

# LINGUISTICS

**FOURTH YEAR**

**LECTURE (5): LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY**

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# KEY CONCEPTS

## ❑ Language and Regional Variation

- The Standard Language
- Accent and Dialect
- Isoglosses and Dialect Boundaries
- Bilingualism and Diglossia
- Pidgins and Creoles

## ❑ Language and Social Variation

- A speech community and Sociolinguistics
- Social Dialects (Sociolects) and Idiolect
- Speech Style and Style-Shifting
- Register and Jargon
- Slang, Taboo, and Euphemism

# LANGUAGE AND REGIONAL VARIATION

## ▪ The Standard Language

This is the variety of a language (such as **Standard English**) that is treated as **the official version**. It is the form used in public **broadcasting, publishing, education**, and by those in positions of power.

## ▪ Accent and Dialect:

➤ **An accent** refers to the way people pronounce words. It is concerned only with **phonological features** (**sounds, stress, intonation**), **not vocabulary or grammar**. For example,

❖ The **'r' sound** is **dropped** at the end of words in **UK**, while it is **pronounced** in **US** as in **“beard”**.

➤ **A dialect** is a variety of a language that differs in **pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar**. Dialects are often associated with a **region** or **social group**. For example,

❖ **Jumper (UK)** vs. **Sweater (US)**.

❖ **Lift (UK)** vs. **Elevator (US)**.



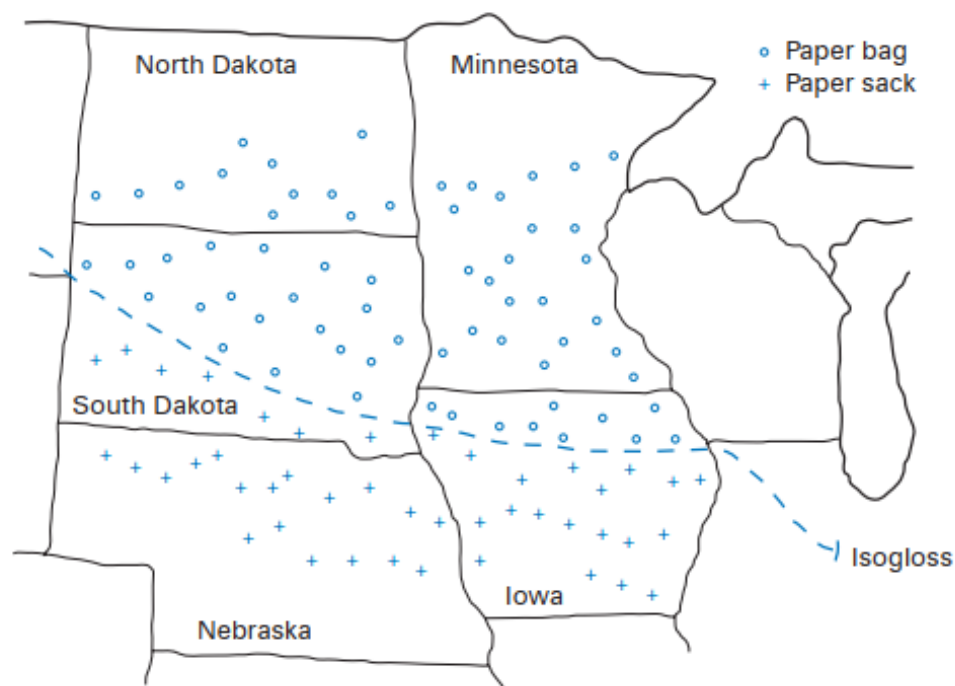
# DIALECTOLOGY

- **Dialectology** is the **systematic scientific** study of **dialect variation** within a language. It focuses on differences in **pronunciation**, **vocabulary**, and **grammar** across different geographical areas or social groups. For example,
  - ❖ **Phonological variation** (e.g., pronunciation of /t/ as /d/), **lexical variation** (e.g., **chibs**, **fries**, and **crisps**), and **grammatical variation** (e.g., use of **double negatives** in some English dialects).
- **Regional Dialects:** are language varieties associated **with specific geographical areas**. Speakers from **different regions use distinct linguistic features** even though they share the same language. For example,
  - ❖ **Northern Iraqi Arabic** (Mosul), **Central Iraqi Arabic** (Baghdad), and **Southern Iraqi Arabic** (Basra)
- **Isoglosses and Dialect Boundaries**
  - **Isogloss:** is an **imaginary line** on a **geographical map** that separates areas using **different linguistic features**.
  - **Dialect boundary:** occurs where **several isoglosses overlap**, creating a noticeable **linguistic division**. For example,
    - ❖ In the US, the **“pop/soda line”** separates regions where people say **“pop”** (**Midwest**) from those who say **“soda”** (**Northeast/West Coast**).

# DIALECTOLOGY

The dialects in USA are of two areas:

1. A **Northern dialect area** that includes **Minnesota, North Dakota**, most of **South Dakota** and **Northern Iowa**.
2. A **Midland dialect area** that includes **Iowa** and **Nebraska**



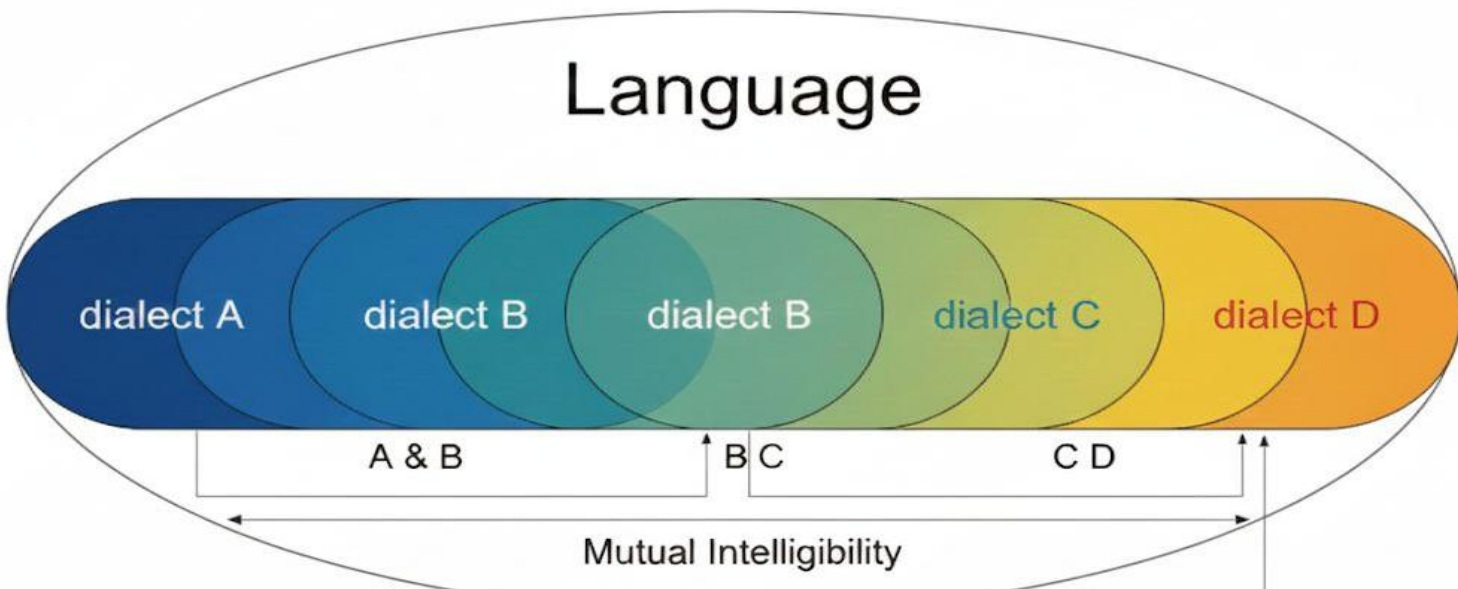
	("taught")	("roof")	("creek")	("greasy")
Northern:	[ɔ]	[ʊ]	[ɪ]	[s]
Midland:	[ɑ]	[u]	[i]	[z]

Northern:	<i>paper bag</i>	<i>pail</i>	<i>kerosene</i>	<i>slippery</i>	<i>get sick</i>
Midland:	<i>paper sack</i>	<i>bucket</i>	<i>coal oil</i>	<i>slick</i>	<i>take sick</i>

# DIALECTOLOGY

## ➤ Dialect Continuum

- It refers to a **geographical spread of dialects** where language change is **gradual** rather than **abrupt**.
- The **neighboring towns understand each other**, but **distant ones may not**.
- There is **no clear beginning or end of dialects**
- Dialect continuum happens because **gradual migration**, **continuous interaction among communities**, or **absence of strong political borders**
- Speakers who move back and forth across this border area, using **different varieties** with some ease, may be described as **bidialectal** (i.e. “**speaking two dialects of the same language**”).



# BILINGUALISM AND DIGLOSSIA

□ **Bilingualism** refers to the ability of an **individual** or a **community** to **use two languages**. There are different types of bilingualism

1. **Individual Bilingualism: A person** who can speak **two languages** (e.g., **An Iraqi who speaks Arabic and English**).
2. **Societal (Community) Bilingualism: A whole society** uses two languages for different purposes (e.g., **Arabic and Kurdish in Iraq**).
3. **Balanced Bilingualism: Equal proficiency** in both languages (rare).
4. **Dominant Bilingualism: One language is stronger than the other** (very common).
5. **Early** (learned both languages in **childhood**) vs. **Late Bilingualism** (second language learned **later in life**).

- **Diglossia:** is a situation where **two varieties of the same language** are used in a community, each with **distinct social functions**. The term was popularized by **Charles Ferguson** (1959).

## High (H) and Low (L) Varieties

1. **High Variety (H):** is used for **formal, written, and prestigious uses** (such as **education, government, literature, sermons, news**). It is often **standardized, historically rooted, and taught formally**. For example, **Classical or Modern Standard Arabic (فصحى)**.
2. **Low Variety (L):** is used for **everyday, informal, spoken, casual communication**. It is the **native, colloquial tongue**, often **unstandardized and varying regionally**. For example, **Iraqi Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, Levantine Arabic (العامية)**.



# LANGUAGE PLANNING

- **Language Planning:** choosing and developing an official language or languages for use in government and education. For example,
  - ❖ **Israel:** Reviving **Hebrew** as a national language.
  - ❖ **India:** Designating **Hindi** and **English** as official languages.

## The Planning Process

Einar Haugen (1966) outlined four essential stages for language planning:

1. **Selection:** Choosing a specific language or variety to be developed.
2. **Codification:** Standardizing the language through dictionaries and grammar books.
3. **Implementation:** Promoting and spreading the new language norms through media and education.
4. **Elaboration:** Continually updating the language to meet modern needs (modernization)

# PIDGINS AND CREOLES

- ❑ **Pidgins** are **simplified communication tools** created by groups of people who **had a lot of contact**. They have **no native speakers** and are used only for specific purposes like **trade**. For example,
  - ❖ **Nigerian Pidgin**: A widely spoken English-based variety in West Africa.
- ❑ **Creoles** are fully developed natural languages that often evolve from **pidgins**. They **have native speakers** (typically **children of pidgin speakers**) and possess **complex grammar** and **extensive vocabularies**.
  - ❖ **Haitian Creole**: The most widely spoken creole in the world, with over 12 million speakers. It is an official language of Haiti.

## The Lifecycle: From Pidgin to Creole

- **Pidginization**: Occurs when people **simplify a dominant language (the superstrate)** and mix it with elements of **their native languages (the substrate)** to communicate.
- **Creolization**: Happens when children are born into a community where **a pidgin** is the primary **lingua franca** (a common language used for communication between people who do not share a native tongue). Their brains naturally **expand the pidgin's structure** into a **full language** with complex syntax.
- **Decreolization**: Over time, a **creole may evolve toward the standard version** of its parent language if it remains in contact with it (e.g., **Jamaican Patois shifting toward Standard English**).

# **LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL VARIATION**

# SPEECH COMMUNITY AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS

- ❑ **A speech community:** is a group of people who **share a set of norms** and **expectations** regarding the use of `language. The study of the linguistic features that have social relevance for participants in those speech communities is called “**sociolinguistics**”.
- ❑ **Sociolinguistics:** studies how **social factors** (**class, age, gender, ethnicity**) affect language use. It is used generally for the study of the relationship between **language** and **society**.



# SOCIAL DIALECTS VS. IDIOLECT

- **Social Dialects vs. Idiolect**
- **Social Dialects (Sociolects):** Language varieties associated with features that differ according to **the social status** (e.g., **working-class** vs. **upper-class speech in the UK**), **not regions**. Factors like **education** and **occupation** often determine these dialects. For example,
  - ❖ **Working-class: “I ain’t done nothing.”** vs. **Upper-class: “I haven’t done anything.”**
- **Social Markers:** a linguistic feature that marks the speaker as **a member of a particular social identity**. For example,
  - ❖ **[g]-dropping** in words like **walking** and **talking** (pronounced as “**walkin**”, “**talkin**”) is a **common social marker of working-class speech**.
  - ❖ **[h]-dropping** which makes the words **at** and **hat** sound the same (e.g., **I’m so ’ungry I could eat an ’orse**).
- **Idiolect:** the **personal dialect** of an individual speaker. **No two people speak exactly alike**; even members of the same family or social group possess distinct idiolects. For example,
  - ❖ One person might end every sentence with **“Right/Okay?”**, while another from the same city might constantly use **“Is it clear?”**

# SPEECH STYLE VS. STYLE-SHIFTING

## Speech Style vs. Style-Shifting

**Speech style:** is a way of speaking that ranges from **formal** to **informal**. For example,

**Formal:** “Could you possibly pass the salt?”

**Informal:** “Pass the salt, please.”

**Style-shifting:** is the process of **changing from one style to another** depending on **the situation** (i.e., **from formal to informal or vice versa**). For example,

A professor uses **formal language in a lecture** but **shifts to casual speech with friends**.



# SPEECH STYLE VS. STYLE-SHIFTING

- Reasons of **style-shifting** are **Prestige** and **Speech Accommodation**
- **Prestige**: occurs when speakers **adjust their language** to gain **social status, respect, or group acceptance**. This process is generally divided into two types:
  1. **Overt prestige**: **standard, correct, or better** by the **dominant culture**.
  2. **Covert prestige**: **non-standard varieties** within a specific **local group**.
- **Speech Accommodation**: is the process by which individuals **adjust their communication**, including accent, diction, and nonverbal behavior, to either **minimize** or **emphasize social differences** between **themselves** and **their conversational partners**. People can accommodate their speech through two primary ways:
  1. **Convergence**: adopting a style that **reduces social distance**. For example,
    - ❖ **A doctor uses simpler terms when speaking to a patient.**
  2. **Divergence**: **emphasizing differences**. For example,
    - ❖ **A teenager uses slang to distance themselves from a parent.**

# REGISTER AND JARGON

- **Register and Jargon**
- **Register:** refers to a variety of language used in **specific situational contexts**, **rather than by a particular social group**. It depends on **what is happening**, **who is involved**, and **how language is being used**. Register is usually described in terms of:
  1. **Field** – **what is happening** or **the subject matter** (e.g. **medicine**, **law**, **education**, **media**, **social media**)
  2. **Tenor** – the **relationship between speakers** (**formal/informal**, **equal/unequal**)
  3. **Mode** – **spoken** or **written** language
- **Jargon:** is the **special technical vocabulary** associated with **a specific area of work** or interest. For example,
  - ❖ Medical jargon: **“myocardial infarction”** (**heart attack**), **“hypertension”** (**high blood pressure**).

# SLANG, TABOO, AND EUPHEMISM

- Slang, Taboo, and Euphemism
- **Slang:** refers to **informal, non-standard vocabulary** used by **particular social groups**, especially **young people, soldiers, professionals**, or **online communities**. For example,
  - ❖ **cool** (good)                      **bucks** (money)
- **Taboo terms:** words or phrases that used in **swearing**. They are **culturally, socially**, or **religiously forbidden** because they refer to **sensitive** or **dangerous topics**. For example,
  - ❖ **What the bleep are you doing, you little bleep!**
- **Euphemisms:** is a **polite, indirect**, or **softened expression** used to replace a **taboo, harsh**, or **unpleasant word**. Euphemisms help speakers **maintain politeness** and **social harmony**. For example,
  - ❖ **passed away** → **died**
  - ❖ **restroom** → **toilet**
  - ❖ **senior citizen** → **old person**

***Thanks***