

It should be noted that people are often attracted to the Esperanto movement for ideological rather than practical reasons but leave for the same reason; they conclude that an international language is not attainable. As Broadrib (1970:4) notes, "It is a striking fact that although within the past 25 years well over a million persons have formally studied Esperanto in school classes and in clubs, the actual number of Esperantists known to be active seems not to have risen at all. The number of active Esperantists—taking this to mean actual speakers of the language who are members of Esperanto groups or regularly purchase literature and take part in the movement—is in the neighborhood of 50,000, a figure which has remained fairly constant for nearly fifty years now."

### Discussion questions

1. What is a language variety? What are the principal language varieties in use in your community?
2. What is a standard language? Do you feel that this is a valid concept? Is there one or many standards in this country?
3. Watch the evening network news on several different TV channels. Can you observe any regional features in the announcers' speech?
4. How does the sociolinguistic concept of "dialect" differ from the popular one?
5. Describe the different styles of speech you use and the situations in which you use them.
6. Discuss the ephemeral nature of slang. What expressions are on the way in and what expressions are on the way out in "your dialect"?
7. Do you know any speakers from the West Indies, Haiti, Hawaii, the South Pacific, West Africa, etc., where creoles are spoken? Ask them about the language varieties in use in their home communities.
8. Interview a foreign student about his difficulties with English when he first came to this country.
9. Under what kinds of social circumstances do pidgins and creoles arise? What social forces promote decreolization? Discuss the evolution of Black English in this framework.
10. What are the purposes of artificially constructed international languages? What has been the degree of their success in the past, and what appears to be the outlook for the future?

## Multilingualism and the language community

### 7.1 Multilingualism

One of the most widespread and most interesting of all sociolinguistic phenomena is multilingualism. In many societies of the world, we find large numbers of people who speak more than one language. Generally, those who speak two languages are called bilingual, although there is no reason why the term multilingual cannot be applied to all persons speaking more than one language. It is a moot point whether there is a qualitative rather than a mere quantitative difference between the speakers of two languages and those who speak more than two.

It is rare to find an individual in any society who speaks more than one language with native-like fluency. Halliday (1968:140) calls such a speaker, who has completely mastered two languages and makes use of both in all situations, *ambilingual*. Most bilingual people restrict one of their languages to certain uses. One tends to predominate. Halliday furthermore considers any language learned by a child before school age as a native language, so it is possible to have more than one native language. An interesting fact is that native bilinguals, including ambilinguals, ordinarily cannot translate between their native languages, although they can learn to do so.

Since almost all bilingualism is asymmetrical, the question can be raised: How asymmetrical can a person's control of two languages be, such that we can still classify the person as bilingual? There is no unanimous agreement among scholars on this issue, although perhaps the most widely accepted definition of bilingual is a person who can produce spontaneous meaningful utterances in two languages. Such a minimal definition may appear to be too generous in classifying persons as bilingual, but it is a sociolinguistically relevant one. Any case where there is a person producing spontaneous meaningful utterances in more than one language, there is potentially a sociologically interesting situation. It is not

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merely a linguistic phenomenon but generally involves interaction between different categories of people, that is, some sort of cross-cultural communication.

The compound-coordinate distinction is considered by many to be of significance. The distinction has been most clearly described by Macnamara (1967a:64): "Compound bilinguals are those who attribute identical meanings to corresponding words and expressions in their two languages. The fusion of meaning systems is said to result from their having learned both languages in the same context (e.g. a bilingual home), or one language through the medium of the other (the so-called indirect method). Coordinate bilinguals, on the other hand, are defined as those who derive different or partially different meanings from corresponding words and expressions in their two languages. The distinction in the coordinates' meaning system is said to arise because they acquired their languages in different contexts." This distinction is probably best understood as a continuum rather than a dichotomy.

One linguistic problem of the bilingual is keeping the two languages apart; most bilinguals do not succeed. To the extent that he does, and this is more likely to happen in the case of the coordinate bilingual, he is in a sense two separate speakers in one person. Inability to keep the two languages separate results in what is often referred to as *linguistic interference*, defined 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" (Weinreich 1953:1). Specific kinds of interference are often referred to as "foreign accent," "language mixture," "unidiomatic expressions," "borrowings," etc. These phenomena may or may not be deliberate and may range from a slip of the tongue or a personal habit to a usage of the whole community.

The skills involved in bilingualism are production or encoding skills (speaking and writing) and reception or decoding skills (listening and reading). In each of these four skills, we can distinguish the phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic aspects. In other words, there is a total of sixteen dimensions along which skill can vary from complete fluency to minimal command. Thus, a person might have good syntactic control over the second language, but his phonology may be defective. He may speak one language very well but be illiterate in that language, or conversely be literate in a second language but virtually be unable to speak it. A person may also be perfectly able to understand a language but be unable to speak it. Macnamara (1967a) considers bilingual any person who "possesses at least one of the language skills even to a minimal degree in their second language." He would approach the description of bilingualism from the individual perspective in terms of how well the individual knows the languages he uses; what he uses his languages for; the extent to which he alternates between languages; when and how, as well as how well, he keeps the languages apart.

It sometimes happens that an individual, through extensive training in a second language, gains a proficiency in it which exceeds that of his mother tongue. In that case, perhaps it is more useful to speak of primary and secondary languages. Sometimes a secondary language is learned first. Among the Chontal Indians of Mexico, children are taught Spanish first and learn Chontal when, as

adolescents, they enter the cultural life of the adult community (Waterhouse 1949). This is despite the fact that the nearest Spanish-speaking villages are two or three days away by horseback trails. Chontal seems to be a part of the adult culture, but the people are motivated to learn Spanish by the presence of the school. Parents want their children to do well in school and fear that knowledge of Chontal will impede the child's progress. Adults forbid the child to use Chontal and address him only in Spanish, although they prefer to use Chontal among themselves.

Some European scholars make a distinction between "local" and "cultural" (or "artificial") bilingualism. Local refers to bilingualism that arises under natural circumstances in the family, in the playground, or during the first years at school. Cultural bilingualism characterizes the educated classes in many countries, although in some cases it is limited to reading knowledge in one language only.

As we consider bilingualism as a characteristic of societies, we look at the relative numbers and types of bilingual speakers. Most of the nations of the world are multiethnic and, hence, also multilingual. Bilingualism can result from migration, a wide gap between vernacular and standard versions of the same language, or from the revival and expansion of languages not spoken for centuries or used on a restricted basis, such as Hebrew in Israel or Swahili in Tanzania. In some of the new countries which have extreme ethnic diversity, former colonial languages have been adopted as national or auxiliary languages, so that, as a result, numerous new bilinguals have been created. Unfortunately, many large bilingual populations are being forced to function in their weaker language, a further burden on the decolonized nations. As Mackey (1967:19-20) puts it, "More and more people are tending to be bilingual through the necessity of becoming polysocial; that is, belonging to one group for one thing and to another for another."

Bilingualism inevitably results from the coming into contact of people with different cultures and different languages. Under such conditions, it is likely that more speakers from one of the speech groups become bilinguals than from the other. Socially based bilingualism is rarely symmetrical. There is actually no reason for a completely bilingual community, for a closed community in which everyone is fluent in two languages could get along just as well with one.

Given that a person is bilingual, on what basis does he decide to use one language rather than another in a given situation? Asked more broadly, in a particular community, what social forces impinge on the communication process are likely to encourage the use of one language rather than another in certain specific types of situations? Clearly, choices have to be made, as one cannot speak two languages simultaneously, though one can alternate languages in a single stream of discourse. The decision is not made by the individual alone, for there is sociocultural allocation of situations for the use of particular languages. In this connection, we make use of the concept of *domains* which refers to "the large institutional role-contexts within which habitual language use occurs in multilingual settings" (Greenfield and Fishman 1972:65). They can be considered social situations at the level of face-to-face interaction which involve language appropriate to certain places, role-relationships, and topics. In complex

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multilingual societies, the relevant domains would include family, friendship, religion, education, work, and government. For example, a bilingual Mexican American might use Spanish with family and friends, as well as at church, but use English at school, on the job, and in dealing with local government officials.

In some societies we find bilingualism without diglossia (see section 7.3). That is, there is a bilingual population, but no societal allocation of functions to the two languages. Such situations tend to be transitory in terms of the linguistic repertoire of the community. There has been, in these cases, massive dislocation of population associated with immigration and industrialization. The linguistic repertoire becomes less compartmentalized as the language of work and school come to be used in the home. A natural result is linguistic interference, such that the immigrants' speech may be ridiculed at the same time that their standard variety is given no official support (Fishman 1972b:104-105). Sedentary populations are much better able to resist the onslaught of foreign-inspired domination, as in the case of linguistic minorities in Europe.

Where linguistic minorities are large, their languages may be recognized as official languages, as in Canada, Finland, or Yugoslavia, or if the minorities are very small, a certain amount of local autonomy may be granted; or their linguistic rights may be unrecognized (see section 1.1.2). In these cases, members of the linguistic minority ordinarily are then forced to be bilingual. On the other hand, if they had their own nation state, they would not be forced to be bilingual. Minority groups sometimes use this as an argument for political independence. Therefore, national governments may seek to eliminate linguistic foci for political discontent by suppressing or at least discouraging the use of minority languages.

There is wide variation in patterns of language division in multilingual societies, for example, in the number and relative size of language groups, the degree of relatedness among languages and between standard languages and dialects, including the relevant literary traditions, the relation of language divisions to other societal divisions, and the degree of importance attributed to the language factor by each of the speech communities. There are several broad patterns: For example, in Indonesia, there is a number of closely related languages, one of which, Bahasa Indonesia, has the status of a *lingua franca*. In Morocco, there exists a number of languages, not closely related, of which only one, classical Arabic, has a long literary tradition. In much of tropical Africa, a country may have a number of unrelated languages, no one of which can claim a long literary tradition. In India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia, there exists in each country a variety of languages, each with its own substantial literary tradition.

Where linguistic minorities enjoy substantial political power, they may be able to have the state provide bilingual education at public expense. Bilingual education programs vary widely in purpose, scope, method, and results (see sections 9.4 and 11.2). Thus, for example, bilingual education in Canada concerns primarily the acquisition by speakers of one of the official languages (English or French) of the other official language. In the United States, on the other hand, bilingualism is regarded not as the province of the elite but primarily of the poor, dispossessed, and disadvantaged Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and American

Indians. Mackey's (1972a) study of the John F. Kennedy Schule in Berlin is a study of a program for elite students. A major finding is that students from fortunate home backgrounds in a favorable educational setting do not suffer from doing their school work in a foreign language. On the other hand, the results of the bilingual education of poverty-level Chicano children in the southwestern United States are somewhat inconclusive. What is clear is that many so-called bilingual programs are not geared to the maintenance of Spanish but rather to its use as a transition to English and monolingual education. Furthermore, many Chicano children do their schoolwork in their weaker language, whether English or Spanish, and the effects of this are not fully known. It should be noted that it is the younger, English-speaking, better educated, and more articulate Chicanos who have been the most forceful in demanding bilingual education programs. Their work has been made considerably easier by the Lau decision, which makes it mandatory for school districts to provide special education programs for children who do not speak English.

Two of the most widely discussed topics in bilingualism are choice of language and code switching. (Concerning the latter, see sections 5.5 and 9.3). An interesting example of language choice concerns Paraguayans, almost all of whom are bilingual in Spanish and Guaraní, the local Indian language. Among these people, Guaraní is the language of intimacy, indicating solidarity or identity with the person spoken to, whereas Spanish is more likely to be used with mere acquaintances. When Paraguayans are overseas, they tend to use Guaraní with their countrymen, even though they may have used more Spanish back in Paraguay. Formal relationships or topics are more likely to require Spanish. Guaraní dominates the rural areas, while the capital city Asunción is more bilingual. Jokes are told in Guaraní and anger expressed in the first language learned (Rubin 1968:523).

## 7.2 Second language learning

It is not entirely clear whether different processes are involved in first and second language learning (see section 4.3). The easily observed difference between the ease of childhood language learning and the difficulty of adult language learning is oft-cited evidence that there is indeed a difference, due possibly to some physiological or psychological ability lost by the adult. Since he has already acquired a linguistic system which, to him, embodies logic and good sense, the adult may be resistant to learning a new system of thinking. He has to process the new system through his old system, and the two may be far from congruent, hence the first is modified to fit the second. In other words, there occurs a tendency to transfer semantic, lexical, morphological, syntactic, or phonological features from one language to another (usually from the more familiar to the less familiar language).

The social contexts in which the two types of language learning take place are different from each other, as indicated above. The first language is learned in the everyday, ordinary setting of family living. The second language is typically

learned in a more formal setting, characterized by secondary-group relations, frequently a school of some sort. Likewise, learning of the second language, whether in a formal or informal setting, more often than not involves contact and interaction with members of a different ethnic group.

It has been hypothesized that the nature of the relationship between the two ethnic groups (their relative numbers, power, etc.) and such factors as whether the learner is living in his own society or in one to which he has migrated will have an effect on the numbers of persons who, in fact, learn the second language, how well, and what attitudes they develop toward it. Especially significant in this regard seem to be the attitudes held toward the people whose language one is to learn. Presumably the more favorable the attitude, the more easily and fluently the second language will be learned.

The theory of second-language learning, developed by Lambert and his colleagues over the past decade and a half, maintains that the successful learner must be psychologically prepared to adopt various aspects of behavior of the other linguistic-cultural group. Ethnocentric attitudes impede learning. Lambert distinguishes between two different sets of motivation: *instrumental*, where the purposes of language study reflect utilitarian values, such as getting ahead in one's occupation; and *integrative*, where the student is interested in the other community in an openminded way. Perhaps he even wishes to be accepted as a member of that community, that is, the other group may become a membership group as well as a reference group, as his proficiency in the language increases. As Gardner and Lambert (1972:3) note, "Depending on how he makes his adjustment to the two cultures, he may experience feelings of chagrin or regret as he loses ties in one group, mixed with the fearful anticipation of entering a new and somewhat strange group. Thus, feelings of social uncertainty or dissatisfaction which often characterize the immigrant and the bilingual may also, we believe, affect the serious student of a second language." In a study of English-speaking students in Montreal, students with an integrative attitude were more successful in learning French than those who were instrumentally oriented. This orientation is probably developed within the family; that is, students with an integrative disposition had parents who were sympathetic to the French community and who themselves had integrative attitudes. On the other hand students may resent another group whose language they are compelled to learn through social or economic pressure.

Macnamara (1973:36-40) argues, on the other hand, that favorable attitudes are of only minor importance to success in language learning and that an integrative attitude is not necessarily more likely to lead to success than an instrumental one. He points out that conquered people have frequently learned the language of their conquerors, despite unfavorable attitudes toward them. Note, for example, the almost complete displacement of Irish by English. Macnamara further comments on the differences between first and second language learning, in that in the school the child sees language as a tool for communicating. The teacher, on the other hand, believes that language is to be respected and cared for its own sake, with all due attention to the fine points of pronunciation and grammar, and pounces on all departures from perfection. Furthermore, school

children are usually required to speak in full sentences in an unnatural manner. By way of contrast, when the child was learning his first language or dialect, the mother accepted everything the child said which was both true and mannerly, not bothering to correct his pronunciation or grammar until he was about five, by which time he had almost mastered his language.

Specialists in the field are convinced that second language learning is faster, more complete, and leads to greater retention if it takes place in informal, unplanned imitation and use in actual communication situations than if it is learned by formal study in a school or other special educational situations (Ferguson 1971:68).

Students who have learned a foreign language in school, even if they have learned it well, frequently find that they have difficulty in finding native speakers who are willing to speak the language with them when they travel abroad in search of practice. Their attempts to practice the language may be met with barely intelligible replies in English. The foreigner may have failed to learn how different language varieties are used in the country he is visiting. There may also be severe social barriers to interpersonal friendships, which means that the foreigner will not be able to practice the language or variety used within such intimate groups. Gumperz (1971:184-185) notes that, for example, "The Indian's persistent attempts to use English in interaction with Westerners serves as a boundary maintenance device marking the social differences. This can be overcome only after long periods of close contact." The best place to practice would be in the bazaar, characterized by impersonal transactions, or with monolingual villagers.

### 7.3 Polyglossia

A phenomenon related to bilingualism and often confused with it is the situation called *diglossia*, the use of two different languages or language varieties, a "high" formal, official one, and a "low" informal, colloquial one, in separate spheres of a given society or community. The original definition is that of Ferguson: "Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes, but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation." The defining languages are French/French Creole in Haiti, Katharevousa/Dhimotiki in Greece, German/Schwyzer-tütsch in Switzerland, and classical/colloquial Arabic in the Arab countries. Each of these situations has arisen out of different historical circumstances. The Arabic and Greek situations go back many centuries. Classical Arabic is fundamentally the language of the Koran, some thirteen centuries old, while Katharevousa is a largely artificial language which attempts to resuscitate various aspects of ancient

Greek, as well as "purify" the language of foreign words. Dhimotiki is ordinary, spoken Greek; Schwyzertütsch is the Swiss-German dialect of which its speakers are extremely proud. The Swiss situation developed as a result of isolation from the centers of German linguistic standardization. Haitian Creole arose from a creolization of a pidgin French, standard French subsequently being superposed.

The "high" formal variety (H) and the "low" colloquial one (L) have specialized functions, such that only H is appropriate in one situation and in another only L, with very slight overlapping between the two sets. Thus, H would be used in a sermon, personal letter, political speech, university lecture, or news broadcast, while L would be used in instructions to subordinates, conversation with family or friends, or in a radio or television soap opera. It is exceedingly important in these societies to use the right variety in the right situation. Speakers characteristically have a particular set of beliefs concerning H, namely that somehow it is more beautiful, more logical, and better able to express important thoughts and the like. These beliefs are widespread, even among those with little or no mastery of H.

Objectively considered, H is more standardized and, in most cases, grammatically more complex. Furthermore, according to Ferguson, "A striking feature of diglossia is the existence of many paired items, one H and one L referring to fairly common concepts frequently used in both H and L where the range of meaning is roughly the same, and the use of one or the other immediately stamps the utterance or written sequence as H or L." Thus, for example, in a Greek restaurant "wine" would appear on the menu as /inos/ (H), but the customer would ask the waiter for /krasi/, the Dhimotiki (L) word.

H is normally learned through formal education, and in the case of the classical administrative and liturgical languages—such as Latin, Sanskrit, and Arabic—the elaborate ritual and etiquette that surround their use could be learned only through many years of special training. Only a privileged few could afford the private tutors who were the only source of instruction. Thus, small elites tended to maintain guild-like control over their linguistic skills.

Diglossia differs from other situations involving functional differentiation, in that both varieties are used throughout the society, not just in certain social classes and ethnic groups. However, H is never used for ordinary conversation, and L may be standardized to varying degrees. As in other cases of functional differentiation, diglossia may also be the focus of ideological and political struggles. Thus, in Greece, for example, liberals have historically favored Dhimotiki (L) and conservatives Katharevousa (H), and changes in government have been reflected in changes in the official status of the two varieties. Thus, in the 1960s Dhimotiki was made the language of the schools by a liberal government, only to be replaced by Katharevousa with the military dictatorship in 1967 and reinstated in 1975 with the restoration of constitutional government. The problem had been, in any case, an artificial one because Katharevousa was artificially constructed from archaic forms and had never been a living language. There was never any benefit to be obtained by acquiring Katharevousa, as there is, for example, in acquiring standard German in Switzerland, as it was not used

outside of Greece itself. Its imposition was long a form of class oppression (see especially Petrounias 1970, 1978).

Because H and L varieties are functionally separated, there is ordinarily no conflict between the behavior, attitudes, and values associated with one variety and those associated with the other. Each set is accepted as culturally legitimate. Values related to "L" are usually intimacy, solidarity, spontaneity, and informality, while the cluster related to "H" usually emphasizes status differences, ritual, and formality. The appropriate variety is used in the appropriate domain: L in domains such as family and friendship, while H is used in education, occupation, and religion. In ambiguous situations, interlocutors struggle to identify the domain, redefine the situation, and thus use the appropriate variety (Greenfield and Fishman 1972:65-66) (cf. discussion on code-switching in section 5.5).

It has been suggested that the concept of diglossia should be extended beyond the H-L dichotomous situations to characterize societies that utilize any kind of functionally differentiated language varieties, including separate languages, dialects, or registers. Thus, the term *polyglossia* may be more appropriate.

As a consequence of growing modernization and social complexity, the number of societies characterized by polyglossia or functionally differentiated varieties has greatly increased. Polyglossia and multilingualism may or may not occur or co-occur. Only the smallest and most isolated and least internally differentiated societies manifest neither, but such societies are rare. In some cases, masses and elite form a single society but two separate speech communities, in which case there is diglossia without bilingualism. Such societies are generally economically underdeveloped. As they begin to modernize and industrialize, they encounter very serious language problems. Bilingualism without diglossia stems mainly from the dislocation of populations, especially through immigration. The existence of separate languages without societally allocated functions tends to be a transitory phenomenon, that is, either functions are allocated, or linguistic assimilation is accomplished.

Although there are few nations that are really both bilingual and diglossic, major regions or social classes within a society may manifest both phenomena, for example, urban Paraguay (Spanish/Guarani), Swiss-Germans (Standard German/Schwyzertütsch), pre-World War I Eastern European Jewish males (Yiddish/Polish, for example). Such situations involve role compartmentalization, as well as functional allocation of linguistic varieties.

Fishman (1972b:91-106) has differentiated between stable bilingual societies with diglossia and unstable bilingual societies. In stable bilingual societies, languages tend to be reserved for different domains of life in the community, e.g. French and English in Canada; whereas in unstable bilingual societies without diglossia, the domain separation in language use disappears, and both languages come to be used alternately, especially in the family and friendship domains.

Take the case of Mexican Americans in the United States, where Spanish-English bilingualism along with code-mixing and code-switching, rather than Spanish alone, are now predominantly used in the home. On the other hand, with the spread of bilingual education, more and more Chicanos are encountering a bilingual situation in the school as well.

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#### 7.4 Speech communities

According to Fishman (1972b:22): "A speech community is one, all of whose members share at least a single speech variety and the norms for its appropriate use." The speech community ordinarily possesses a verbal repertoire more extensive than the verbal repertoire of any of its subgroups, while the subgroups have a wider verbal repertoire than any of their individual members. Of special concern from a sociolinguistic point of view is the totality of language varieties shared by members of a community, that is, its linguistic repertoire. We are interested in the presence or absence of polyglossia, the extent of multilingualism, multialectism, etc. Different types of communities, nomadic, rural, traditional urban, industrialized urban, etc. have different patterns in this regard. Each may form a speech community, which has its own rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety (Hymes 1972d:54). Interpretative rules enable the speaker-hearer to know what counts as a coherent sentence, request, statement requiring an answer, requisite or forbidden topics, marking of emphasis or irony, normal duration of silence, and normal level of voice, etc.

Gumperz (1968:466) has presented a description of the major types of speech communities. In the simplest, technologically least advanced communities, such as those of hunters and gatherers, social interaction is limited to face-to-face communication, social stratification is minimal, and contacts with outsiders are relatively infrequent. There is some differentiation between casual, everyday speech and styles used in ritually defined situations, such as, for example, religious ceremonies or myth recital. Larger, more economically developed tribal communities may maintain some trade relations with other communities, and thus a measure of bilingualism develops, particularly in market towns. Pidgins will sometimes result from contact between an economically advanced society and a tribal group (see section 6.4). As economic development produces economic stratification, community bilingualism, speech stratification, or major stylistic variations may appear, as is true of most of the world today. Maximum internal linguistic diversity is characteristic of societies of an intermediate level of complexity, with peasant, herder, or tribal groups integrated in various degrees into the socially dominant groups, as for example in Indian caste society. In such societies, people may show language loyalty to varieties distinct from the vernacular, such as, for example, Latin in medieval Europe or Sanskrit and Persian in medieval India. On the other hand, in highly urbanized, industrialized societies, differences between standard and local dialects are minimized, which is a reflection of the fluidity of roles in a class as opposed to a caste system.

Social heterogeneity and linguistic heterogeneity are co-occurring phenomena. Societies which are more internally diversified and stratified tend to have more diversified linguistic repertoires (Fishman 1972b:55-56). Such internal diversity can be maintained in a stable fashion over very long periods of time and has been so particularly in traditional societies. Peoples have lived in close proximity to the same country or city without learning each other's languages to any significant extent, except for middlemen such as merchants or translators

who may serve as links between divergent speech communities. In modern urban areas, particularly in Western countries where we also find social class, religious, and ethnic cleavages, the linguistic differences to be found are not between varieties so much (except for incursive immigrant groups) as quantitative variations in certain marginal lexical and phonological forms. Community boundaries may be emphasized by cultivating such variations, as in a situation reported by Labov (1972g:1-42): Martha's Vineyard is an island off the coast of Massachusetts, which was formerly fairly well isolated from the mainland. In recent years, however, there has been a heavy influx of outsiders during the summer. Natives of the island have resented the economic domination and exploitation of their island by more powerful people from the mainland. Their ancestors had been landowners and ship captains, but there has been a steady downturn in socioeconomic status. They have reverted to an older and less prestigious speech to identify with the older values. Those who most resent the intrusion of the mainlanders and who identify most closely with the local traditions have been exaggerating what was formerly a low-prestige, old fashioned pronunciation of certain vowels. Exaggeration of this pronunciation seems to serve the function of emphasizing group identity and solidarity and rejection of mainland lifestyles.

#### 7.5 Language attitudes

What is customarily referred to as language attitudes actually encompasses a wide spectrum of attitudes, values, beliefs, and emotions regarding language. Though labelled as such by the sociologist or social psychologist, they are likely to be regarded as some sort of self-evident truth or "natural" feelings by the persons who hold them. The nonrationality, that is, the culturally and experientially conditioned nature of such attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and values is not ordinarily recognized. It is characteristic of such attitudes that they tend to be shared even by those who suffer most from them. That is, a speaker may regard as "incorrect" forms which he himself uses, or look down upon his own language or dialect as unworthy.

Cooper and Fishman (1974:6) consider language attitudes to include attitudes toward a language or toward a feature of a language, toward language use, or toward language as a group symbol. They do not consider that attitudes reflected by the speakers themselves are language attitudes, although they might be determined by language attitudes. Research is aimed at discovering the nature, determinants, effects, and measurement of attitudes. Also important is the fact that attitude has served as a variable in many sociolinguistic studies.

Perhaps the most actively researched area of language attitudes has concerned judgments of certain languages or language varieties as better than others, which result in a higher evaluation of those who speak in that fashion. In every community we find attitudes and beliefs about the language of the community, as well as about other languages and language in general. These beliefs may or may

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not have a basis in objective reality or involve esthetic judgments not subject to empirical verification. Language attitudes are ordinarily conservative, for one must be convinced that changing his attitude toward a particular type of speech will not have repercussions he cannot handle. If change in linguistic behavior is proposed, the speaker must also be convinced that his change will not result in sanctions for violating the rules of the ideological system. This is at the root of much of the opposition to language and language attitude change (Smith 1973b:107-108).

Language attitudes seem to be extremely uniform throughout a speech community. Labov (1971b:248-249) says, "It seems plausible to define a speech community as a group of speakers who share a set of social attitudes toward language." Wolfram (1971:99-100) claims that speakers react to the social differences that the language differences imply. Such reactions are often based on stereotyped notions of linguistic and social differences which may or may not have any factual basis. Listeners are reacting to the supposed personality traits of the identified social categories, rather than the speech characteristics as such (Robinson 1972:95). (On the interrelationships among social evaluation, ethnic identity and language attitudes, see the excellent collections by Giles, ed. 1977 and Giles and St. Clair, eds. 1979.)

Some linguistic stereotypes have names, such as "Brooklynese" (Toity-toid Street), "Bostonian" (Pahk yaw cah in Hahvahd Yahd), "Southern drawl" (Y'all), etc. Some stereotyped features of United States working class speech are widely stigmatized but remarkably resistant and enduring like *dese* and *dose* for "these" and "those." There is a strong tendency for highly stigmatized forms to disappear, and in the last stages of disappearance to serve as a source of ritualized humor. Some people may consciously or unconsciously cultivate certain speech styles in order to be identified with and receive the same treatment as certain groups, or cultivate a style appropriate to a particular role.

Lambert, Tucker, and their associates at McGill University in Montreal have devised a technique for analyzing language attitudes known as the "matched guise" technique. The technique consists of having subjects listen to tape recorded excerpts which include bilingual or bidialectal speakers speaking in both of their languages or varieties. The subjects are asked to make judgments as to characteristics of the speakers without, however, realizing that the speakers recur in matched guises. Since the set of speakers for both languages or dialects is the same, any attitudinal differences found between the two sets of recorded excerpts must stem from attitudes toward the language variety and its speakers rather than the speakers actually heard. Thus, for example, lower class speakers are perceived as less intelligent or confident, although not less kind or good-natured (Fremder and Lambert 1973:244-245).

Several important findings have arisen from this work, such as the fact that subjective evaluations of social dialects or foreign languages are quite uniform throughout a speech community. These norms are acquired in early adolescence. Labov (1972g:310-311) has found a further important principle, namely that those speakers who use the highest degree of a stigmatized feature in their own natural speech show the greatest tendency to stigmatize others for their use

of this form. It is important to recognize that very few speakers realize they are using these stigmatized forms. As Labov (1972d:533) notes, "They hear themselves as using the prestige forms which occur sporadically in their careful speech and in their reading of isolated word lists. Secondly, the subjective responses tapped by our tests are only the overt values—those which conform to the value systems of the dominant middle-class group. There are surely other values, at a deeper level of consciousness, which reinforce the vernacular speech forms. . . . Labov (1971a:62) suggests what these values may be in a school situation: "There seems to be some permanent source of support for the nonstandard forms which leads many gifted speakers to prefer them. We are led to suspect the existence of covert values which do not normally appear in test situations. . . . The message that seems to be coming across to students can be paraphrased in this way: 'Don't talk like those big boys in the back of the room who beat up on kids and take their lunch money away; you should talk instead like the kids who sit up in the front of the room, get beat up, and have their lunch money taken away.'"

Some people have very strong attitudes about their language. For example, in general, Arabs believe that Arabic is the most perfect of all languages since God chose it as the medium through which to reveal the Koran. It is thought to be extremely rich in vocabulary as a result of its extensive "logical" derivation system, but Arabs may get defensive if you point out the chaotic nature of Arabic plurals, for example. Each believes his own dialect is closest to the classical (Ferguson 1968b). In eliciting responses to Ferguson's question "What Arabic is best?", Nader (1968:279) found that the answer depended partly on the informant's origin, for example, a person from Damascus visiting in Beirut would defend his dialect as the best, but in Damascus, he would say that the Bedouin dialect was best. No informant suggested that the dialect of some other town was best.

One hypothesis which has been suggested is that mutual intelligibility of closely related language varieties depends heavily on attitudes toward speakers of the other variety. Thus, for example, Russians and Serbs understand Slovaks better than the Czechs do, although the phonological and syntactic patterns of Czech and Slovak differ less than each does from Serbo-Croatian or Russian. It has been noted that as soon as members of a certain community in Nigeria recognized a related hinterland dialect, they refused to understand it. But some communities will make a great effort to understand despite great differences (Hymes 1973:65).

Acquisition of language attitudes is part of the process of linguistic socialization. Many preschool children have remarkably consistent notions on what is "correct" and "not correct" in language and can even make accurate judgments about the ethnicity of a speaker from speech alone. The prestige which various languages have in the schools is an interesting question. It seems rather certain that a language tends to have low prestige in areas where there are large numbers of native speakers of that language. Thus, Spanish has more prestige in Iowa than it does in Texas, and Navaho is much more highly regarded at the University of California, Los Angeles, than it is in Arizona. Some languages have had prestige because of certain supposed virtues they inculcated in the minds of those who

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studied them. Thus, Latin allegedly gave one a better grasp of English grammar, which was perceived as based on Latin, as well as providing a useful knowledge of the large English vocabulary based on Latin roots. French supposedly trained one in logic and supplied the student with instant culture. All languages, furthermore, were deemed to give insight into a foreign culture which was quite impossible to get without a knowledge of its language. This last claim on the surface, at least, seems to have some validity. The claim has been made also that knowledge of another language gives one insight into a different way of thinking. What makes these claims less relevant, however, is that the languages most commonly studied in the United States have structures very similar to English and reflect cultures of the same general variety as American culture. A much stronger case could be made for Navaho, Japanese, Swahili, Chinese, Hebrew, Turkish, or even Russian, as mind-stretchers than for Spanish, French or German. Nevertheless, educators will urge and students will respond to the study of foreign languages for reasons quite alien to their supposed virtues. Thus, while throughout the world French is studied largely as a result of its prestige in earlier days and as a result of strenuous efforts by the French government to promote the teaching of French abroad, the great extent of English study abroad is a direct reflection of the enormous political, military, and economic power of the United States. No doubt as power relations change throughout the world, these will be reflected in the attitudes toward and the teaching of foreign languages.

### Discussion questions

1. What is meant by bilingualism? How does it differ from diglossia? To what extent are these phenomena found in your community?
2. Are there any linguistic minorities in the city where you live? What language rights, if any, do they enjoy?
3. What foreign languages are taught at your university? Which are the most popular, and why?
4. Which foreign languages have the highest status in your university? Why do you feel this is so?
5. Would you describe the speech community to which you belong as homogeneous or heterogeneous? Discuss why you think so.
6. Describe some of the commonly held language attitudes of the persons best known to you. How do you feel these attitudes originated?
7. Ask some of your friends or family members to describe the "worst" and the "best" speakers they know. What is the class and ethnic background of these speakers? Do these language attitudes appear to be a reflection of their attitudes toward the groups to which the speakers belong?

## Language and social inequalities

One of the most pervasive of all sociocultural universals is social stratification, that is, the unequal social distribution of prestige, power, wealth, and privilege. This involves also the ranking of persons and groups along various dimensions of stratification (education, income, occupation, etc.), as well as the identification of ranked categories, such as social classes, ethnic groups, castes, or estates. The social scientist is interested in how such social inequalities come into being, are maintained, changed, and how they affect and are affected by other social variables.

In other words, it is patent that in all societies there are persons who are more powerful than others, that is, who are able to command goods and services and deference from others with or without their consent. Likewise, some persons or families are wealthier than others, while still others have more prestige and respect than others. The wealthier and more prestigious are also likely to be the more powerful, although these variables are by no means always perfectly correlated.

Linguistic inequality and social inequality are closely related. Christian (1972) has expressed the matter succinctly: "The ideal of linguistic democracy, in which the speech of every citizen is regarded with equal respect by all others, is perhaps the most unrealistic of all social ideals. Speech is one of the most effective instruments in existence for maintaining a given social order involving social relationships, including economic as well as prestige hierarchies."

Both language varieties and linguistic variables may be ranked. Socially diagnostic linguistic variables are those whose distribution differs on the basis of social rank. Stratification may be either *sharp* or it may be *gradient*, in which case there is a progressive increase in the frequency of occurrence of a variant in various social groups. Some variants may be socially *prestigious*, that is, they have been adopted by a high status group (e.g. "To whom would you like to speak") or they may be *stigmatized* variants, those features associated with low status groups (e.g. "Don't you have no more grapes left!").

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