dynamic system. It is the business of sociolinguistics to highlight variation in social interaction and to evolve new ways of providing adequate explanations to the occurrence of variation in society.

5.0 Summary

This Unit has focused on the interesting factors of historical evolution of language and its contemporary underpinnings. The exploration of change in language provides us with adequate insights into the importance of the social aspect of language in the explication of both the Diachronic and Synchronic dimensions to the phenomenon of language variation. While the diachronic dimension provides us with the necessary historical perspective to the development of language, the synchronic dimension presents us with an opportunity to relate with the diverse influences imposed on language not only by its varied users but more crucially, the social environment in which language is constantly enacted and transmitted from one group to another. Indeed, the synchronic dimension enables us to

recognise the social factors which motivate the development of language varieties and their functions within the specific speech community in which they are used.

6.0. Tutor-Marked Assessment

1. Explain what you understand by 'Variation in Language.'
2. Highlight the major motivations for language change.
3. Explain how the diachronic dimension of language variation exhibits historical features of language.
4. What is synchronic variation? Discuss its components with useful examples.

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Unit 3: LINGUISTIC DETERMINISM AND LANGUAGE RELATIVITY: THE SAPIR-WHORF HYPOTHESIS

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assessment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

UNIT 3:

LINGUISTIC DETERMINISM AND LANGUAGE RELATIVITY: THE SAPIR-WHORF HYPOTHESIS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language and society has been a major concern of sociolinguists. The concern is primarily based on the range of activities and social functions which language is used to accomplish in human communication. Language is not just a means of conveying meaning, but an essential part of what language does is to project social and cultural linkages between and among the people who use it in their daily interactions. The link between speech and speakers' ethnic origin, their social status, gender, age group, among others are clearly indexical of the inextricable connections between language and society. As the discussions in the previous units have shown, society and its intricate web of culture, norms, attitudes have a great deal to do with how language plays out on a daily basis. At the heart of all these connections is the reality that language is entwined with human existence. It has been argued that language not only reflects social patterns and categories, but also sustains and reproduces them (Susan Gal, 1989:347).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- a) Understand the relationship between language and society.
- b) Understand the principles of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
- c) Explain the connections between language relativity and linguistic determinism.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Also called the *Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis*, the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis refers to the proposal that the particular language one speaks influences the way one thinks about the world and of reality. Linguistic relativity stands in close relation to language and thought; specifically about how patterns of language use in cultural context can affect thought.

Edward Sapir and his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf developed the hypothesis that language influences thought and not the other way round. Sapir & Whorf both worked on Amerindian languages. Sapir (1929) argued that the relationship between language and culture was very strong and that there was no way you could understand one without the other. According to Sapir:

“Human beings are much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society”

Whorf went further to postulate that the language - society relation was deterministic. Thus came about the *language determinism hypothesis*. Whorf argued:

“We dissect nature along the lines laid down by our native languages”
(1956: p. 213)

There are two forms of determinism: extreme and mild. *Extreme determinism* says that if one person learns two different linguistic items from two different groups of people or cultures, each item will be associated with different cultural values or beliefs. This means that your language may determine your world-view.

The second view, which is *mild determinism*, can be simply described as how language or speech socializes people. That means that as culture is transmitted verbally, children grow up as competent members of the society, while becoming familiar with the values and norms of the society. For instance, upper class parents bring up their children to use upper class speech and vice versa for lower class families.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypotheses, to a large extent, reflect the role of speech in the determination of the social content of language. What the language speaker says reveals a variety of information about the social process that generates the speaker's thoughts and expressions. Sociolinguists believe, for instance, that while a speaker's accent may reveal the person's social group (upper class, middle class, lower class), an essential part of that categorisation is the social definition of the social group itself. Ways of talking therefore

do not only reflect social structure, but also the social practice that gives validation to that social structure. Such is the close connection between language and society, and by implication, speech; which is often a vivid pointer to a variety of social ramifications.

However, though the Sapir-Whorf hypotheses have argued that speakers' language influences ways thinking and viewing things; it is worth noting that language does not necessarily influence speakers so strongly as to prevent them from seeing things from different perspectives, or from creating fresh ideas. A sociolinguist, Gillian Sankof (1986: xxi) buttresses this point by arguing that:

“in the long term, language is more dependent on the social world than the other way round..... Language does facilitate social intercourse, but if the social situation is sufficiently compelling, language will bend.”

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Sapir-Whorf hypotheses have remained of great importance in contemporary attempts to establish or explain the close connections between language and society. In recent times, these concepts have been quite useful in some sociolinguistic debates, especially those concerning issues like 'politically correct' language. This deals with issues of social discrimination occasioned by racism, ageism, minorities, majorities, among others. In what ways would societal thinking about these issues affect the use of language? For instance, reference to blacks in America as 'niggers' is gradually being replaced with a more acceptable term, 'African-Americans'; 'old people' or 'the aged' are now being referred to more positively as 'senior citizens'. These are aspects of language use that are influenced by thought in contemporary perspective.

5.0 SUMMARY

Thus Unit has presented you with an insightful background to the workings of language in relation to society. The interconnections between language and the speaker's thought; and how these thoughts reflect societal patterns, are ideas which were first established by social anthropologists several decades ago. It transcends the idea that language is an outcome of thought, but rather, the way one speak is deeply influenced by the language one is born into. This means that the speaker's mind is in the grip of language

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Summarise the main principles of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

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ENG 856 MODULE 4: GLOBAL-SCALE SOCIOLINGUISTICS

MODULE FOUR:

CONTENT

Unit 1: Contact Linguistics

Unit 2: Language Planning

Unit 3: Language Policy: socio-political considerations

UNIT 1

CONTACT LINGUISTICS

CONTENT

1.0 Introduction

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 3.1 Goals of Language Contact

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 3.2.1. Bilingualism: Typologies

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UNIT 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hello Students!

Welcome to Module 4.

Our work in the previous Modules have focused on aspects of language and society at the individual and communal level, otherwise known as micro-level sociolinguistics. It may interest you to know that there are also aspects of sociolinguistics which may be explored at both the micro and macro levels, depending on the subject. Contact linguistics falls within this category, and the main subject of enquiry in this field revolve around the concept of language contact.

The idea of “language contact” is a term which suggests the social interrelations among speakers of different languages, and the social consequences of these interrelations. The ‘coming into contact’ of people for the purpose of social interaction has many varied dimensions, which are deeply influenced by factors like language attitudes, ethnicity, language conflict, language displacement, among others.

There are distinct linguistic traditions which have been proposed for the explication of these different aspects. These include:

- i) The descriptive tradition, involving the sociology of language (Fishman, 1972). This has two major dimensions: *the descriptive sociology of language* which deals with general patterns of language use and norms in speech communities; and 2) *the dynamic sociology of language* which focuses on the factors which account for different rates of change in the social organization of language use and language attitudes.
- ii) The qualitative tradition, involving the descriptive-analytical approach (Labovian), also known as ‘social linguistics.’ Here, we have studies in cultural communication, such as those established by Dell Hymes (1974), which were later adopted by Saville-Troike (1982) and J.J. Gumperz.

In this Unit, we shall explore an aspect of ‘global –scale sociolinguistics’ by discussing one of the major fields in this orientation – Contact Linguistics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- a) Understand the Contact Linguistics and its dynamics.
- b) Understand the motivations for language contact.
- c) Discuss the major consequences of language contact.
- d) Understand the place of bilingualism in language contact studies.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Contact Linguistics

As the term implies, contact linguistics is the interdisciplinary branch of multilingual research which relies on the tripod of language, language user and language sphere. Contact linguistics generally explores issues in language use beyond the individual and community level. It deals with larger issues in the inter-cultural applications of language, especially those connected with the sociology of language (Joshua Fishman), ethnography of communication (Dell Hymes), and issues in language contact, such as the sociolinguistic consequences of bilingualism and multilingualism across cultures.

The term "contact linguistics" was first introduced according to Nelde (1997: 287) at the First World Congress on Language Contact and Conflict, held in Brussels in June 1979. However, there have been earlier works on language contact. For instance, the language situation in the Balkans, a Peninsula in South Eastern Europe received the attention of scholars as early as in the 19th century with Kopitar (1829), Schuchardt (1884) and others. Moreover, Trubetzkoy (1928) also provides a definition of a linguistic area or "a union of languages" which he termed "Sprachbund".

The major turning point however in the study of language contact was the works of Weinreich (1952) and Haugen (1950, 1953). Both scholars emphasize the importance of studying language contact from both a linguistic and a socio-cultural perspective, Michael Clyde (1987: 456) observes that: "Despite all the previous research, there was before Weinreich (1953), no systematized theory of language contact". Moreover, the work of Thomason and Kaufman (1988) has given much impetus to research in language contact.

3.1.1 Goals of Language Contact

When we speak of language of language contact, what we imply is the variety of communicative situation which bring speakers of different languages together in a social setting. Since language speakers naturally take their languages with them wherever they go, language contact is motivated by the social interactions of the language speakers. Such interactions were originally motivated by trade and socio-economic activities, but contemporary happenings have broadened the scope of language contact to include key factors like: wars, natural disasters, political upheavals, religion, education, technology, among others. It becomes clear then, that increased social interactions have influenced the occurrence of language contact situations, as well as the variety of speech functions which these interactions normally bring forth.

Language contact is geared toward the achievement of certain sociolinguistic goals. One of the clearest statements of the goals of contact linguistics was given by Weinreich (1953: 86) as:

To predict typical forms of interference from the sociolinguistic description of a bilingual community and a structural description of its languages is die ultimate goal of interference studies.

Thus, Weinreich focuses specifically on the phenomenon of bilingualism' in his description of the goal of the study of language contact, though there are some other contact situations. This in essence also means that the goal of contact linguistics is to uncover the various factors, both linguistic and socio-cultural, that contribute to the linguistic consequences of contact between speakers of different language varieties.

In this regard, three broad kinds of contact situation can be identified:

Language Maintenance

This refers to the preservation by a speech community of its native language from generation to generation. Preservation implies that the language changes only by small degrees in the short run owing to internal developments and/or (limited) contact with other languages. The various subsystems of the language - the phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and core lexicon - remain relatively intact. Maintenance also implies *borrowing* and *interference* that is, the native language borrows words and structures from the external or foreign language, Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 37) also argue that borrowing is "the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language.

In explaining **interference**, Weinreich (1953: 1) defines it as:

Deviations from the norm of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language.

All these show the linguistic behaviour of the bilingual since according to Mackey (1968: 55): "Bilingualism is not a phenomenon of language but of its use." It becomes clear therefore that it is in the bilingual's use of language that such phenomena as *interference*, *borrowing*, *code-switching*, etc. are observable.

Language Shift

In another situation, language contact can also lead to *language shift*. This refers to the partial or total abandonment of a group's native language in favour of another. In many cases, language shift may be accompanied by varying degrees of influence from the group's

first language to the target language. Language shift may lead to language death when there is a complete abandonment of the native language in favour of the target language. The native language slowly decays and dies off.

Pidgins and Creoles

And finally, language contact may lead to the creation of new languages such as *pidgins and creoles*. A pidgin is a highly reduced language with minimal vocabulary and grammar whose functions are restricted to informal settings. Pidgins can become Creoles when they assume the role of mother-tongues for an entire speech community.

In all, the ultimate consequence of all contact situations is bilingualism. In other word it all begins with bilingualism and may end in monolingual if there is a case of language death over successive generations.

3.2 Bilingualism

As one of the major consequences of language contact, bilingualism is a topic which has attracted the interest of scholars for decades. The field has amassed a body of literature that cover the broad scope and depth of its dynamics in contact linguistics. Much of this literature attest to the nature of bilingualism as a normal phenomenon, while affirming that it is actually monolingualism which represents a special case (Romaine 1996).

Bilingualism thus stands in opposition to the ‘asocial’ view of language which was a major spur for the development of the social perspective of sociolinguistics. But far from the view of Jacobson (1953) who opined in the pre-sociolinguistic era that: “Bilingualism is for me the fundamental problem of linguistics”, researches in the social dimension of language in the past six decades have shown that bilingualism and its cohorts indeed stand at the heart of language use in society.

This section will examine some crucial literature on this subject which are pertinent to our study and which relate directly to the Nigerian experience. Let us examine bilingualism in relation to language contact which is the catalyst for its existence.

3.2.1. Bilingualism and Language Contact

A common parlance in language studies is the reality of change in all aspects of its investigation – phonology, morphology, syntax, grammar, etc. These changes may be a function of the interplay of factors that can be related to the use of language in different situations. This is because man cannot exist in isolation. He must belong to a society to which he contributes ideas in his language. In this regard, Ghosh (1972:234) argues that: A social man cannot live in isolation; he must contribute to and communicate with the society he lives in. He must speak, work...

Thus, a study of language or language contact would not be separated from a study of both the speakers and the society in which they exist. The contact of languages therefore presupposes the contact of the speakers. In essence, language contact basically recognizes the contact of the different speakers of different languages and the resultant effects of such interaction.

In examining language contact therefore, one must look at the ultimate or resultant effect of it, which is bilingualism. The word 'bilingual' primarily describes someone with the ability to speak two languages. According to Li Wei (2000:7), the term can also be taken to include the many people in the world who have varying degrees of proficiency in more than two languages, which they may use interchangeably. Again, the language behaviour of the speakers of the different languages in contact is also the focus of a study of language contact. This is in line with Weinreich's (1968) view that: "The bilingual individual is the ultimate locus of contact."

There has been in linguistics, a systematic study of language contact and bilingualism. This is because according to Sankoff (2001: 638) "language contact is part of the social fabric of everyday life for hundreds of millions of people, the world over". This phenomenon has attracted so much attention that it has been assigned a field of study known as "contact linguistics."

Despite all the previous research, there was before Weinreich (1953), no systematized theory of language contact.

Moreover, the work of Thomason and Kaufman (1988) has given much impetus to research in language contact. Studying a wide variety of contact phenomena, they (Thomason and Kaufman) attempted to lay the foundations for both a typology of contact outcomes and a theoretical framework for analyzing such outcomes. Thus, the field of contact linguistics has come a long way in providing useful analytical frameworks for the understanding of global-scale issues in language, from establishing the nature of lexical borrowing, transfer, interference, to analysing the linguistic contacts of classical languages, inter-ethnic contacts, language conflicts, among other directions.

3.2.2. Bilingualism: Typologies

Bilingualism as a consequence of language contact has been variously defined by many scholars as we noted earlier. Because bilingualism does not have a universally accepted comprehensive definition, scholars have considered the typology levels and degrees of bilingualism. Typologies basically present us with descriptive labels for the content of the bilingual's competence, and the variety of social functions to which bilingual behaviour is

usually applied. To this end, we shall now examine two sets of typologies put forward by two foremost scholars – Weinreich and Haugen:

Uriel Weinreich (1953)

Weinreich (1953) discussed three types of bilingualism in terms of the ways in which it was thought that the concepts of a language were encoded in the individual's brain. These types according to him are: the *coordinate*, *compound* and *subordinate bilingual*.

The *coordinate bilingual* acquires the two languages just like the native speakers of each language. In other words, "he/she performs like a first language speaker in both languages at all levels" (Dadzie, 2004: 142). An example of this bilingual is a Nigerian who has acquired both English and his native language for instance, Hausa, in such a way that he can be mistaken as an English man when he speaks English; and when he switches to his native language, he speaks it well with the same ability. This type of speaker is called a "perfect bilingual." He is also referred to as an *ambilingual* by Halliday, Mckintosh and Strevens (1970). The *ambilingual* is capable of functioning equally in either of his languages in all domains of activity without any traces of the one language in his use of the other. This kind of bilingual is not commonly found.

Weinreich's second typology is the *compound bilingual*. The compound bilingual does not function like a native speaker in either of the languages; "the two languages are sourced from the same reference" and they therefore serve principally to express the same background and culture. This is common with children who are exposed to two languages at the same time especially those whose parents do not, share the same first language.

The third typology is the *subordinate bilingual* who is proficient in his first language and learns the second language in order to meet his other communicative needs. Most Nigerians are in this category. There is usually a heavy interference of the native language on English. This results in transliteration such as: "I hear the smell of pepper"
This is a literal or direct translation from the mechanism of the first language.

Eina Haugen (1983)

Haugen (1983) gave a different classification of bilingualism from what Weinreich explained. He (Haugen) identified the *supplementary*, *complementary* and *replacive bilingual*.

The *supplementary bilingual* is one who makes use of the second language occasionally. It may be for travel or tourist purposes. A good example is a Yoruba corps member going to serve in the North where the predominant language is Hausa. All he/she needs to learn is the rudiments of the language and pleasantries so that he/she will not feel completely left

out. As Dadzie (2004: 146) puts it: "what is done here is simply to tailor the approach to the needs of the individual, based on his reason for the acquisition of the language. This type of acquisition has its own strategies for the learning and teaching of language and may just be acquired for a period of time only.

On the other hand, the *complementary bilingual* is born out of the need to acquire another language, say for education, advancement in career or to increase one's status. In most cases, the language is imposed. This is the case for individuals who have their mother tongue and first language in Yoruba/Hausa/Igbo but now have to learn the English language in school as a means of communicating across ethnic boundaries. The former colonies of both the British and the French play a dominant role in this typology. In Nigeria for example, English is used for official purposes while the four hundred and fifty or more native languages are relegated to the homes. But given the diverse ethno-linguistic background of the people, the imposed language serves as a unifying force since it is not the language of any of the language groups in the country.

The *replacive bilingual* occurs in a situation of *language decay* and *language death* when the second language takes over all the functions of the first language. In this case, the first language is not passed down to successive generations but is gradually and completely abandoned until it dies off. A good example is an African-American with a Nigerian origin who has lost all traces of his/her mother-tongue that may have been spoken by grandparents or parents.

3.2.3. Who is a Bilingual?

Now that we have explored the nature of bilingualism, and the typologies which have been proposed in describing the linguistic competence of bilinguals, it is necessary to give some thought to some additional criteria which may be used in describing a bilingual.

Bilingual behaviour has prevailed consistently in many aspects of social life across space and time, such that its communicative functions can now be said to transcend the scope of these formal typologies. Li Wei (2000:6) presents an interesting list of additional types of bilingualism in the form of dichotomies or lexical oppositions, which throw more light on the description of a bilingual's competence. Some of these are: *minimal/ maximal bilingual*, *early/late bilingual*, *overt/covert bilingual*, *additive/subtractive bilingual*, *horizontal/ vertical bilingual*, *subordinate/coordinate bilingual*, *primary/secondary bilingual*, *active/dormant bilingual*, among other pairs. In this regard, bilingual competence in contemporary life may be described by several types and categories, some with overlapping features, but certainly representing trends in the social applications of bilingualism in social life.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain the idea of language typologies with reference to the works of Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1983)

3.3 Bilingualism: The Nigerian Experience

Bilingualism and multilingualism are undeniable linguistic situations in Nigeria. Most Nigerians are either bilingual or multilingual. The linguistic situation in Nigeria is complex with over four hundred and fifty (450) languages (*Ethnologue*, 2000) and more than one thousand (1000) dialects spoken by a population of over 140 million people. Less than 30% of these languages have their orthography, primers, elaboration of functions, etc. as compared to English language. Nigeria is essentially a multilingual society which has a hierarchical system of language classification. For example, we have class one, two and three languages (Brann, 1986).

Class One Languages: These are known as “decamillonnaire language(s)” and also referred to as "demolects". This means languages spoken by more than ten million people. This class is made up of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba languages.

Class Two Languages: These are sometimes referred to as "millionaire" and "choralects". They are languages spoken by more than one million people. Example include: Tiv, Efik, Edo, Ijaw, Nupe, among others.

Class Three Languages: They are languages spoken by more than one hundred thousand people e.g. Ishan, Isoko, Urhobo, Ika, and others.

Minority Languages: These are languages spoken by less than one hundred thousand people. Examples include: Marda in the North, Akoko in Edo State, and others.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Briefly explain the categories of Nigerian languages.

3.4 Bilingualism, Multilingualism and Language Choice

Bilingualism/Multilingualism is widespread in Nigeria as each state has at least more than two languages used simultaneously. However, it is more pronounced in the southern states such as Rivers, Cross River, Delta and Edo. In these states, one language may be used for intra-group communication to the exclusion of others.

In everyday inter-personal contact situations, this 'elevated' language is not imposed as a second language on speakers of other languages, but it usually acts as a third language chosen as the medium for inter-ethnic communication. As a rule, it is normally the dominant language of the district that is so elevated. This is the case in Cross River State

where Efik, (which is in fact a dialect of Ibibio), is the language of communication among other ethnic groups.

Furthermore, we observe some instances where a language may have a geographically well-defined area of influence based partly either on numerical strength or the historical significance of the ethnic group using the language. The prolonged use of such languages as local "lingual francas" may lead to *acculturation* and *language shift*, for they may play defined complementary roles among the minority groups inhabiting the geographical area. Old Bendel State (now Edo and Delta) provides us with a good example. Here, Edo language plays the leading role in Benin while other languages like Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ishan, Isoko, Igbo, etc. rather than competing for supremacy, complement Edo through cooperation and acculturation. There is also a case where a language, instead of waxing stronger and unifying an otherwise multilingual society, disintegrates when its dialects become full-fledged languages, such that mutual intelligibility no longer exists among its speakers. When this happens, the complexity of the multilingual society deepens because it will spread from the leading language to the emerging ones. Ijo (Ijaw), a leading language in River State, provides a good illustration of the point mentioned above.

In this regard, Williamson (1983: 16-28) argues that:

“Although Ijaw is often referred to as a single language with different dialects, the degree of difference between the groups is really beyond the realm of dialect. Speakers of Eastern Ijaw have difficulty understanding Nembe, although Nembe speakers can understand them considerably. Nembe speakers understand Southern Izon dialect but this is not Northern or western ones: speakers of Bisens and Okordia learn Kolokuma for wider communication. But there is no one form accepted as a standard language by all Ijaw speakers. It is therefore more appropriate to speak of a language cluster than a language.”

This type of language situation is widespread in most multilingual states in Nigeria. With this diversity of languages, coupled with the presence of foreign languages such as English, French and Arabic, Nigeria as a political entity constitutionally recognizes the languages in the following order:

Constitutionally recognized official languages:

These are languages of government as stated in the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions. They are English, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

Official languages as recognized by Public (governmental) policy but not the constitution:

French was declared an official language by the 1998 National Language Policy.

State government recognized official language:

An example is Kanuri, a language recognized by the Bantu state legislature as the state's official language (Awonusi, 2012 Web).

English however occupies a dominant position among all these languages, despite any constitutional provision elevating the native languages. Thus, Nigerians are expected to be bilinguals in English and at least one Nigerian language. Right from the primary school level therefore, the Nigerian child is already being prepared, taught and instructed to be able to communicate in English and his/her native language or language of his/her immediate environment. This trend continues till the secondary level where he/she is expected to have acquired some competence in English and one or two Nigerian languages. Thus, in the senior secondary examination, he/she will sit for English and one major Nigerian language from Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba along with other subjects. How the teaching/speaking of the native language(s) affects his/her performance in English positively or negatively or both is a matter of individual and societal factors.

Self –Assessment Exercise 3.4

Assess the functions of English in bilingual and multilingual communication.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Language contact phenomena are interestingly wide-ranging and complex in their unravelling of the social implications of language use among different in groups, and in varying kinds of speech communities. More crucially, we must understand the socio-economic and socio-political ramifications of language contact, in terms of how it sheds light on global-scale issues like language consciousness, language identities, ethnicity, language conflict, language planning, among other areas. Specifically, we have attempted, in this Unit, to present the most relevant aspects of language contact which align with the Nigerian experience.

5.0 SUMMARY

This Unit has focused on aspects of contact linguistics which explore the scope of sociolinguistics on a more global scale. Our study of language contact has provided us with interesting insights to the range of studies which may be carried out in this field, and the implications for the social manifestations of language, from one place to another. A major point to note about the discussion of language contact issues is that it present various methodologies which may be applied to the analysis of language at both micro and macro levels.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain what you understand by Language Contact and discuss its social manifestations.

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UNIT 2

LANGUAGE PLANNING

CONTENT

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3.1.2. The Process of Language Planning

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Language Maintenance, Language Shift, Language Death and
Language Displacement

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UNIT 2

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most striking feature of multilingual societies worldwide is the fact that languages are not equal. Thus, the principle of majority versus minority languages comes to the fore as language policies may favour one language group over others. In this unit, we shall examine the principle of language planning and the process of its application to society; multilingualism and its social implications.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- a) Understand what language planning means.
- b) Understand the motivation for language planning.
- c) Understand how multilingualism works in modern society.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Language Planning

The term 'language planning' was introduced by American linguist, Eina Haugen in the late 1950s to refer to all conscious efforts aimed at changing the linguistic behaviour of a speech community (Mesthrie et al, 2000). It may involve a process of changing a word to changing a whole language. The term thus describes measures taken by official agencies to influence the use of one or more languages in a particular speech community. American linguist, Joshua Fishman (1987) defined language planning as "the authoritative allocation of resources toward the attainment of language status and corpus goals, whether in connection with new functions that are aspired to, or in connection with old functions that need to be discharged more adequately." Language planning has four major types:

i) *Status planning*, concerned with the social standing, or status, of a language. It focuses on efforts to change the uses and functions of a language in a particular society. Activities in status planning include the allocation of new functions ('official language', 'medium of instruction', etc.) in a given society. Language planning establishes varying functions to languages, such as: *official language, provincial language, language of wider communication, international language, educational language, language as school subject, language of religion, literary language, language of the mass media, work place language, etc.*

ii) *Corpus planning* (concerned with the internal structure of a language. Typical activities of corpus planning include devising a writing system for the spoken form a language; initiating spelling reforms; and establishing new coinages; and the publication of grammar

books. In this regard, the central focus of corpus planning is language standardization, a process which involves the creation and establishment of a uniform linguistic norm.

iii) *Language-in-education*, focusing on learning; and

iv) *Prestige planning*, dealing with the image conferred on the language user by a specific language.

Status planning and corpus planning are the two dominant types of language planning. Based on its sociolinguistic dimensions, language planning may occur at both the micro (the community) level and macro level (the state).

3.1.1 Stages in Corpus Planning

With regard to corpus planning, degree of standardization differs from one language to another, giving rise to different types or stages of standardization. These are highlighted below:

- a) *Unstandardized oral language*: This is a language for which no writing system has been devised. Examples are Galla in Ethiopia and Phuthi in Lesotho.
- b) *Partly Standardized or unstandardized written language*: Such languages are characterized by high degrees of variation in the morphological and syntactic systems. They are mainly used in primary education. Most American –Indian (Amerindian) languages fall in this category.
- c) *Young Standard Language*: This is a language which is used mainly in administration and education, but not considered fit for use in science and technology at tertiary or research level. Examples of such languages are: Luganda in Uganda, Xhosa in South Africa and Basque in France/Spain, among others.
- d) *Archaic Standard Language*: These are languages which were widely used and favored in pre-industrial period. But they lack adequate vocabulary and registers for modern-day use, especially in science and technology. Examples are classical Latin, classical Greek, and classical Hebrew.
- e) *Mature Modern Standard Language*: This category includes languages which are widely used in all forms of communication, including science and technology. at tertiary level. Most modern languages are found in this group, such as English, French, German, Danish, modern Hebrew, among others. (Mesthrie et al, 2000)

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain the major stages in language planning

3.1.2. The Process of Language Planning

A framework for the description of language planning process is proposed by Haugen (1966). The framework outlines four stages, which may not necessarily be sequential. These are:

1. Selection
2. Codification
3. Implementation
4. Elaboration

Let us discuss these stages briefly.

3.1.2.1 Selection: This involves making a choice of the specific language variety which needs to fulfil certain functions in a particular society. Usually, the most prestigious dialect is chosen. Choosing certain linguistic forms over others for promotion to the level of the 'norm' is the basis of language planning. In this regard, language planning serves the purpose of a normative response to language diversity (Mesthrie et al, 2000: 388).

3.1.2.2. Codification: This is the process of creating a linguistic standard or norm for a selected linguistic code. It is commonly divided into three stages; i) *graphisation* (developing an orthography or writing system); *grammatication* (establishing rules/norms of grammar); and *lexicalization* (identifying the vocabulary).

Furthermore, *graphisation* of a previously unwritten language involves many important decisions about which writing system to select, adopt or whether a new one should be created. It may also involve revising an existing writing system, as was the case of non-Russian languages in the former Soviet Union which were devised in the 1930s based on the Russian Cyrillic alphabet.

Grammatication is the aspect of language planning which involves making decisions about which forms will belong to the new standard, thereby reducing variations in syntax and morphology. A good example is the verbal ending in the third person singular (*she likes food* versus *she like food*) which is variable in many spoken varieties. In standard English however, the ending *-s* (*she likes food*) is obligatory, and does not admit variations.

Lexicalisation: This process involves the selection and publication of an appropriate vocabulary for the selected variety. It is worth noting that lexicalisation is often visited by puristic tendencies whereby words of foreign origin are excluded from the new vocabulary. A good example is what happened during the standardization of Hindi in India. Many commonly used words from languages like Persian, English and other languages were replaced. Instead, they included borrowings and adaptations from classical Sanskrit, India's ancient language (Coulmas, 1989:11)

Codification is the exclusive job of language Academies, (as in the case of French and Basque). But recent instances have shown that it may also be the achievement of individuals. The typical products of codification are: orthography, grammar books, and dictionaries.

3.1.2.3 Implementation: As the term implies, this is the stage where all the decisions made in the first two stages – Selection and Codification- are brought to fruition. Implementation involves book publishing, production of pamphlets, newspapers, textbooks. These are all produced in the new codified standard, as well as being introduced in new domains, especially in the educational system. It is important to note that Implementation is normally done by the state, unlike selection and codification which are handled by professionals in the fields. Thus, it may involve some legal enforcement. Implementation may also involve marketing techniques and advertisement to promote the use of educational publications; awards for authors and language incentives for teachers and civil servants. (see Haugen 1983; Cooper, 1989).

3.1.2.4 Elaboration: This process is often referred to as *modernization*. It has to do with the stylistic development of a codified language that meets the communicative demands of contemporary life and technology. The main features of elaboration is thus the production and dissemination of new terms or vocabulary items. There is often the need to employ different strategies of lexical enrichment for this process. A good example is Hausa, an Afro-Asiatic language, spoken by approximately 50 million people in West Africa. Hausa characteristically uses three stages of elaboration: borrowing (from Arabic or English), semantic extension and creation of new terms (neologism).

Mesthrie et al, (2000:393) have noted that it is not easy to relate the four dimensions of language planning (status, corpus, prestige and acquisition) directly to these four stages in the language planning process. However, Haugen (1987), observes that codification and elaboration can be identified as aspects of *corpus planning*; while the dimensions of status, prestige and acquisition planning (education) may be related to the practices of selection and implementation.

Generally, the aim of both models is to describe ‘what language planners do’. How they arrive at their decisions is another topic entirely.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.1

Explain the stages in the language planning process.

3.1.3. Social Motivations for Language Planning

Language planning, and the subsequent policy that arise from it, normally arise out of socio-political situations. For example, in multilingual communities where speakers of different languages compete for the allocation of resources. It also arises in situations

where certain linguistic communities are denied their basic rights, simply because they belong to minority groups. Clyne (2004) observes that when the goal of language planning is to promote multilingualism, the motivations may be:

- a) Social- to promote equity for all groups;
- b) Cultural – to facilitate cultural maintenance;
- c) Political – to ensure the participation of all groups, and/or gain their electoral support.
- d) Economic – to be able to harness language assets to the advantage of the country's balance of payments. (p.304)

Michael Clyne (2000:304) cites some examples from multilingual African countries where English is chosen as an official language for specific reasons. In the case of Namibia, which had two prior official languages - Afrikaans and German- the choice of English as the sole official language has to do with the multiplicity of African ethnic languages in use in that setting. This made it impossible for any of the ethnic languages to be an official language.

In Singapore, the choice of English as the main official language in the midst of three other official languages – Mandarin, Malay and Tamil- was informed by the relatively higher status of English as the language of interethnic and intercultural communication. Also, in Canada, the declaration of “official bilingualism” is intended to promote the balance between the two contending languages – English and French.

Linguists have however argued that the declaration of an “official language” will usually have the effect of undermining other languages. It turns out that the ‘balance’ is in favour of English, based on economic and political motivations.

The pioneer efforts at language planning were mainly motivated by colonization and its consequences. After the Second World War, many nations which emerged from colonial empires faced the challenge of what language to adopt as official language. They needed to make decisions on what language(s) to designate as official, to be used in both political and social arenas. Thus, the task of language planning was to promote the desire of the new nations to symbolize their identity. This was to be achieved by giving official status to their indigenous language(s) Kaplan 1990: 4)

Contemporary language planning however has been motivated by a new set of challenges. Social changes occasioned by political upheavals like globalization, rising poverty and refugees populations caused by wars. As a result of widespread linguistic diversity, language planning has come to be aligned with balancing internal linguistic diversity with external issues, such as those caused by immigration. In addition, language planning became necessary as a result of colonial policies which were focused more on strengthening English than promoting the social reality of multilingualism.

Self- Assessment Exercise

Briefly discuss the social motivations for language planning.

3.2 Multilingualism

Our discussion in the previous section has outlined the significance of multilingualism in language planning in many countries of the world. The term ‘multilingualism’ may be used to refer to either the use of many languages, or the competence of the individual, or to the language situation in a particular nation or society. Clyne (2000) however observes multilingualism is usually subsumed under bilingualism at the individual level. The reason may not be far-fetched, for while it is possible to find more bilinguals than monolinguals in the world, it is hardly likely that one will find more multilinguals than bilinguals.

It is equally unrealistic to come across what Clyne calls “normative definitions” which describe bilinguals and multilinguals as possessing equal competence. A common definition of multilingualism, according to Clyne, would be “the use of more than one language”, or “competence in more than one language.”

The study of multilingualism entails the study of the language systems in contact, the functions of the languages, the linguistic groups which are in constant interaction, and the speech of the people who use more than one language. It is necessary to see all these as components of a continuous language system. Based on the multiple aspects of language that naturally come with studies in multilingualism, a number of paradigms have been introduced into the field. They provide insights into the kinds of studies which may be considered crucial aspects of the field. They are highlighted below:

- a) *The language contact paradigm*: This focuses on “language as a system” and has been in multilingualism studies to include the documentation of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors. This paradigm embraces the processes of language contact and interactional patterns (see Weinreich, 1953; Haugen, 1956; Gumperx, 1976; Giles et al, 1977, Neustupny, 1985).
- b) *The language shift paradigm*: This deals with language use and its domains, explanations of situational or general shifts in language (see Fishman, 1966,1985,1991; Veltman,1983).
- c) *The language death paradigm*: This exhibits systemic overlap with language shift. However, the object of study is usually languages which are not represented elsewhere, such as Aboriginal languages. Specifically, *language death* focuses on the changing grammar of certain languages in the last stage of existence. (see Dorian, 1977, 1981; Dressler)
- d) *The language attrition paradigm*: This has to do with measuring the loss of language skills in a speaker’s first language. This is frequently studied, and also investigates the limitations in the retention of such languages.

Self-Assessment Exercise

What is Multilingualism? Briefly outline its salient research directions.

3.2.1. Language choice in multilingual settings

Multilinguals are language speakers who either belong to more than one language group; or function in more than one language group. Linguists have noted that often, the use of two or more languages would depend on the need for these different languages. The most prominent examples are observed in whole societies exhibiting functional distribution between the contending languages or distinct language varieties.

Fishman (1977) established certain criteria for determining multilinguals' choice of language: These are: *interlocutor, role relationship, domain, topic, venue, channel, type of interaction, and Phatic function*. Clyne (2000) provides some insights:

Let us examine these in some detail:

- a) *Interlocutors*: These are the participants in the speech event. They may be identified by names or numbers. Interlocutors influence language choice in significant ways. The age of an interlocutor may influence language choice. Interlocutors who are monolingual will usually cause a code-switch, even if they are passive participants in the conversation.
- b) *Role relationships*: When the same interlocutors have multiple relationships, the language choice may be governed by the role relationships (Clyne, 1991, 2000).
- c) *Domain*: This is the contextualized sphere of communication (home, office, school, church, etc.). The home domain is usually the one that survives last in a minority language, but sometimes, it may be other factors, such as religion or community/group. When there are several languages, their use may also be based on domain. A limitation on the use of a language may mean an impoverishment of the language (such as limited vocabulary), just as a limitation on the use of a language in a home domain detracts from its liveliness.
- d) *Topic*: This overlaps slightly with domain. Different types of experience associated with the two languages make some speakers switch languages to talk about personal issues (job, leisure, school, etc.)
- e) *Venue*: Certain buildings or other venues (street, garden, home) are associated with a more public or a more private domain which may bring about a switch in language.
- f) *Type of interaction*: Interaction types (e.g. business, church) will determine domain choice between private (story-telling, jokes and anecdotes) or public (e.g. office).
- g) *Channel of communication*: Speakers tend to use a different language for specific modes of communication, e.g. telephone conversation versus face-to—face. In other case, some will speak one language to each other but write in another language. (Clyne, 1991)
- h) *Phatic function*: The use of a particular language may indicate an attempt to create a distinct effect, e.g. drama (Heller, 1998; Appel & Muysken, 1987).

Self-Assessment Exercise

Give an account of Fishman (1977) criteria for determining language choice in multilingual settings.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our discussion of multilingualism has presented you with adequate insights into the way it is structured within the ambit of contact linguistics. This Unit provides useful guidance to the various social parameters which account for the diverse explanations of language choice, as well as the interconnections of the language features as well.

4.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you have been presented with insights into the dynamics of language planning, and the social motivations for language planning. You have also learned considerably about the processes and stages of language planning. Multilingualism as a major consequence of language contact has been explained, with meaningful insights into its significance for the understanding of language behavior in a complex social setting.

5.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Attempt a detailed discussion of either language planning or multilingualism.

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UNIT 3

LANGUAGE POLICY

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UNIT 3

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we shall explore the topic of language policy, which represents the decisions which normally follow the process of language planning. Language policy is essentially the actions taken by government either officially through legislation, the legal process (court decision) or policy toward determining how languages are used by members of a particular society. It usually stipulates the language skills to be cultivated in order to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or group to use and maintain languages.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

- a) Know what language policy is all about.
- b) Understand the importance of language policy.
- c) Explain the types of language policy

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Language Policy

Language policy is essentially an interdisciplinary academic field, which many scholars like Joshua Fishman consider part of sociolinguistics. For scholars like Robert Kaplan and Bernard Spolsky however, language policy is best considered a branch of applied linguistics. The field was formerly known as language planning and occupied a related position to fields like language education, language ideology and language revitalization. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) define a language policy as “a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, group or system (p.xi).

The traditional scope of language policy concern is mainly concerned with language regulation. This is basically about what processes are favoured by a particular government, either officially through legislation, court decisions or policy, in order to determine how languages are used in that state or country. Such regulations also normally extend to establishing procedures that determine how citizens may cultivate language skills to meet national priorities; or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and maintain languages. Language regulators come in the form of language academies, language standardisation boards, or language council, which have the powers to take decisions that are binding on all members of the speech community.

From the above, it becomes clear that the language policy of a speech community tends to be broad in scope. It may however be categorized into three components, according to Spolsky (2004:15):

- a) The community's language practices – the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that constitute its linguistic repertoire;
- b) The community's language beliefs or ideology; that is, the members' beliefs about language and language use; and
- c) Any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning, or management.

3.2. Language Policy: Political Considerations

A foremost sociologist, Joshua Fishman, has identified three major types of policy, each labelled A, B, and C respectively (Fishman, 1971). All three types rely on the notion of a 'Great Tradition' and its relationship to the twin goals of Nationalism and Nationism. For the purpose of clarity, let us first examine the concept of a 'Great Tradition' and its influence on the planning decisions of a government or nation.

According to Fishman (1971), a Great Tradition may be defined in terms of the assumed existence of a set of cultural features - law, government, religion, history - which are shared by the nation and can serve to integrate the members of the state into a cohesive body. Such a Great Tradition is almost certain to have as one of its manifestations and its major vehicle of expression, a language and frequently a literature, perhaps purely oral, which may for this reason commend itself as an appropriate choice for National Language or Official Language.

This Unit presents mostly arguments and insights on language policy as documented in the works of authors in the field. To begin with, let us examine some of the critical terminologies in the discourse of language policy which have been widely documented. (Adegbija, 2008; Cooper, 1989; Lihani, 1991; Ridler, 1993).

3.2.1 Nationalism and Nationism

It has been suggested (Fishman, 1971) that nations, particularly but not exclusively the 'developing nations' of the Third World, are faced by the requirements of satisfying the two potentially conflicting needs of nationalism and nationism - sociocultural and political integration respectively. Nationalism suggests that a 'new' nation is involved in a search for its own 'ethnic identity' as it attempts to overcome local, tribal, religious and other communal loyalties which clash with loyalty to the state. In practical terms, Nigeria needs to make her peoples feel Nigerian first and then Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo or Efik second. Similarly, the European Economic Committee has to aim at making the member nations feel 'European' first and British, French or Danish second.

Nationalism, on the other hand, constitutes the macro-aspect of what we have been considering earlier within the context of individual and small-group interaction: solidarity. At this macro-level, national solidarity is typically expressed by such outward signs as a national flag, anthem and perhaps a national language.

Nationism: simultaneous with the need to achieve authenticity as a united people, the government of a new state has to arrive at operational efficiency - central and local government must function without undue delay and waste, health and education services must be provided for the citizens, commerce and communications must be fostered within the state and with its neighbours. The outward signs of nationism will be seen in state-operated postal, telegraphic and telephone services, transport, education, finance, justice and so forth. Crucial to the working of such complex structure is a national language which can act as the vehicle of communication between the government and the people and between the government and other institutions outside the state. Writing on the distinction between nation and nationality, Kroeber (1963) asserts:.. .. in nationalities and ethnic units, language is always a factor, and often the basic one' (Kroeber, 1963: 36.).

3.2.2 National and Official Languages

The terms 'national' and 'official' language are frequently used in a rather loose way while many writers on language planning and most of the planners themselves tend to use the terms as synonyms. Following Fishman (1971: 32), we may retain the term 'national language' for the code(s) chosen for the achievement of the goal of nationalism, in contrast with the 'official' which has the nationism function. It is worth noting that in the Americas, parts of Asia and Africa and most of Europe, the national and official languages are one and the same entity, e.g. English in U.K., U.S.A., Australia, Asia. But the choice of different languages for the two roles is far more common in the Third World and this is exemplified by quite a range of alternative policies.

3.2.3. Endo-and Exo-glossia

Linguistic heterogeneity is found in different nations but heterogeneity in itself may well be a less important factor than the source of the language(s) chosen as national or official by a state. A more revealing approach might be to contrast those nations in which the national, official or national-official languages are indigenous, with those in which they are not. Clearly 'indigenous' and 'imported' are not all-or-none categories and therefore need to be seen as terminal points on the now familiar 'continuum'. Kloss has coined a neat pair of terms - endo-glossic and exoglossic - to distinguish the choice of an indigenous language from that of an external language for some particular formal function.

Given that a state need not be wholly endo- or wholly exo-glossic in its linguistic make-up and that goals and policies can and do change, we should expect to find 'mixed' situation and accept that our description is synchronic, in the classic sense. We shall isolate three types of state and provide examples of each in which English has some key function.

3.2.4 Endoglossic States

The 'purest' form of endoglossia can be found in states in which the national-official language (NOL) is the mother tongue of the vast majority of the population and in which the only linguistic problems are those which arise in relation to the rights of indigenous minorities and immigrants; and those whose variety of the NOL is non-standard. The United Kingdom provides a clear example: English is the NOL but there are indigenous linguistic minorities - the Welsh and the Gaelic-speaking Scots in particular, immigrants, Eastern European refugees, Southern-European, Asian and Caribbean migrant workers - and social and regional dialects of longstanding.

Another type of endoglossia is seen in states in which the NOL is the LI of a number of the citizens, but not necessarily a majority, accepted by a general consensus - English in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

3.2.5. Exoglossic States

Typical of the ex-colonies of Britain and France in Africa is the choice of an exoglossic solution to language problems. Such states are often extremely linguistically heterogeneous — large numbers of non-standard indigenous languages, normally tied closely to specific social and often tribal groups — and, while some tribal languages may have gained wider currency as lingua francas within part or all of the state, few are acceptable as the vehicles of modern government. In such a situation, a common solution is to retain the ex-colonial language as sole NOL but to grant regional official status (ROL) to one or more local languages, e.g. Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, etc.

3.2.6 Mixed States

Between the two extremes of endo- and exo-glossia, commented upon above, lie numbers of states which are part endo-, part exo-, in which the national and official functions are

split between an indigenous and a non-indigenous language . More often than not, such a situation typifies Commonwealth Asia just as clearly as the exoglossic typifies Commonwealth Africa. India provides an extremely clear example and demonstrates the extraordinary problems inherent in such a decision — Hindi as National Official Language, with English as a subsidiary Official and fourteen indigenous languages as Regional Official Language in particular states of the union.

We shall now undertake a survey of the types of language planning decisions which can be made and relate them to the factors we have been discussing so far:

Self-Assessment Exercise 3.2

Explain the major terms in the discussion of language policy

3.3. Types of Language Policies

3.3.1. Type A Policies

According to Fishman (ibid) where the elite has come to the conclusion that there is no available Great Tradition which can be drawn upon to unite the nation, language policy is likely to be directed towards the creation of an exoglossic state. This involves the adoption of the language of the ex-rulers as the National Official Language; an orientation which implies a greater valuation of the achievement of operational efficiency nationalism — than of ethnic authenticity - nationalism.

3.3.2. Type B Policies

Type B policies are decided upon when the elite and in some cases the whole population, are agreed that there does exist a Great Tradition with a related language. An agreement which implies considerable sociocultural and often political unity and hence language policy can, by adopting the language of the Great Tradition as the National Official Language, aim at both goals - nationalism and nationism - simultaneously. In this case, an endoglossic state can be created with considerable hopes of success, since the NOL, being indigenous and accepted by the majority of the population, will serve the goal of nationalism by further uniting an already culturally united community and the goal of nationism by continuing to act as an already acknowledged lingua franca. 'Pure' examples of this policy can be found in Israel, Somalia, Ethiopia and Thailand, while Indonesia, the Philippines and Tanzania appear to be moving from a type A to a type B policy, by abandoning the old 'colonial' language - Dutch, Spanish, English - in favour of the indigenous NOLs - Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog and Swahili respectively.

3.3.3 Type C Policies

While type A policies arise from the belief that no appropriate Great Tradition exists 'and type B from the. belief that one does, type C policies result from the recognition that there are several competing Great Traditions, each with its own social, religious or geographic base and linguistic tradition.

The major problem with a situation of this kind can be seen in balancing the needs of nationalism against regional or sectional nationalisms; and overall national efficiency against existing local political systems. Inevitably, rival elites representing the rival interests will spring up and, if dissatisfied enough, may take steps to take their region out of the federation — to secede and set up their own nation state.

Where sectionalism is further emphasized by physical distance and non-contiguity between the component regions of the state, national unity may well turn out, as it did in Pakistan in 1971, to be impossible to sustain.

Where there are too many Great Traditions, language policy must necessarily aim uncomfortably between the twin goals of nationalism and nationism. The regional, religious, ethnic or social subgroups within the state must be permitted some measure of autonomy but not at the expense of national unity. Some kind of central government must be set up with an efficient medium of national communication but not at the expense of the regional administrations and languages. More often, the dilemma is resolved by the retention of the language of the previous rulers alongside one or more indigenous languages as National Official Language and the adoption of major local languages as ROL, with 'official' status within their own regions. Hence, a type C policy is, in effect, the 'temporary', adoption of a type A policy, tempered by the stated intention of changing to type B as soon as is practicable. The demands that such a policy makes on the citizens of a state are enormous, since the implication is that proficiency in at least two and more probably three, languages is essential for all educated individuals. Indeed, unless a person is fortunate enough to be an LI user either of one of the NOL or a ROL, his learning load will be increased to four.

4.0 CONCLUSION

So far, we have presented here some of the arguments put forward by authors regarding the political considerations on language policy. We have seen how far language policy, may be used to interpret and implement language planning. The typologies of language policy, as presented by authors, also help us to further understand the socio-political dynamics of this process.

5.0 SUMMARY

Language planning is particularly concerned with the policies adopted in the achievement of major social goals in linguistically heterogeneous nations. Heterogeneity of language can be seen-to relate closely to the attainment of the ends of nationalism and nationism and

to be a key factor in the choice of indigenous or non-indigenous languages for official functions within the state. The crucial difference between the role of English, for example, in Africa, in contrast with its role in Asia can be traced, without much difficulty, to the availability in the second case and the lack in the first, of an acceptable Great Tradition manifested in an accepted native language which can be drawn upon to unify the state at both the socio-cultural and political level.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the importance of language policy in contemporary society.

7.0 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING

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