

LANGUAGE CHANGE AND VARIATION

1. Diachronic variation (language change)
2. Diatopic and diastratic variation of language.
 - 2.1. Dialects and their types.
 - 2.1.1. Regional and social dialects.
 - 2.1.2. Urban and rural dialects.
 - 2.2. Folk dialectology. Attitude and stigma. Stereotypes.
 - 2.3. Dialect chain / continuum.
 - 2.4. Dialect vs accent vs lect.
 - 2.5. *Dialect, patwa / patois and Patwa / Patois. Koiné.*
3. Polyethnic / polycentric languages and national varieties. Standard vs non-standard vs vernacular language. Bidialectism and diglossia.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Скибина, В. И. *Национально негомогенный язык и лексикографическая практика*. – Запорожье : Видавець, 1999. – С. 44 – 49, 80 – 88 (English as a pluricentric language).
- Crystal, David. *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. – Cambridge : CUP, 1995. – P. 24 – 26 (dialect, accent, dialect continua), 32 (linguistic variable).
- Hickey, Raymond. *Variety studies* // <https://www.uni-due.de/ELE/VarietiesOfEnglish.pdf>. – P. 1-4, 9-10.

KEY TERMS

- accent;
- bidialectism;
- dialect;
- dialect chain;
- dialect continuum
- dialectology;
- dialectometry;
- diglossia;
- folk dialectology;
- historical change
- lect;
- national variety;
- patwa / patois;
- Patwa / Patois;
- polyethnic / polycentric language;
- regional dialect;
- rural dialect;
- social dialect;
- stigma;
- synchronic variation;
- urban dialect;
- variety

LECTURE NOTES

There are various axes of language variation: *diatopic* (variation in language on a geographical level); *diastratic* (variation in language between social classes); *diachronic* (variation in language over time).

In the *regional dimension* of variation, we distinguish the layers of dialects (which show large differences, especially in pronunciation, vocabularies, grammar) and a standard language (non-regional or supraregional). Practically speaking, however, in many areas there is a continuum of forms between base dialect and the standard language.

Dialects on the outer edge of a geographical area may not be mutually intelligible, but they are linked by *a chain of mutual intelligibility*. The greater the geographical distance the greater the difficulty in comprehension. The effects of differences are cumulative over space.

An *accent* is a variety which is phonetically and/or phonologically different from other varieties (e.g. Boston accent (US English), RP (received pronunciation)). In contrast, a *dialect* refers to a variety which is grammatically, lexically and phonologically different from other varieties.

DIALECT CHAINS in the USA: A SET OF CONTIGUOUS DIALECTS NEAREST TO EACH OTHER AT ANY PLACE IN THE CHAIN ARE MOST CLOSELY RELATED



Source: <https://twitter.com/nathanaphug/status/535441844684214274>

To describe different types of variation the notion of the *linguistic variable* was developed. It is a unit with at least 2 variant forms, the choice of which depends on different factors, such as age, sex, social status, situation. Some linguistic variables are subject to overt criticism (*stigmatisation*).

Perceptual dialectology investigates what ordinary people (as opposed to professional linguists) believe about the distribution of language varieties in their own and surrounding speech communities and how they have arrived at and implement those beliefs. It studies the beliefs of the common folk about which dialects exist and, indeed, about what attitudes they have to these varieties. Some of this leads to discussion of what they believe about language in general, or "*folk linguistics*". Surprising divergences from professional results can be found. For the professional, it is intriguing to find out why and whether the folk can be wrong or whether the professional has missed something. Apart from that, it clarifies why some linguistic variables are subject to overt criticism (stigmatization).

The term *dialect* is used to denote a geographically distinct variety of a language. It is also important that the standard of a language is also a dialect which achieved special political and social status at some stage in the past and which has been extensively codified orthographically. The French term *patois* refers to a dialect which is unwritten and as such without a literary tradition. It should be noted that the term *patois* (OFr *patois* 'local or regional dialect') was earlier used with negative connotations and stigma to refer to 'rough, clumsy, or uncultivated speech'. Such low evaluative connotation was probably caused by the verb Fr. *patoier* 'to treat roughly' < *pate* 'paw' < Old Low Franconian **patta* 'paw, sole of the foot' + *-ois* 'a pejorative suffix'. The term may have arisen from the notion of a clumsy or rough manner of speaking.

The word *patois* is also a part of a linguonym - *Jamaican Patois*, known locally as *Patois* (*Patwa* or *Patwah*) and called *Jamaican Creole* by linguists. It is an English-based creole language with West African influences spoken in Jamaica which developed in the 17th century, when slaves from West and Central Africa were exposed to, and learned, and later nativized some vernacular and dialectal forms of English spoken by the slaveholders (British English, Scots and Hiberno-English). Some Jamaicans refer to their language as *patois*.

The term *koiné* (OGr. 'common') and refers to the situation where, in a group of dialects, one is predominant and used outside of its natural boundaries as a means of *inter-dialectal communication*. This was the case for *West Saxon* vis à vis the other dialects of English in the Old English period.

The adjective *standard* means ‘recognized as correct or acceptable’, and a *standard language* is a variety that in different ways is recognized as more correct and acceptable than other varieties. In many ways, standard variety is an equally appropriate designation. It has the following prototypical properties:

- it is the variety of used by educated users, e.g. those in the professions, the media, and so on;
- it is the variety defined in dictionaries, grammars, and usage guides;
- it is regarded as more correct and socially acceptable than other varieties;
- it enjoys greater prestige than dialects and non-standard varieties: nonstandard varieties are felt to be the province of the less educated;
- it is used as a written language;
- it is used in important functions in the society – in the government, the parliament, courts, bureaucracy, education, literature, trade, and industry.

Vernacular is a term only found in English to refer to the language spoken naturally by the inhabitants of a country as opposed to a possible classical language which may have a position of dominance in cultural or ecclesiastical spheres (e.g. Afro-American Vernacular English vs Standard American English).

A language which is a mother tongue of several nations is called a *polyethnic language* or a nationally heterogeneous language, e.g. English which also evolved as a standard variety in *several regions (centers)*.

Dialects as the collective linguistic patterns of a sub-group of the speakers of a language may be preferred depending on the type of situations. For instance, after a child has learned a standard dialect, s/he is a bidialectal. *Bidialectism* has been suggested as a way of identifying a person's right to continue speaking the dialect of his home (which may be nonstandard). Everyone can be said to be ‘bilingual’/ ‘bidialectal’ in the sense that he masters different ‘registers’ appropriate to home, school, church, office, in other words, the domain spoken of by sociolinguists. Thus bidialectalism can be considered a manifestation of *bilingualism*. Bilingualism, however, cannot be explained simply as control of two language systems or codes by the same individual. The nature of one's bilingualism is affected by how it was acquired and in what type of situational context it is functioning. A kind of bilingualism in a society in which one of the languages has high prestige (henceforth referred to as "H"), and another of the languages has low prestige ("L") is seen as *diglossia*. This notion is sometimes expanded to include the use of unrelated languages as high and low varieties. In some cases (especially with creole languages, the nature of the connection between (H) and (L) is not one of diglossia but a continuum; for example, Jamaican Creole as (L) and Standard English as (H) in Jamaica.