

Varieties of Language (II)

U.G. Semester IV

MJC - 06

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A Bengali person speaking English would use English in a very different manner from that of a South Indian English-speaking person. Even the same person would speak different English in different contexts/circumstances. For example, in a formal setting, such as in a meeting or in an interview, a person would use words which are much more formal (Father, instead of dad, Child, instead of kid, etc) than in an informal context such as talking to a friend or talking to a person from the same peer group.

Thus, there are such varieties in the use of language that when one ponders over the divergent language use one can only think in terms of the complexity of language variation studies deal with the performative aspect of language use.

Idiolect

Idiolect is a term coined by linguist Bernard Bloch from the Greek word "idio" (personal, private) and the word "(dia)lect" to mean a variety of languages which is unique to an individual. "Idiolect", in other words can be said to be referring to "a person's individual speech patterns" (Frege), but the term is not so easy to define as there are at least two claims about the relationship between idiolects and language:

- Idiolects are defined as deviations from a common standard, deviations from a language intended as a social institution or convention (thesis of the priority of language and idiolects)
a language

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- a language is defined as the result of the way individuals use linguistic expressions in different contexts (thesis of the priority of idiolects over language).

Dialect

The term dialect, its origin from the Greek Language word *dialektos*, is significant to the sociolinguists in particular and linguists in general. Whereas dialect on the one hand refers to a particular variety of a language that is a characteristic of a particular group of that language's speakers; yet on the other, it refers to a variety of language which is supposedly socially subordinate to a regional or national standard language. For example, let us take the example of Maithili or Bhojpuri. Are they language on their own or are they dialects? If they are dialects in the sense of variety of Hindi then, the question of the status of the language does not come into the question. But when a supposedly Hindi speaker (in the sense of speaking the standard Hindi) looks down upon these languages or other

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varieties of Hindi then the notion of the prestige value of the dialect comes into being. Mostly in the urban centres, the standard Hindi speakers look down upon not only the speakers of the dialect, but at the same time also looks down upon the dialects, as they are brought up with the idea that they are more cultured as they speak the standard variety of a language.

When a dialect is associated with a particular social class it is termed as sociolect; and when it is a regional dialect it is called regiolect or topolect. For example, the language spoken by the elite educated class is not similar to that of the language of the lower working class.

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