Language Varieties—Standard and Non-standard Languages, Formal and Informal Languages

Study Material for L1-English form Semester I General CBCS

Sandip Chatterjee

State-aided College Teacher, Dept. of English, Abhedananda Mahavidyalaya

1. **"The English" or "Many English Languages"?**

In the previous chapter we did learn how language evolved as a tool for communication and how human language is markedly different from the modes of communication used by animals. In the chapters to come, several other aspects of language will be learnt by us. But, as this course (Core Course / L$_1$-1) is designed to be on the English language, the previous and all the subsequent chapters are based on several aspects of the English language, the language which perhaps frightens us more than ghosts. However, we know from our already acquired knowledge of the English grammar that the definite article "the" specifies the English language as something one and unique, just as the use of "the" before Taj Mahal gives it a "one and only" status. But the fact is that there is nothing called "the English language"; rather, there are *many English languages*. Let us put it simply by giving example of our very own Bangla. We know that Bangla is one language. But, we also find that the Bangla we use at the informal setting of home sounds different from the Bangla used in the formal setting of a school, a college, a radio or TV news channel or a government office. We will also find that the Bangla we speak is also different from the Bangla we write in the answerscripts in our examinations. If we take a tour of our state,

West Bengal, and move gradually north, we will find that the Bangla spoken in the west of our state is vastly different from the Bangla spoken in Kolkata and its surroundings; or, the Bangla spoken in Murshidabad differs a lot from the Bangla used in the north of West Bengal. If we look at the neighbouring country Bangladesh, we will find that the Bangla spoken there is different from the Bangla generally spoken in West Bengal. But, the fun is that we, the Bangla-speakers, understand each other while we speak Bangla among ourselves. This is called **mutual intelligibility**. It will be discussed later on.

So, we find that there are many Bangla languages instead of the one and only "the Bangla language." Now let us look into the language of our discussion, the English language. If we ever visit an English family living in London, we will find that the English language which the members of the family are using among themselves is starkly different from the English language they are using outside. George Bernard Shaw, in his characteristic witty style, notes this phenomenon in his essay *Spoken English and Broken English*:

> Suppose I forget to wind my watch, and it stops, I have to ask somebody to tell me the time. If I ask a stranger, I say "What o'clock is it?" The stranger hears every syllable distinctly. But if I ask my wife, all she hears is "cloxst." That is good enough for her; but it would not be good enough for you. So I am speaking to you now much carefully than I speak to her; but please don't tell her.

He also says that no two British speakers speak the English language alike. If we come down to London streets and visit the London slums, we will find a special kind of English, the Cockney English, spoken by the London lower class. If we take a tour of the world and go to places where English is spoken, we will find so many varieties of the English language: the American English, the Canadian English, the Indian English, the Australian English, and so on. Suppose we hear an

Australian cricketer giving an interview on television. If we study him in details, we will find that his English is different from that of an English cricketer or an Indian cricketer. But, the fact is that, all these cricketers are speaking English. If we study ourselves, we will find that the English we use while sending text messages over mobile phones is starkly different from a text message received from an agency like the government. The English written in a History textbook is different from the English written in a Biology textbook, or the English written in an English poem is different from the English spoken by a news reader in a television or radio news channel.

What we must thus understand is that there is nothing called one language. The language we refer to is actually its so many varieties taken together. Nobody can tell which variety is good or which is bad. Each of these varieties is functional in its specific social, geographical or professional area. This unique phenomenon of language is studied in a branch of studies called **Sociolinguistics**.

2. Sociolinguistics in the Study of Language Variety

Sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society. It studies how a language functions in several social contexts. It views language as a means of communication which performs a number of sociocultural functions. According to Sociolinguistics, language permits varieties. Before we go detailed into these varieties, let us know certain basic concepts connected with Sociolinguistics. According to Sociolinguistics, when a group of people interact by means of speech and share among themselves a given language or dialect, this group is called a **Speech Community**. A speech community can also share more than one language or dialect. Speakers of Bangla can be held to be belonging to one speech community. Within one speech community

there may be several other speech communities. For example, though speakers of English are a speech community, a number of people using a special variety of English called "Birmingham English" around that particular area called Birmingham in England may be called another speech community. Similarly, people of America using American English are a speech community marked by a distinct group identity given by their language and they belong to the broader speech community of English speakers.

So, we can see that within a speech community, there may be another speech community. This takes us towards our point of discussion in this chapter. The concept of "a language" is therefore broad and heterogeneous, involving within itself so many varieties within a single language. So we may ask ourselves what variety of English we have been studying since our childhood in schools, or what variety of Bangla we have been using while writing our exam papers. The answer is simple. We have been studying a variety of English that is held as a standard in grammar. We have been using a variety of Bangla determined as a standard to be used in academic or literary circle. A language, according is Sociolinguistics, is therefore composed of all the varieties (or a single variety sometimes), which have a substantial similarity in pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar and which are mutually intelligible (i.e., user of one variety can understand the other variety). A **variety**, on the other hand, can be defined as a set of speech patterns within a given language which are sufficiently homogeneous (i.e., of the same nature), which are used widely enough by a speech community to function in all normal contexts of communication, and which are in general mutually intelligible to users of the other set or sets of the same language.

3. Mutual Intelligibility

The term "**mutual intelligibility**" thus refers to the phenomenon of one group of users of a particular language variety understanding (at least for ordinary purposes) the language variety used by another group within the context of the same language. Let us take two varieties of English for example: the Indian English and the American English. Speakers of both these varieties belong to the broader speech community of English speakers, and they do generally understand each other, though many terms of American English are unintelligible to Indian English speakers, and vice versa.

It is not that mutual intelligibility works only in the case of language varieties. Speakers of two distinct languages which have a shared origin can understand each other. For example, Bangla is well-understood by the speakers of Oriya (as we may notice this when we give a tour to Puri), and vice versa. Marathi speakers understand Hindi, while Hindi speakers understand Marathi.

It is also not fixed that varieties of a given language are always mutually intelligible. For example, in China, Mandarin and Cantonese are two varieties of Chinese. Mandarin is used in northern China, in Beijing and surrounding regions, while Cantonese is used in southeastern China. These two varieties share the same base alphabet. But, in the spoken form, they are so widely different that Mandarin speakers cannot understand the speech of a Cantonese speaker. Linguists thus often label these two varieties as two distinct languages.

4. Factors Defining Varieties: Geography, Society and Ethnicity

So far as we have seen, variety is defined by geographical and social factors. There are also other factors which lead to formation of varieties within the context of a language. Let us have a deeper look into this. But, before that, an interesting fact should be noted. Language is a

means of communication which performs certain sociocultural functions at any given point of time. At the same time, language also undergoes development in the course of history. Therefore, the study of language is done in two ways: **Diachronic** study and **Synchronic** study. Diachronic study is a historical study of a given language in which the development of the language over the years is established through research. For example, it studies how a certain word has changed over time from its root, or how a sound has assumed its present pronunciation through time. Synchronic study, on the other hand, examines and describes how a language operates through its own system and laws in a given time. A simple example can be given. The grammar books of English which we have studied so far describe how the English language functions in our own times. However, these grammar books also prescribe the laws of the English language to be followed by us. And that is another matter which is not to be discussed here. Let us return to the main issue. A Diachronic study of many of the languages of today like English, German, Hindi, Italian, Russian and Iranian etc. points to a common ancestor of these languages. A comparative study of a number of core words from these languages reveals that these languages evolved from a common ancestor and share a close kinship among themselves. Most of the languages of Asia and Europe belong to the **Indo-European Family of Languages**, of which Sanskrit is the oldest known language which has retained many of the characteristics of the ancestral original mother language from which the Family was born. When the speakers of the original mother language dispersed (from somewhere in Europe, as language historians think) before the dawn of history (some 5000 years ago) throughout the world, they also carried their mother language with them. In time, the speakers were separated geographically and the mother language they carried also underwent many changes. As a result, several speech communities evolved and gradually they lost all memory of their previous oneness. These speech communities gradually divided into

several other communities, with each community possessing a certain language which evolved from the mother language. Some of these languages survived and some became extinct. A comparison of the vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation of these descendant languages reveals many similarities and thus together are categorized into nine (eight, according to some) families or groups, called the Indo-European Family of languages. The languages belonging to these families show considerable similarity in many respects, showing that their common ancestor evolved into many descendant languages over time as their speakers were distributed geographically over several regions. According to geographical dispersions, these nine families are Indian, Iranian, Armenian, Hellenic, Albanian, Italic, Balto-Slavic, Teutonic and Celtic. The oldest Indian language Sanskrit, along with its several varieties known as Prakrits (the most important of them being Pāli), and our modern day Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi belong to the Indian branch. The Avestan (the language in which the Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrians, was written), the modern Persian and the Afghan language Pushtu belong to the Iranian branch. Armenian, the chief language of the Armenian branch, is found in a small area south of the Caucasus and the eastern end of the Black Sea. In the Hellenic branch we find Greek and its several dialects like the Ionic, the Doric and the Aeolic etc. The languages of the Albanian branch are spoken in the Northwest of Greece on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. In the Italic branch we can find the ancient classical languages like Latin and the modern ones like Italian. Languages of the Balto-Slavic branch (like the Lithuanian and the Russian) are spoken in a vast area in the eastern part of Europe. Languages of the Teutonic or Germanic branch (chief among which are English and German) are spoken over a large area ranging from the Scandinavia to England. French is the principal language belonging to the Celtic branch.

Many words belonging to the languages of the Indo-European family have a common ancestor and are called **cognates**. A chart can be given to show how these languages are related and point towards a common ancestry:

Sanskrit	Avestan	Greek	Latin	English
pita	*pater*	*pateras*	*pater*	*father*
padam	*poda*	*podi*	*pedem*	*foot*
bhratar	*phrater*		*frater*	*brother*

The change in the consonant sounds in these words from one language to another is called **Consonant Shift** and it operates upon the principles of Grimm's Law and Verner's Law. The classical Latin and Sanskrit are similar in grammar in their inflectional system, in which relation between words in a sentence is indicated by inflections or suffixes attached to words.

The case of the Indo-European Family of languages helps us to learn how geographical dispersion acts as the chief factor behind creation of varieties. When speakers of a language disperse to other places, they come across languages of the new regions which influence their own language, gradually making it slightly different from the parent language or the language of the original region from which they dispersed. The social, cultural, political or economic demands of the new regions also give rise to new words, new grammatical structures or even new pronunciations. As a result, new varieties of the parent language evolve. If these varieties evolve further in time, they become completely different from the parent language in future, thus leading to the creation of new languages. But, if these varieties share certain common features which lead to their being classified under one language, and are also mutually intelligible, these varieties are called **Dialects**.

4.1 Dialect

A Dialect is a variety of language distinguished from the other varieties of the parent language or the parent language itself according to region. This is a simplified definition of a dialect, as social class and ethnic identity also give rise to new dialects. Regional, social and ethnic factors combine and intersect in various ways in the creation of dialects.

A **Regional Dialect** is a distinct form of a language spoken in a certain geographical area. If we consider our own Bangla, we will find five principal regional dialects: the Rarhi (spoken in the southern part of West Bengal in the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly, certain parts of Murshidabad and the areas in and around Kolkata), the Bangali (spoken in Tripura and in the Dhaka, Khulna and Barishal areas of Bangladesh), the Varendri (spoken in Malda and South Dinajpur), the Jharkhandi (spoken in Bankura, Purulia, Medinipur, western parts of Birbhum and Burdwan) and the Rajbanshi (spoken in the northernmost districts of West Bengal). We have regional dialects of Hindi like the Banaras dialect and the Meerut dialect. In the case of English, we have to go to Great Britain itself to understand the dialectal varieties. The dialects of English in Great Britain are many, the chief among them being the Cornwall dialect, the Devon dialect, the Somerset, the Dorset, the Gloucestershire, the Oxfordshire, the Shropshire, the Lancashire, the Westmoreland, the Northumberland, the Yorkshire, the Lincolnshire, the Norfolk, and the Sussex dialects. In England, a single shire often comprises as many as three distinct dialectal varieties. When speakers of the same language can easily shift from one dialect of that language to another, they are called **bidialectal**.

Just as boundaries differentiate between two regions in geography, in Sociolinguistics, an **isogloss** refers to the line on a map which marks the boundary between areas in which one particular linguistic item is used or pronounced differently. For example, if a vowel sound is

pronounced differently in two adjoined regions, a line or isogloss is drawn between the two regions. When a number of isoglosses come together in this way, a more solid line, indicating a **dialect boundary**, is drawn.

As we are dealing with the varieties concerned with the language called English, let us note another matter regarding geography as an important factor in the making of varieties. What we consider English is not only spoken in England but also in many other countries. The colonial expansion of the British Empire has taken English to many parts of the world. And wherever English has gone it has assimilated the local linguistic features into itself, has changed itself according to sociocultural demands and has evolved itself into a new variety. The American English, the Canadian English and the Australian English are cases in point. As English is the first language spoken in these countries, linguists often hold that along with the British, the Americans, the Canadians and the Australians are the native speakers of English. Hence, the American English, the Canadian English and the Australian English are held as native varieties, or, to be precise, **native dialects of English**. A brief discussion on the features of the American English will be pertinent here, and it will be done a little later.

But, English is also spoken in many other countries, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, in the countries of West Africa and also in Philippines. The fact is that English is a second language in these regions, usually learnt in the formal settings of schools. The English used in each of these regions has developed certain features which distinguish it from the native varieties. The Indian English, the South Asian English, the West African English are thus **non-native varieties or dialects of English**. While the native varieties further have a wide range of regional and stylistic variations, the non-native varieties have limited number of variations. Further, the native varieties are distinguished from each other mostly at the level of phonetics or

pronunciation. But the non-native varieties exhibit differences from the native in all the three levels of language: phonetic level, lexical level and syntactic level. We should note some interesting features of the Indian English. But, before that, let us go into the world of American English as promised before.

4.1.1 American English

The Americans are given to enormous and even excessive word-formation. Sometimes they coin a new word for an existing British word: *baggage* for the British "luggage," *schedule* for "time-table," *antenna* for "aerial," *gas pedal* for "accelerator," *elevator* for "lift," *railroad* for "railway," and *subway* for "metro" etc. Back formation resulted in making *automate* from "automation" and *to televise* from "television." The Americans have also coined picturesque idiomatic phrases such as *fly off the handle, go-getter*, *bury the hatchet*, *face the music*, *bark up the wrong tree* and *go on the war path* etc. We will find many of these items in the English language we encounter everyday.

The American pronunciation, too, shows certain well-marked difference from English. Words like "dock," "fog" and "hot" are pronounced with a vowel identical in quality with the first vowel in "father." Both word-stress and sentence stress are less forceful and intonation is more level here than in the British English.

The grammar, too, in American English shows difference. Hundreds of words are made through grammatical conversion or functional shift. Americans do not hesitate *to loan*, *to audition* or *to service*. Often they use different prepositions, as in "He lives on Broad Street" instead of "… in Broad Street." They use *dove* as the past participle of "dive" whereas the British

use "dived." They use *cater to* for "cater for" and *Monday through Friday* for "from Monday to Friday."

The Americans also use reductions and changes in the spellings of some words to suit common sense and convenience. Thus *favor*, *honor*, *humor* are used for "favour," "honour" and "humour"; *defense* and *license* for "defence" and "licence." The Americans have replaced "-er" for "-re" as in *center*, *fiber* and *theater* etc. They have reduced one redundant consonant in *traveler* and *jewelry* etc, and introduced *jail* for "gaol" and *program* for "programme."

The differences between the British English and the American English today are lessened by the fact that many of these Americanisms have made their way into English use in a gradually increasing number. The print media, and above all, the information technology, now play the key role in publicizing these Americanisms throughout the world. There was a time when an American writer had to virtually apologize for writing American. But today one cannot do away with such frequently encountered Americanisms like *placate*, *telephone*, *jazz*, *typewriter*, *caucus*, *lynch*, *stunt* and *joy-ride* etc.

4.1.2 Indian English

The Indian English, like its American counterpart, is the product of the modification of the English language. Although this variety of English is often criticized by certain purists as an aberration or an anomaly, many scholars and linguists, and above all, the famous Randolph Quirk have commended it as a vitally significant language, one commanding a great deal of interest. The cause of the "Indianness" of Indian English or its deviation from the native English is the acculturation of a Western language in the linguistically and culturally pluralistic context of the Indian subcontinent

At the level of phonology, there are many deviations in the Indian English that impede intelligibility between an Indian speaker and a native speaker of English. The Indian speakers of English pronounce the initial consonant sounds of the words "fool," "thin" and "then" differently from a speaker of British Received Pronunciation, a standard of pronunciation followed throughout England and the world. An Indian speaker of English would pronounce the final consonant of the word "garage" in the same manner as they would pronounce the first consonant of "jug." The distinction of vowel length is also lost in Indian English. In case of stress and intonation, almost all questions in Indian English are asked with a rising tone, unlike in the British English. The syllable-timed rhythm of the Indian English leads to either the use of unstressed syllables or the use of arbitrary stress.

Grammatical variations, too, are many. It is claimed that Indian English has a tendency towards using complex nouns and verb phrases and rather long sentences. In the phrase level, we find many variations. One such example is the "be+verb+ -ing" construction in Indian English. In such constructions, Indian English speakers violate the restrictions of the British English. In English, the static verbs like "hear" and "see" do not occur in the progressive tenses. A Hindi-Urdu speaker, as he has no such restriction in his mother-tongue structures—*mãi sun rahā hū* and *mãi dekh rahā hū*"— extends his mother tongue structures to Indian English and uses, respectively, "I am listening" and "I am seeing." As articles are absent in most Indian languages, the articles in Indian English are arbitrary. Another characteristic is that of **reduplication** which is the tendency to say the same word twice in a succession. Common examples, such as "he sells different different things," "small small children," "one one piece" are available, even in noted writers. It is used to intensify the effect. The Indian English is famous for forming interrogative constructions without changing the position of the subject and the auxiliary items: as for

example, "What you would like to eat?" or "Really, you are finished?" Tag questions in Indian English sometimes show the mother tongue interference. "It" in all tag questions is common: "You have taken my book, isn't it?" or "He has left, isn't it?"

Lexical variations in Indian English are of various types. The largest number of such variations in vocabulary involves single item transfer from Indian languages into English. Some of these involve relationships such as *mama* and *kaka*, *pisi* and *masi*, since the general English terms *uncle* and *aunt* are vague for the relation-conscious Indians. Other such words include *lathi*, *pardah*, *gherao*, *loot* and so on. It is significant that many of these terms have become incorporated into native English, the most important being *guru*, *avtar*, *pundit*, *Brahmin*, *shanti* and *mantra* etc. The second type may be "**hybridized items**." A hybridized formation comprises two or three lexical items, in which at least one is from an Indian language and the other from English: *lathicharge*, *kumkum-mark*, *goonda ordinance*, *ragmala paintings*, *coolie-hat*, *coconut paysum*, *guru-ridden*, *factory-wallah*, *ahimsa soldier*, *puja festival*, *haldi-invitation* and *rail gadi* etc. Some of these words, known as "**collocations**," such as *dining leaf*, *flower bed*, *sister-sleeper*, *separate-eating*, are exclusively from Indian cultural background lying beyond the ken of the British speakers. Sometimes the Indian English speakers utilize the device of "reduction" of an item from an English phrase, but this often leads to a change in the order of components, e.g., "an address of welcome" of British English becomes *welcome address*; "a bunch of keys" becomes *key-bunch*; "a box of matches" becomes *match-box*; "strength of class" becomes *roll-strength*; "the basis of caste" becomes *caste-basis*. A large number of formations function to describe various types of local items, formations often unintelligible to native English speakers: *alms-taker*, *betel-case*, *dung-cake*, *upper-cloth* and *car-festival* etc.

Thus, the Indian English has acquired an Indian characteristic or "Indianness" which manifests itself in every level of linguistics. In the spoken medium Indian English has by now established itself an important variety of English, maintaining Indian patterns of life, culture and education.

4.2 Sociolect

It is not only geographical regions which make dialects, social class also defines a dialect. A **Social Dialect**, or a **Sociolect**, is a distinct form of a language spoken by members of a specific socioeconomic class. We have working class dialects of English in England. Cockney is a case in point. Though initially restricted to the Cheapside district of London, Cockney, in general, is the language of the London working class or lower class. Cockney has distinct phonetic and grammatical features, making the language unpolished to many hearers. A cockney speaker often uses double negatives, such as in "I don't see nuffink (nothing)" instead of "I don't see anything." The sound of "h" is often dropped in the beginning of a word. Snobby Price, a character in George Bernard Shaw's play *Major Barbara*, says "appiness" instead of "happiness" and "orspittle" instead of "hospital." Snobby Price's dialogue—"No good *jawrin* about it. You're *ony* a jumped-up, jerked-off, *orspittle*-turned-out incurable of an *ole workin* man: who cares about you?"—can be translated into standard English as "No more talking about it. You're only a jumped-up, jerked-off, hospital-turned-out incurable of an old working man: who cares about you?" The italicized expressions in the above dialogue show how Cockney English carries some marked lexical and phonetic innovations. To give a more familiar example, one may note the dialectal difference between the Hindi spoken by newsreaders and the Hindi spoken by slum-dwellers. In certain Bollywood Hindi films, we come across characters from the Mumbai

underworld and Mumbai streets who use a distinct form of Hindi called Tapori, which is an odd mixture of Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati.

4.3 Ethnolect

Ethnicity, or racial identity, also influences dialect-making. An **Ethnolect**, or an **Ethnic Dialect**, is a special variety spoken by a particular ethnic group. Yiddish English, which is historically associated with the speakers of Eastern European Jewish ancestry, is an example. Yiddish, a Germanic language, was originally spoken by the Jews of Central and later Eastern Europe, was written in the Hebrew alphabet and contained a large number of Hebrew words. Later, many of these words came into the English language which they came to use: *chutzpah* (meaning, "bravery"), *dybbuk* (meaning, "ghost"), *glitch* (meaning, "a minor malfunction," also used in English).

5. Factors Defining Varieties: Contact (*Lingua franca,* Pidgin and Creole)

So far we have seen how one language assumes several varieties under the influence of geography, society and ethnicity. Social contact also gives rise to certain varieties which may not descend from one particular language. *Lingua franca*, **Pidgin** and **Creole** are language varieties which develop out of situations in which people of several language communities come together socially for various purposes. Whereas dialects principally generate out of geographical dispersion of a speech community, these language varieties generate when several speech communities come together. Hence, these are often called **Contact Language Varieties**.

5.1 *Lingua franca*

Sometimes, a common language serves as a medium of communication among diverse groups speaking diverse languages. A language which is known to all but which must not necessarily be the native language of a particular group may function as the common language. A language used in this way becomes a *Lingua franca*. A *Lingua franca* is thus a language which is used for communication between groups who have no language in common or who speak in diverse languages. The term is derived from a trade language of the same name used in the Mediterranean ports in the medieval times. It was made principally of Italian, with elements from French, Spanish, Greek and Arabic. Latin was considered a *Lingua franca* up to the eighteenth century by European scholars, as it was the common language for science, philosophy and other fields of knowledge. Today, English serves as the *Lingua franca* among people who want to share thoughts and knowledge in a common language. It is the common language of situations in which people from diverse Speech Communities hold talks and conferences and have a common agreement in the use of English. Apart from English, Swahili is another *Lingua franca* used as a common language in East Africa and Central Africa where it is not native. The term *Lingua franca* is often linked with *Langue vehiculaire*, a French term denoting a common language used among societies whose own languages are different. French is a *Langue vehiculaire* used in much of West and Central Africa where it is not native.

5.2 Pidgin

When people from diverse language groups come into contact, and when one group becomes economically or politically dominant over the other, a special variety of language develops and is called the Pidgin. The pidgin develops particularly in colonial situations in which a dominant language group colonizes or trades with a subordinate group. The word "Pidgin" is

derived from the English word *business* which is pronounced as *pidgin* in Chinese Pidgin English. A pidgin is formed of linguistic features of one or more languages and has a reduced and simplified vocabulary meant to be of limited use. The vocabulary is usually drawn in large part from the dominant language and the simplified grammar also lacks suffixes and prefixes indicating plurality or tense. As English has been the language principally associated with colonial expansions, English-based pidgins are numerous. Apart from English, there have been pidgins based on French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Swahili. A sentence from the Hawaiian Pidgin English can be cited to show the limited use of words and grammar in pidgins: *da pua pipl awl poteito it* (glossed in English as "the poor people only potato eat," and translated as "The poor people eat only potatoes."). Apart from being used as day-to-day contact language among traders, the pidgin is also used to express serious thought. Chinook, a pidgin used by Native Americans and early Europeans and Americans in the northwestern United States, consisted of about 500—800 words and was so developed that it was used also in delivering sermons. Chinook has become extinct, but another pidgin, Tok Pisin, used in Papua New Guinea, has evolved its own writing system, has literature written in Tok Pisin and radio programmes aired in Tok Pisin.

It is interesting to note that when the British came to India, the British colonists and the native Indians developed some pidgins to communicate: the Butler English of Madras, the Pidgin English of Bombay, the Boxwallah English of Upper India, the Cheechee English and the Baboo English. The Baboo English, highly ornate and full of poetic suggestions, but full of gross errors, was used by the Indian subjects who wanted favours from their British masters. Arnold Wright gives in his book *Baboo English as 'tis Writ* a sample of Baboo English:

HONOURED AND MUCH RESPECTED SIR—With due respect and humble

submission, I beg to bring to your kind notice that for a long days, I have not the

fortune to pay you a respect, or not to have your mental and daily welfare,

therefore my request that you will be kind enough to show me some mercy and

thankfulness, by pending some few lines to your wretched son and thereby highly

oblige. In accordance by your verbal order, I am still lingering for your hopeful

words, which I cannot put out from my memory or think not to be disappointed by

you.

5.3 Creole

Now consider a phenomenon in which a pidgin is transferred from one generation to the

next. When this happens, a pidgin turns into a Creole. A Creole is a pidgin which has been

accepted as the primary language of a speech community. When a pidgin becomes a Creole it

expands its vocabulary and grammatical features like any other language. A pidgin is used by

several speech communities who have come into contact with each other and who need a

medium of communication. When the next generations begin using the pidgin as their mother

tongue (or First Language) and communicate among themselves in that language, a Creole takes

birth. The whole process is called Creolization. Like the pidgins, Creoles, too, are spoken in

many parts of the world. Goanese, the Creole Portuguese used in Goa, is now probably extinct.

The Haitian Creole (based on French) came into being when Africans from several Speech

Communities in the slave plantations in the Americas began using a French-based Pidgin and

later their descendants began to use the Pidgin as their First Language. Black English

Vernacular is a living example of a Creole. It is spoken in uneducated urban areas and by the

poor whites of the southern states of America. Some sentences used in the Hawaiian Creole English are *Us two bin get hard time raising dog* ("The two of us had a hard time raising dogs."), *She no can go, she no more money, 'a'swhy* ("She has no more money, that is why she cannot go."), *He lazy, 'a'swhy he no like play* ("He's lazy, that is why he does not want to play.").

6. Factors Defining Varieties: Language Use

Sometimes, language varieties come into form on the basis of language use in several fields of life or fields of studies. In fact, using the correct language in particular situations to particular persons is a skill which language users must acquire. Some varieties of language become exclusive to certain fields. Language performs sociocultural functions. Hence, some varieties are used to make a meaning clearer or to drive home a point more effectively. Some varieties are place-specific, i.e., certain places require a particular variety of language to create the proper feeling or ambience exclusive to that place. This is how the varieties like **Register**, **Slang**, **Jargon** and **Diglossia** come into existence.

6.1 Register

Register refers to a subject-oriented variety of language. We can find that subjects like religion, literature, history, science and law etc., and the occupations related to fields like medicine, computers, games and news media etc., require a particular type of language exclusively meant for that subject or occupation. Registral varieties of language contain certain words or lexicons meant for a particular subject or occupation. Innovations in grammar are less frequently observed. One interesting thing about register is that the register of a particular field, subject or occupation is not interchangeable with another field, subject or occupation. Thus, the register of religion (*Ye shall be blessed by Him in times of tribulation* or *For dust thou art and*

unto dust shalt thou returnst) is exclusive to religion and is not found in games. The register of law is found to be difficult for a common man because of its stilted vocabulary. The register of literature is replete with figurative devices like image, symbol, metaphor, irony etc. and is not used in science. The commonly used idea "washing of utensil with soaps" can be glossed in the register of chemistry like this: "the aqueous treatment of metal product in alkaline medium." The register of news media, called **Journalese** (which consists of such forms as "tycoon," "probe," "hush up," "con man," "uneasy calm prevailed," "limped back to normal" etc.) is different from the register of history. Some lexical items belonging to different registers are "inflation" (economics), "off-side" (cricket), "tonsillitis" (medicine), "brethren" (religion), "cyclone" (meteorology), "electron" (physics), "combustion" (chemistry), "allophone" (linguistics) etc. We must, in this regard, note that switching from one register to other is a mark of the language user's **communicative competence**, which refers to a language speaker's knowledge of the total set of rules and conventions of language which helps in a skilled use of language in society.

6.2 Jargon

A register acquires its special identity with the use of jargons specific to itself. In other words, jargon is one of the key features of register. A jargon is a technical vocabulary associated with a special activity, group or subject. The register of every subject, occupation or field of studies has developed a special vocabulary to express the desired message. For example, doctors use medical jargon; lawyers use legal jargon; people associated with sports use vocabulary of sports; music has its own jargon. A jargon gives a group a solidarity, so that users of one particular jargon feel themselves to be "insiders" while others not using it are "outsiders." It is interesting that a word can assume a new meaning when used as part of the jargon of a particular

field. Thus, though the word "depression" has the lexical meaning of "a sunken place," in medical jargon it refers to "a mental condition characterized by severe feeling of dejection," and in meteorological jargon it refers to "an atmospheric condition involving low barometric pressure." "Leg" in everyday use refers to our lower limb, but in the jargon associated with cricket, we know that "Fine Leg" does not refer to the good looking leg of a cricketer but refers to an area of the cricket field. "How's that?" refers to a bowler's appeal to the umpire when a batsman may be out. Most of us are aware of the jargon of the digital world involving words like "programme," "application," "byte," "WAP" etc.

6.3 Slang

"Language is like dress. We vary our dress to suit the occasion," says Simeon Potter (*Our Language*). In fact, to serve this basic need of the occasion that Slang has evolved. We fail to communicate if we talk like a book. The use of slang instead of solemn and ponderous words makes a conversation or a speech lively and expressive. Therefore, colloquial speech certainly contains a fair amount of slang in it. Even though many purists defined slang as a low, vulgar, unmeaning language, slang possesses a more forceful meaning than the conventional words.

The motive of the users of slang remains in question. But, in general, they use slang for novelty, vivacity and intimacy in speech. As Simeon Potter puts it, "Slang is like a light music." The conventionally used words soon become hackneyed and dull, but slang offers a picturesque, startling and lively expression. Slang allows the speaker to drop to a lower key with the listener by pouring "a word in his ear." A good slang "hits the nail on the head." If someone on the street uses *to dismiss*, it may seem to be dull, worn out and colourless. But if he uses the term *to give one the air*, we will readily understand him. Some even say that slang is a private language of the

robbers, jail-birds and loafers. The robber's, jail-bird's and loafer's language—or in short the "-'s language" is the origin of *slang*. But today men of other professions and even literary men tend to have their own slang.

Slang expressions may be ephemeral, living for a day, a year or for a decade only. Except some slang as *to booze* (meaning "to drink to excess") or *to rook* ("to cheat"), most of them either disappear quickly or do not find entry into respectable language. The usual expression "go away" or "depart" was replaced by a series of slang: *clear off*, *evaporate*, *fade away*, *get out*, *vamoose* and *skiddoo*. These will certainly disappear when some newer term catches the popular fancy. Yet, more than thirty percent of the slang have found permanent seat in English. The terms *what on earth*, *grit*, *pluck* and *to go back on* are still in service. Noteworthy it is that the popular word *joke* was at first a slang.

Slang expressions are of various origins and type. They may either be existing or coined. The word *slang* itself was coined in 1756. The Americans often speak of *horse sense* (a coarse, robust and conspicuous shrewdness found in rude and ignorant men). We also use *savvy* (from the Spanish *sabe usted* or "you know") to suggest "a skilled person," as in "computer-savvy." Slang expressions for "police" include *man in blue* and *arm of the law* etc. A mad person is "a man of few screws loose." Sometimes, original expressions are shortened to give slang: "on ticket" becomes *on tick* and "whipper-in" in a government becomes *whip*. Existing slangs include *onion* and *block* etc. for "head."

Slang as a language variety proves that the key to successful communication is simplicity.

6.4 Diglossia

Diglossia refers to a sociolinguistic situation in which a speech community uses two varieties of a language for different functions. In a situation involving diglossia, one variety of the language used is termed High and the other Low. Each of the High and Low varieties have specific uses. While the High variety is used in the formal situations of a religious service, a legal document, a parliament address, a news broadcast or literature, the Low variety has its use in domestic situations, in informal friendly conversations and in folk literature. The High variety is considered by speakers as something superior and formally learnt, while the Low variety is acquired. In languages like Arabic, Greek and Swiss German such diglossic varieties can be found. In India, Tamil, exhibits diglossia. And we might be aware of the diglossic nature of our own Bangla. Shadhubhasha (literally, "Chaste Language") contains highly Sanskritised terms and longer verb inflections and was the accepted standard of writing till the 19th century, while the Chalitbhasha (literally, "Common Language") has simpler forms and is a literary standard today.

7. Factors Defining Varieties: Individual Style

So far we have seen that language undergoes variation according to regional, social, ethnic variations or according to the purpose behind the use of language. We must note that language also varies from person to person. If we give two persons the same language and the same situation, we will find them speak the language each in his or her own way. Practically, we are often able to distinguish between persons by their manner of speaking alone. A person is what he or she speaks. In other words, a person's use of language gives him or her a distinct identity. It is also important to note that accent or pronunciation, too, influences an individual's using a language in speech. While some speakers have distinct and easily recognized accents, the

others may not have so. An **idiolect** is a variety of language which is exclusive to an individual. Every speaker of a given language has his or her own idiolect. The variation between speaker to speaker in a given speech community is thus called **Idiolectal Variation**. There are many factors which go behind the making of an idiolect. An individual's voice quality, physical state, accent, education, taste, age and gender determine his or her idiolect. The role of gender in determining variation in language—as it is special area of interest among linguists today—will be dealt with a little later in this chapter. Apart from the other factors including gender, age is by far the most important in determining an idiolect. We might notice the vast difference in the ways in which youngsters and old people use language. Whereas the language used by older generation may be replete with terminologies related to family, health, politics and life, the younger generation tends to use terms related with modern technology, sports, films and sartorials. An old individual rarely uses such slangs as "sucks," "creepy," "cute," "cool," "dude" etc. While the elders tend to use complete grammatical sentences, the youngsters use broken syntax: "A fat lot you know about films." and "I'm like, you know, I like cricket rocking good." Idiolect thus identifies the speaker.

8. Factors Defining Varieties: Formal / Informal Style

Another factor which creates variations in the use of language is the situation of use. A language used in the comfortable atmosphere of home is certainly different from that used in the formal atmosphere of an office, as we must find in our day-to-day lives. As such, language situations are placed between two extreme scales or poles: the **formal** and the **informal**. Whatever be the situation of language use, it must invariably fall within these two extremities— the formal and the informal—as certain linguists believe. Accordingly, there are two extreme

styles: the **formal style** and the **informal style**. Suppose we are going for a job interview. So, once we are inside the formal atmosphere of the office where the interview is going to take place, each of us has to assume a formal style while talking to the people working in that office. So, suppose we have ask for a permission there. We have to thus say, "Excuse me. May I meet the Secretary now? I have an appointment." We will notice that the style here is of course airy and stilted, artificial and prosaic, with virtually no scope for humour or show of wit. This is formal style. Now imagine the opposite extreme: you are going to meet your favourite friend. You go straight into his home and ask, "Hey, is my lazy dog still holding his pillow? I gotta meet you. Come down, boy." This is informal style, where there is plenty of space for humour or show of wit and where sentences come from the core of the heart. In a formal setting, we use "may I offer you some coffee?", while in informal situation we can use "Want some coffee?" or simply "Coffee?" We may also see that in our Bangla there are different terms for the persons we are speaking to, depending on the formality and informality of the situation. In formal situations, "aapni" is mostly used, whereas in informal situations "tumi" or "tui" are mostly used. By the way, "aapni," "tumi," and "tui" are all terms for the English "you," and the English language does not have such variations of a single pronoun to be used for different situations. Formality and informality of situation also affects our writing. When we write a formal letter, we begin like this: "With due respect I beg to state that…." Now imagine a letter to a friend which begins with "Hope you are well. I just want you to know that…." In general, formal style is applied more to writing than while speaking

A formal style thus refers to the style of using a language in a social context which demands seriousness and importance and in which the language user must be conscious and cautious of all decorum. Informal style, on the other hand, refers to the language style used in a

relaxed and casual social setting in which the language user is spontaneous and free from censorship. Between the extreme scales of the formal and the informal styles, linguists often identify five gradations: the frozen style, the formal style, the consultative style, the casual style, and the intimate style. The following sentences illustrate these five styles:

      i)   "Admission without permission is strictly prohibited." (frozen style)

      ii)   "Visitors should ask for permission before going inside." (formal style)

      iii)   "Would you mind asking for permission before going inside?" (consultative style)

      iv)   "Please ask before you go in." (casual style)

      v)   "Hey, go and ask before you go in." (intimate style)

9. Factors Defining Varieties: Gender

Recently, a great deal of research is going on on the variations of language according to the gender of the language user. As such, on the manner of idiolect, the technical term **genderlect** has been coined. Genderlect refers to the language variety specific to the gender of the language user. Most of the researches regarding genderlect focus on the female genderlect as a grammatical, phonological and lexical deviation from the male genderlect. Accordingly, these researches have often been held as biased. However, controversies kept apart, genderlect is an interesting subject. Way back in 1922, Otto Jespersen, noted philologist, observed the existence of separate languages for the two sexes. We may here note that in ancient India, men used the higher and pure form of Sanskrit while women were allowed to use a lower Sanskrit dialect or Prakrit. However, Jespersen studied the differences between the male and female languages in terms of vocabulary, grammar, slang words and mannerism. He, too, determined that female language was an inferior version of the male language. Later, linguists like Zimmerman opposed

Jespersen and held this view that male language is dominant over the female as the latter have less assertive attitude, which is the result of society's denial to allow women join the axis of power in society. He opined that language maintains the hierarchies of society in this way. Later linguists hold that men and women are different subcultures and that is why their language behaviours are different from each other. While men tend to report, to lecture, to confront and to show their independence, women tend to listen, to agree, to support and to seek intimacy.

As this is not a fit place to discuss the question of hierarchy and dominance, we must concentrate upon the different communicative styles employed by men and women in practice. For example, women tend to be more precise and discriminating in using colour-words. Most men would name broader and inclusive shades of colour like red, blue, violet, pink and green etc., but women's vocabulary consists of precise names of colours like beige, ecru, mauve, aquamarine and lavender etc. In the case of using adjectives, while there are some gender-neutral adjectives like "great," "terrific" and "neat" etc., women tend to use adjectives like "adorable," "charming," "sweet," and "lovely" more than men do. While using swear words, women generally use the weaker ones, such as "oh dear," while men use the stronger ones like "oh shit."

An interesting aspect regarding the difference between male and female genderlects has been observed in the use of hyper-correct sentences. Women use more grammatically correct sentences than males. Women would pronounce a whole word more frequently than men: while women would pronounce the full form of the "-ing" ending of verbs (for example, "singing"), men would utter the shortened form ("singin"). Forms such as "I done it" and "He ain't" occur more in male genderlect than female genderlect in which we will find "I did it" and "He is not." Politeness-denoting terms like "please" and "thank you" are more frequent in female genderlect than in male genderlect, which is characterized by strong imperatives like "Close the door."

Women also use "hedges" like "sort of" and "kind of" more than men. Tag questions, too, are abundant in female genderlect. Slang words dominate the male genderlect, while prestigious forms are abundant in female genderlect. Regarding the subject of talking, men like non-personal topics like sports, politics and news, while women concentrate more on personal feelings.

10. Factors Defining Varieties: Social Media

As things stand in today's world, the involvement of more and more people in social media is exerting an immense influence on the English language. Social media is providing a rich playground for experimenting with language. With virtually no agency to look after the maintenance of the purity of language, language on social media can be moulded and remoulded, new words (or Neologisms) can be formed, words can assume new meanings, words can be replaced by icons, words can be shortened, and grammar can be relaxed for convenience and clarity. These experimentations have seen a spurt in recent years with the rise of social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram etc., the message-sharing media like Whatsapp and the search-engines like Google. Although the language used in social media is yet to receive its technical name in the manner of "Dialect", "Idiolect" or "Genderlect," this language consists of an exclusive jargon and slangs, has a limited vocabulary, is different from the language of other fields just as Register of one field is different from the other, is sometimes an odd mixture of English and other tongues, and is not geographically limited to one place. Though the social media is scattered with many attempts to write the correct English, this worldwide language variety is gaining ground gradually to such an extent that often formal communications of today are tainted with the inadvertent use of the social media language

variety. One interesting fact about this language variety is that the new generations of today are more conversant with it than the elder ones.

Emoticons (pictorial representations of facial expressions like smile and frown formed by combining several keyboard characters) and abbreviations form a major part of the language variety used in social media. Non-verbal elements like the Emoticons such as ";)" and ":)" and abbreviations like *LOL* ("Laughing out loud") have replaced long phrases or sentences. We will find that the language of social media also imposes new meanings to very common words. "Wall" is not a vertical brick structure on Facebook, but an area is somebody's profile where one can give comments or write something. A "troll" is no longer just a character from Norse folklore, but someone who makes offensive or provocative comments online. "Throwback" refers to a retrospective. "Follower" is not one who physically follows us, but who shows support for whatever we say or show in social media. "Viral" is not something which is caused by a virus, but something which is widespread. New coinages like "unfriend," "hashtag" "weblog," "to Google," "webinar" and "photobomb" dominate the social media. The word "selfie," the Oxford Word of the Year, 2013, was in use for a long time, but it has recently caught the social media with a vengeance. It is interesting to note that the language of the social media is very much instantaneous: a word is introduced or given new meaning in an instant, is overused in a short time, and is then discarded all of a sudden.

11. Which Variety to Choose: Standard Language, Non-standard Language, Code-switching and Code-mixing

Language is a complex, context-dependent mode of communication in which numerous interrelated variables operate simultaneously. So it is hard to determine which variety an

individual will use in a given situation. It is not that each of the factors discussed above operates

singly. Many factors can operate simultaneously, crossing each other's path. The factors above

are thus not absolute. There are many crosscurrents made by these factors which work towards

the formation of varieties. Further, no variety can be absolutely held to be better than the other

varieties of the same language: all varieties perform the given sociolinguistic functions expected

in a language.

However, as stated in the beginning in this chapter, there is a standard in every language,

a unique variety among many varieties of that language, which is recommended to be used in

official, literary or academic circles. A **standard variety of a language** thus refers to that unique

and socially acceptable variety which is held to be correct and pure, is generally used by

educated speakers, is recommended to be used in official, literary or academic circles, and for

which dictionaries and grammars are available. For example, British English is the recommended

standard to be used in the United Kingdom and also in other English-speaking countries in

writing especially. Among so many dialectal variations within the English language, the British

Received Pronunciation (British R. P. in short), spoken in the south of England, is the accepted

standard for pronunciation. In India, a country in which English is the Second Language and also

the official language, and where the regional languages strongly influence the use of a standard

English, the General Indian English, a variety of Indian English rectified of all the strong

regional influences, is the recommended standard variety. In West Bengal, the standard Bangla

refers to the standard colloquial Bangla spoken around Kolkata. It is a historically proven fact

that it is comparatively easier to set a written-language standard in a region or a country than a

spoken-language standard. The **non-standard variety of a language**, on the other hand, refers to

that variety which is generally used by relatively under-educated speakers and for which reference works are not available. It is socially less acceptable than the standard variety.

However, it must be noted that determining the standard and non-standard varieties is not always a linguistic affair: some politics also go behind it. In general, recommending a variety as standard is done on the basis of which class uses it. The class whose value-system is held to be the most correct, whose power and prestige are revered, is also believed to be the class which gives the standard variety. Labeling one variety as standard and degrading others to a non-standard level is thus more a sociopolitical affair than a linguistic one.

However, shifting from one variety to the other as per demands of situation is a mark of a person's communicative competence. This is called **code-switching**. "Code" here loosely refers to a language or a language variety. Suppose two government officers meet in a formal meeting where they use the formal variety of language in communicating and documenting; then the meeting is over and they meet in the table of a coffee house where they discuss their family affairs in an informal language. The persons in question have thus switched or shifted their codes or languages from the formal to the informal. Code-switching thus refers to the shift from one language or language variety to another language or language variety. Earlier, only a shift from one language to another in a bilingual situation was taken as code-switching, but nowadays, shift from one variety to another is also considered as code-switching. In our normal day-to-day life we frequently switch from standard language to the non-standard dialects and vice versa. The subtle difference between code-switching and code-mixing should be noted here. **Code-mixing** refers to the situation in which a language user borrows words from another language and mixes them in sentences made in another language. We might notice the way some Bengali speakers intersperse English words in their sentences formed in Bangla: "*In fact*…aami to jaantei parini je

film ta esechilo, *but* ota aami *phone* e dekhe niyechhi, hero ta *so cute*" (English words are italicized).

12. Conclusion

Language is thus not fixed and uniform. Human language is a highly flexible rule-governed system, allowing individual creativity, geography, society, race, occupation, gender and situation make their own influence. But it is not true that the varieties formed due to these influences are "incorrect." It cannot be claimed that even the non-standard varieties of a language are inferior or inadequate in performing the sociocultural role of a language. Terming one variety as inferior and another as superior depends upon the politics of individual or collective attitude. A variety of a language is, to say in a roundabout way, a mark of the language user's class and status. But, for that, no accusation of class-categorization can be made on a language variety. In fact, as language was given to Man to utter his thoughts, and as every man is free to speak or write, the ultimate test of a language variety lies in its usefulness and its ability to make Man's intentions clear.

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