4
Styles, gender, and social class

Styles

Geography provides a good beginning when we want to explain language variation. Dialectology is able to account for many of the differences that otherwise play havoc with those who seek a pure, unified language with a single set of correct forms. The differences between *dived* and *dove*, between *footpath* and *pavement,* between /bʌtə/, /bʌʔə/, and /bʌdə/ set difficult quandaries for someone trying to describe *the* English language. Being able to add regional labels to variations helps a great deal. Thus, dictionaries can label forms as *British, American*, or *Australian,* implying the existence of unmarked correct forms.

But even if this is accepted, there remains the issue of variations within individual speakers who come from a single location. Speakers of English sometimes use 'don't' and sometimes use 'do not'. Some Londoners sometimes say /bʌtə/ and at other times say /bʌʔə/. If you carefully record anyone speaking, you will find that there is still patterned variation in the pronunciation of a single phoneme, in the choice of words, and in grammar.

A first useful explanation is provided by the notion of **style** and the related dimension of **formality**. At times, we are more careful, and at times we are more relaxed in our speech or writing, just as at times we are more careful or more relaxed in other kinds of behaviour, like how we dress or eat. This varying level of attention to variety forms a natural continuum, the various levels of which can be divided up in different ways. Each language has its own way of doing this: some, like Javanese or Japanese, have a finely graded set of levels, marked specifically in morphological and lexical choice.

How many distinct points there are on what is really a continuum is not important, but most accounts of language (such as those in good dictionaries and complete grammars) now make some reference to levels of stylistic variation. The cautious writer or speaker is warned in this way how others might react to possible choices, just as etiquette books advise readers how to avoid embarrassment in social settings.

In the sociolinguistic interviews that Labov conducted in the New York City study referred to earlier (see Chapter 1), he found evidence of the informal style (the vernacular he was most interested in) being used when a person he was interviewing interrupted to speak to a child who had entered the room, or offered a cup of coffee to the interviewer, or became excited about the story he or she was telling. In the interview, Labov would elicit more formal use by asking the subject to read a passage or read a list of words. To obtain more casual speech, he asked the subject to tell an emotionally significant story. This gave him three or four levels, and the possibility of comparing changes in certain features at each of them.

In bilingual communities, these stylistic levels may be marked by switching from one variety to another. Officials in Switzerland who use Swiss German in intimate and casual circumstances move to High German for informal and formal speech. Paraguayan city-dwellers switch to Guarani for casual and intimate speech and jokes. Speakers of Arabic who use the vernacular in normal conversation shift to Modern Standard Arabic when they are giving public speeches.

The commonly accepted explanation for this stylistic variation is the care that speakers and writers take with their expression. The more formal the situation, this explanation goes, the more attention we pay to our language and so the more we are likely to conform to the favoured and educated norms of our society. It is in large measure an effect of formal education, especially common where the educational system aims to pass on the prestigious norms associated with literacy.

Attention or care is a good explanation as far as it goes, but it leaves open the question of where the norms come from, and it does not deal with the possibility of conscious choice of a less or more formal style. One explanation for these cases is the idea of **audience design**. A speaker who can control more than one variety chooses a level of speech according to the audience he or she is addressing. We might consciously choose an informal style when speaking to strangers in order to seem friendly. Related to this is unconscious **accommodation**; we automatically adjust our speech to be more like that of our interlocutor. Both of these approaches offer some idea of the importance of language in establishing social relations and in representing a speaker's sense of identity, a topic we will explore later in more detail.

It should be noted that this recognition of stylistic levels as being appropriate to specific social situations is in opposition to **normativism**, the approach taken by purists who claim that there is one 'correct' version and that all variation is incorrect and bad. When Webster's Dictionary in its fourth edition introduced stylistic labelling and listed such informal usages as 'ain't', there were many who criticized its admitting the barbarians into the gates of pure English.

Specialized varieties or registers and domains

Dialect concerns variations that are located regionally or socially. Style refers to differences in degree of formality. A third set of variations concerns the special variety (or **register**) especially marked by a special set of vocabulary (technical terminology) associated with a profession or occupation or other defined social group and forming part of its **jargon** or in-group variety. People who work at a particular trade or occupation develop new terms for new concepts. Phrases like *hacking* and *surfing the net* have no obvious meaning to those who are not keeping up with the computer revolution. Terms like a *sticky wicket* and *hit for a six* are understood best by people with some experience of cricket.

A specialized jargon serves not just to label new and needed concepts, but to establish bonds between members of the in-group and enforce boundaries for outsiders. If you cannot understand my jargon, you don't belong to my group. (You might have noticed how in this series of books, the writers are careful to identify new terms by putting them in **bold**, and to explain them in a glossary, all to make it easier for the novice reader to join the group of experts.)

Australian aboriginal secret societies developed their own special forms of language. Thieves and underworld jargons (sometimes called **cant**) are another example. The goal of these was often to make it hard for the outsider to understand conversations. This is not limited to the underworld. In Alsace, where the fact that so many people knew German made Yiddish more widely understandable, Jewish horse traders were reported to have used a great number of Hebrew terms for numbers and parts of a horse so as to keep their language secret. In the course of time, these terms might get known by all professionals in the field, and form part of the register of horse-traders. Gangs and other closed peer groups often develop their own forms of jargon to serve as markers of group membership and also to make their speech less intelligible to outsiders.

Dialects, styles, and registers as we have presented them are ways of labelling varieties of language. The starting point of our classification is the linguistic variation, which we attempt to explain by associating it with a specific set of social features. We might choose to work in the reverse direction, by classifying social situations, and then naming the variety that is suitable for it. A register is a variety of language most likely to be used in a specific situation and with particular roles and statuses involved. Examples might be a toast at a wedding, sports broadcast, or talking to a baby. A register is marked by choices of vocabulary and of other aspects of style.

A useful way of classifying social situations is to analyse them into three defining characteristics: place, role-relationship and topic. Together, these make up a set of typical **domains**. One common domain is *home*. Domains are named usually for a place or an activity in it. Home, then, is the place. The role-relationships associated with home (the people likely to be involved in speech events) include family members (mother, father, son, daughter, grandmother, baby) and visitors. There are a suitable set of topics (depending on the cultural pattern) such as activities of the family, news about family members, the meal, the household. A particular variety of language is appropriate to the domain. In a multilingual community, different languages may well be considered appropriate for different domains. In a multilingual family, different role-relationships might involve different language choice.

For instance, husband and wife might use one language to each other, but father and children might use another.

Another common domain is work. The place might be a factory or an office or a store. The role-relationships include boss, worker, colleague, customer, foreman, client, to mention just a few. The topics are work-related. Now we can understand some of the sociolinguistic complexity that occurs when two people who have one role-relationship at home (such as father and son) have another at work (boss and worker, for instance). When they speak, they can choose a register or language variety to show which relationship is dominant at the time.

Slang and solidarity

The importance of language in establishing social identity is also shown in the case of slang. One way to characterize **slang** is as special kinds of 'intimate' or in-group speech. Slang is a kind of jargon marked by its rejection of formal rules, its comparative freshness and its common ephemerality, and its marked use to claim **solidarity**.

Solidarity, or common group membership, is an important social force that has a major impact on language. The solidarity relations (the claims that we belong to the same group) underlie the notion of accommodation mentioned above. When we are talking to someone, most of us unconsciously move our speech closer to theirs (which explains why our accents change after we have lived in a new place for a long time). Similarly, by choosing the form of language associated with a specific group, we are making a claim to be counted as a member of that group.

This contrasts with the power relation, in which a person's speech carries a claim to be more or less powerful than the other. Slang is primarily speech claiming group membership, and it rejects the power dimensions associated with formal language.

Often, slang is associated with peer group and gang speech, intentionally used to obtain some degree of secrecy. It may be compared to the secret languages found in some tribes. In one Australian aboriginal language, there is a men's society with a secret language in which every word means its opposite. Pig Latin is a children's secret language in which a meaningless vowel is inserted after every syllable. *Canay uyay unayderaystanday*

thisay? In southern Arizona, the Spanish-American young people developed a secret variety called *Pachuco* in which they used idioms translated literally from English to Spanish, which couldn't be understood by either their Spanish-speaking elders or their English-speaking fellow students. Cockney rhyming slang (for example, 'titfer' for 'hat,' abbreviated from 'tit for tat') has also been widely publicized.

Slang regularly transgresses other social norms, making free use of taboo expressions. The use of words like 'fuck' and 'shit' in public media has become a mark of liberation or a sign of revolt, depending on one's point of view. But slang also sets up its own norms, the norms of the in-group, so that the gang is easily able to recognize a *lame* or outsider, who does not understand or who misuses slang terms. Slang thus serves social functions, setting and proclaiming social boundaries and permitting speakers to assert or claim membership of identity or solidarity groups. Slang is a feature of the speech of the young and the powerless. Its dynamic nature is partly an effect of the need to develop new in-group terms when slang terms are adopted by other speakers.

Language and gender

All these cases have started to show how language reflects, records, and transmits social differences, so we should not be surprised to find reflexes of gender differences in language, for most societies differentiate between men and women in various marked ways.

Observations of the differences between the way males and females speak were long restricted to grammatical features, such as the differences between masculine and feminine morphology in many languages. In earlier usage, the word **gender** was generally restricted to these grammatical distinctions. They cause problems for speakers of languages like English, where grammatical gender is marked mainly in pronouns, when they learn a language like French, where non-sexed items like table (*la table*) can be grammatically feminine.

It was ethnographers who first drew attention to distinct female and male varieties of language, often with clear differences in vocabulary. The famous anthropologist Levi-Strauss noted how an Amazonian father laughed at his young daughter for using the male word for 'hunting'. Other ethnographers have provided cases of marked differences in the language of men and women. American servicemen in Japan who learned Japanese from the women with whom they associated were thus a source of amusement to people who knew the language.

Historically, these differences sometimes seem to have arisen from customs encouraging marriage outside the community. If there is a regular pattern of men from village *A* marrying and bringing home to their village women from village *B*, then it is likely that the speech of women in village *A* will be marked by many features of the village *B* dialect. The preservation of these introduced features depends on the maintenance of social differentiation in occupations, status, and activities.

Children soon pick up the social **stereotypes** that underlie this discrimination. They learn that women's talk is associated with the home and domestic activities, while men's is associated with the outside world and economic activities. These prejudices often remain in place in the face of contrary evidence. Thus, while there is a popular prejudice that women talk more than men, empirical studies of a number of social situations (such as committee meetings and Internet discussion groups) have shown the opposite to be true.

There is some intriguingly suggestive evidence of differences in neurophysiological process of aspects of language between males and females. In a recent set of studies using functional magnetic resonance imaging, phonological processing in males was shown to be located in the left half of the brain and in females to involve both left and right parts of the brain. No difference in efficiency was shown, nor is there any evidence so far that any neurophysiological difference accounts for differences between male and female language. The causes are social rather than biological.

Of the social causes of gender differentiation in speech style, one of the most critical appears to be level of education. In all studies, it has been shown that the greater the disparities between educational opportunities for boys and girls, the greater the differences between male and female speech. This can be illustrated with American ultra-orthodox Jewish communities. Males in these communities are expected to spend longer studying traditional

Jewish subjects. Linguistically, this results in their stronger competence in Yiddish and Hebrew, and their weaker control of English. Females on the other hand spend more time on secular studies. While their Hebrew knowledge is much less, their English is much closer to standard. Studies of differences between the speech of Arab men and women also provide evidence that the major cause of difference is educational. In one village, we found greater differences between male and female speech in the half where girls had less education than boys than in the half where both boys and girls had more or less equal opportunity for schooling.

When offered an equal educational opportunity, there seems to be a tendency for women to be more sensitive than men to the status norms of the language. The tendency has been noted in some cities for lower-class males to have much tighter social networks (their neighbours are male relatives, alongside whom they work, and with whom they share leisure hours) and to find their norms within the tight network. The women in these cities have looser multiple networks; they mix more with people outside their community, and so their speech is influenced by the social norms of the wider society.

Studies of gender differences have shown the power of stereotyping. A *poet* is taken more seriously than a *poetess*; women's status is lowered by references to the *girls*. In Hebrew, only the lower ranks in the army (up to the rank of lieutenant) have feminine forms. The use of **generic masculine** ('Everyone should bring *his* lunch, we need to hire the best *man* available'), however well-meaning and neutral the speaker's intention may be, reinforces the secondary status of women in many social groups. With the growth of social awareness in this area over the past decades, there have been many attempts to overcome this prejudicial use of language.

In contrast to the words of the popular saying that 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me', it has been shown that **anthropocentric speech** which assumes that men are more important than women is often accompanied by prejudices and actions that do real damage. These usages do not just reflect and record current prejudices, but they are easily transmitted, reinforcing the lower power and prestige ascribed to women in a society. Many publishers and journals now adhere to guidelines to avoid gender stereotyping and gender-prejudiced language use. Everyone should take care with their language.

Exploring the correlations between gender-related linguistic differences and social differences between the genders is another way to see how closely language and social variation are related. But modern societies are divided in other ways too, one of the best studied being social stratification or division into social classes.

Social stratification

While note had been taken earlier of the effect of social class on speech, it was the work of William Labov in New York that established **social stratification**, the study of class distinction in speech, as a major topic in sociolinguistics. Labov himself started out with a purely linguistic question. He wanted to know how, in the terms of the structural linguistics that was in vogue when he was a graduate student, to set up a phonological analysis that included features that were sometimes zero. What were you to do, he asked, in New York City, where speakers sometime pronounced the /r/ after a vowel (post-vocalic /r/) and sometimes didn't? The notion of **free variation**, the notion that the choice of variant was uncontrolled and without significance, was widely used for such cases, but it seemed an unsatisfactory dodging of the question.

He wondered next whether there was any scientifically observable explanation to the variation. In a clever pilot study (see above, page 11), he found that the shop staff (socioeconomically similar in level, but finely varied by the differences in customers and prices) showed regular and predictable variation. The percentage of *r*-coloration (any tendency to pronounce post-vocalic /r/), he found, correlated closely with the social level of the customers of the store. In fact, in one store, he found a higher percentage of use of the prestige feature among salespeople on the higher, more expensive floors of the store.

In later studies, using extensive interviews with subjects selected on the basis of their socioeconomic classification, the relevance of sociolinguistic evidence to socioeconomic stratification was firmly established. In cities, variations in speech provide clear evidence of social status.

There are historical explanations for social differentiation. The

coming of a group of Tewa speakers to the Hopi villages in Arizona explains why the people in the village of Hano were bilingual in Hopi and Tewa, but it was sociocultural and religious differences that accounted for the maintenance of this cleavage for two hundred years. There were similar reasons for the three distinct dialects of Baghdad Arabic, one Christian, one Jewish, and the third Moslem. The different religious groups lived in the same city while maintaining social and cultural isolation.

While historical differences may also be the original cause of social differentiation in large cities (and this is certainly true now as increasingly large groups of immigrants arrive in most cities), there can develop socially marked stratification within a single language. New York is the classic case. Leaving aside the special minority groups (the Blacks and the Hispanics), New Yorkers speak a kind of English that includes the same features, but with certain crucial and socially relevant differences in their distribution. Certain salient phonological variables (such as the r-colouring or the pronunciation of [th] or the height of the vowels in *bad* or *off*) vary in all speakers in various situations, with a more standard or prestigious version appearing more often in more formal speech. Thus, the pattern for lower middle-class speakers in New York was to use the stigmatized /t/ or /tθ/ pronunciations only occasionally in very careful speech reading word lists, to use it about 20% of the time in careful speech, and to use it 30% of the time in casual speech.

Each social level (as determined on the basis of income, occupation, and education) had a similar gradation according to style or degree of formality. But there were also marked differences between the social levels. In casual speech, for instance, the upper-middle class would use a stigmatized form about 10% of the time, the lower-middle class about 20%, the working class about 80%, and the lower class about 90%. Thus, the same feature differentiated the stylistic level and the social level.

In practice, these fairly fine differences, which affect only a small part of speech and do not interfere with intelligibility, help New Yorkers to identify themselves and each other socially. Sometimes they do this even more subtly and sensitively than do more obvious socioeconomic markers like income and education.

There are social forces leading to or delaying the diffusion. One striking observation was a tendency in the upwardly mobile and socially insecure lower-middle class to over-use (relative to the normal slope) socially desirable features in very careful speech and reading. This **hypercorrection** suggests that the feature is recognized as a stereotype rather than still serving as an unconscious social marker.

The analyses we have discussed to date of these variations have depended on associating linguistic features (for example, the percentage of r-coloration) with social or demographic factors (gender, educational level, socioeconomic status). As far as it goes, the explanatory power of these correlations appears good, but correlation and causation are not the same thing. We obtain a more powerful account of what is involved if we add social psychological factors like attitude and accommodation, and consider them as causes.

Accommodation and audience design

How is it that dialect differences and stylistic differences emerge? The simplest solution is that people tend to talk like the people they talk to most of the time. The physical isolation of villages explains why their dialects are different from the dialects of neighbouring villages, and even more different from those of more distant villages and towns. Similarly, the social isolation of specific groups explains why their languages or dialects remain relatively unaffected by that of other groups. It was because the religious groups in Baghdad had limited contact with each other that the Christians, Moslems, and Jews there maintained distinctive dialects. It was the social distance between the castes in an Indian village that led to differences in their speech.

An alternative suggestion is to consider the driving force as **audience design**, a concept mentioned earlier on page 33. In this view, the speaker, consciously or not, chooses a stylistic level appropriate for the audience he or she wishes to address. The notion comes from radio announcers, who suit their style to their audience. The same announcer will be found to have distinct styles when reading a news item on a national station and when introducing a song on a popular music station. By selecting a style appropriate to a particular audience, the announcer is identifying

himself or herself with the audience or claiming membership of the group that it constitutes.

Adding this social dimension increases the explanatory power. One speaks most like the people with whom one regularly associates, but one may also choose, in appropriate circumstances, to allow one's speech to move in the direction of another group. As we noted earlier, many speech sounds are not always pronounced in the same way by the same speaker, but their realizations form rather a pattern not unlike the patterns of bullet or arrow hits on a target. While there may be a rare bull's-eye, the shots as a whole form a more or less consistent group. If one moves one's aim, the whole group moves, with the centre changing.

In conversations between people with differing pronunciation, it has been noticed that there is a common tendency for the pronunciation of the two to move slightly closer together. This process, called **accommodation**, explains the way that a person who moves to a new part of the country gradually modifies his or her speech in the direction of the new norm. Because we are talking about changes in probabilities and percentages, the change need not be immediately obvious to the speaker or the listener. But if we record a conversation between two speakers of differing varieties, we find that their percentage of use of some features often converge. It is common to find that your speech—choice of vocabulary, grammatical forms, and even pronunciation—moves towards that of your interlocutor.

The opposite effect also occurs, when a speaker chooses not to converge but to diverge, by moving his or her speech away from the other party. Rather than converging, one may choose to stress features that connect one not to the other person present, but to an absent but valued hypothetical audience, such as a peer group or an admired outsider. We have already mentioned the same phenomenon in the use of non-standard slang for showing in-group membership.

This powerful sociolinguistic phenomenon would seem related to the most fundamental linguistic features involved in social bonding. Just as two speakers talking together tend to be moving in the same rhythm, so they unconsciously adapt their speech to accommodate to each other. It is this sympathetic movement and its absence that enable a speaker easily to pick out which members of his or her audience are not listening.

The same factor also accounts for the tendency to speak like one's friends and peers, and to modify one's speech either in their direction, or to some other socially desirable prestige group. Consciously and unconsciously, one uses one's speech, through selection among socially labelled variants which need not change meaning or interfere with intelligibility, to express a claim of solidarity and social group membership. In an early study of the speech of high-school students on Martha's Vineyard, an island off the New England coast, it was shown that the height of their /æ/ (as pronounced in words like cat and mat) signalled either their intention to live the rest of their life on the island, or their desire to move to the mainland.

The existence of variation in language, therefore, is not accidental or meaningless. It adds a vital set of social dimensions, making it possible for language to reflect and record an individual's demographic, geographic, sociological, educational, and religious background. It helps constitute identity; it claims solidarity; it expresses attitudes towards power and prestige. This rich complexity helps us understand both how and why language changes, for the social forces injected into variation provide the dynamism of change.

The possibility of using variation in language to identify group membership can have harmful effects, when it is associated with prejudice. Telephone operators at car factories in Detroit were reported to be trained to recognize Afro-Americans by their speech and to say there were no jobs available. Where there is prejudice against foreigners or members of a social class, speaking a stigmatized variety can do serious harm. In a study in New York, adding non-standard features to a taped sample of a voice led listeners to lower their judgement of the employability of a speaker. The more stratified a society, the more likely it is that speaking a prestige variety will be rewarded, and that speaking a non-standard variety will lead to prejudicial treatment.

While it is possible, as we have seen, to recognize factors like these through the study of variation with a single language variety, they are even more salient when two or more languages are involved. In the next chapter we will look at bilinguals and bilingualism.

related to topic. Showing the effect of domain differences, a speaker's vocabulary will develop differentially for different topics in the two languages. Thus, speakers of a language who have received advanced education in a professional field in a second language will usually not have the terms in their native language. Scientists trained in an English-speaking country giving university lectures in their own language often mix in English words or even switch to English phrases and sentences.

More interesting effects are achievable by shifts concerned with role-relationships. It is important to note that each of a bilingual's languages is likely to be associated not just with topics and places, but also with identities and roles associated with them. In the midst of speaking about work matters in Language A, a sentence or two in Language B will be able to show that the two speakers are not just fellow-employees but also fellow members of an ethnic group. The use of tags and expressions from Language B while speaking Language A enables a speaker to make this kind of identity claim easily. This kind of shift, called **metaphorical switching**, is a powerful mechanism for signalling social attitudes or claiming group membership or solidarity.

The selection of a language by a bilingual, especially when speaking to another bilingual, carries a wealth of social meaning. Each language becomes a virtual guise for the bilingual speaker, who can change identity as easily as changing a hat, and can use language choice as a way of negotiating social relations with an interlocutor.

The bilingual individual thus provides a rich field for sociolinguistic study. A full understanding of bilingualism, however, depends on a deeper understanding of the nature of the speech communities in which they operate. In the next chapter we will look at societal multilingualism.

6
Societal multilingualism

Multilingualism

The discussion of speech communities and repertoires in Chapter 2 foreshadowed our detailed consideration of the interest that sociolinguists take in bilingual and multilingual societies. Bilingualism and multilingualism, whether in an individual speaker or in a social group, are the most obvious and salient cases of variation to observe. With stylistic or dialectal variation, identifying each variety is harder and open to dispute, but with distinctly recognized languages, there is generally agreement on the varieties and their names. We can study how two or more languages intertwine and separate without first being forced, as we are when we talk about stylistic variations within a single language, to establish the criteria for difference. It is both the salience and the commonness of multilingualism that has led to its being so well studied.

Monolingual speech communities are rare; monolingual countries are even rarer. Even a country as linguistically homogeneous as Japan has its linguistic minorities like the Ainu and the Koreans, marginalized as they might be. True, many countries have developed an explicit or implicit language policy as though they were monolingual, but it is rare (and becoming rarer) for linguistic and national borders not to overlap in various complex ways. Most countries have more than one language that is spoken by a significant portion of the population, and most languages have significant numbers of speakers in more than one country.

Historically, multilingual communities evolve in a number of ways. One is as a result of migration, the voluntary or involuntary

movements of people speaking one language into the territory of people speaking another. When the Hopi Indians permitted or encouraged a group of Tewa Indians to move from the Rio Grande area to the Arizonan mesas (each group has a different version of the story), they produced a bilingual village, Hano, among nine that were Hopi-speaking. Mutual distrust and a ban on intermarriage that lasted into the beginning of the twentieth century kept the villages socially distinct. Later, the bilingual villagers of Hano added Spanish and Navajo to their language repertoires, and after the introduction of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, joined the rest of the Hopi in shifting towards English use.

Involuntary migration or forced movement of population was common in the ancient Middle East, as is recorded in the Biblical account of the Babylonian exile, and has continued to be a significant force accounting for multilingual communities. In the nineteenth century, the British policy of bringing indentured Indian workers to the Fijian sugar plantations led to Fiji's current division between speakers of the indigenous Fijian dialects and Hindi-speaking descendants of the original plantation workers. The African slave trade moved large numbers of native speakers of different languages into the East and West Indies, and led to the formation of the pidgins and creoles (to be discussed in a later section). In the twentieth century, the Soviet policy of forced movement of populations assured that many of the newly independent post-Soviet countries are saddled with a challenging multilingual problem. In the Baltic states, it is the Russian immigrants, once the rulers, who are faced with the challenge to learn the now dominant Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian.

In the years after the Second World War, Northern European countries, too, enhanced their multilingualism by encouraging guest workers from the Mediterranean areas. There are significant Turkish minorities in many parts of Europe, and Greek, Spanish, Algerian, and Italian immigrants moved north in the same way. In a response to the social and linguistic problems produced, a new Norwegian multilingual policy is intended to cope with (and encourage the maintenance of) nearly a hundred languages.

Voluntary migration has produced major changes in the linguistic make-up of many countries in the world. While some of its multilingualism was produced in other ways, the United States, as the world's foremost receiver of voluntary immigration, grew quickly into a multilingual society, constantly assimilating large numbers of the immigrants through a melting-pot policy. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the United States absorbed large communities of speakers of German, Norwegian, Greek, Italian, Yiddish, Polish, Ukrainian, Japanese, various Chinese languages, and Spanish. The rate of absorption was slowed down after 1923, when strict immigration laws were passed. There was some relaxation of this policy in the post-war period, including an influx of South East Asian speakers of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and other languages, and a recent wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Most of these groups have acquired English, and many have given up on their traditional languages. Throughout this period, continued immigration, legal and illegal, especially of Spanish speakers, and the rise of ethnic awareness have been threatening to upset this comfortable monolingual trend.

Migration from the countryside or from small towns to the large metropolitan cities that have grown everywhere in the twentieth century is another major cause of multilingual communities. In the Third World as much as in the developed countries, this movement to the cities is creating huge megalopolises, conurbations with populations in the millions, attracting complex patterns of multilingualism, and producing major problems for social, economic, and political development. As African cities expand at an ever-increasing rate, they too become highly multilingual.

Multilingualism has also historically been created by conquest and the subsequent incorporation of speakers of different languages into a single political unit. The incorporation of Brittany, Alsace, and Provence into France submerged the languages of these regions. The spread of English power over the British Isles produced multilingualism and lead to the loss of some Celtic languages. The growth of the Russian empire under the Czars, continued under Soviet rule, made the Soviet Union a multilingual country. The conquest of Central and South America by the Spaniards and Portuguese eventually produced countries with

large indigenous minorities, some still speaking many Indian languages. The occupation of New Mexico and Texas and the incorporation of Puerto Rico by the growing United States included new Spanish-speaking populations within territorial limits.

Colonial policies also led to multilingual states. While the Moslem Empire largely replaced the indigenous languages with Arabic, pockets of multilingualism remained—the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, the Aramaic speakers in Syria, the Copts in Egypt, the Berbers in Algeria and Morocco, to mention a few—and the language mixes led to the great variations in the spoken Arabic dialects held together by the general acceptance of an over-arching Classical Arabic. When Spain conquered Latin America, it created countries where Spanish dominated a mixture of marginalized indigenous varieties, including some, like Mayan, that had previously had their turn as the dominant language in a multilingual empire.

When the major European powers divided up Africa in the nineteenth century, they drew boundaries that left most post-independence states without a single majority language, and usually with languages that had many speakers outside as well as inside the new state borders. They thus opened the way, wittingly or not, for a tendency to adopt the colonial government's metropolitan language as a needed *lingua franca*. Newly independent states like India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Singapore also faced complex language policy decisions that were heavily weighted with effects of colonial policies.

Many of these former colonies might be considered cases of forced federation. More rarely, there has been voluntary federation. One classic case is Switzerland where speakers of French, German, Italian, and Romansch formed a multilingual state. Another is Belgium, where Walloon speakers of various French dialects, Flemish speakers of various Dutch dialects, and some speakers of German dialects added to the package, now form an uncomfortable but working French-Dutch bilingual state. Other federations, like the Serbo-Croatian union in Yugoslavia, or the Czech-Slovak union, brought into existence in the halcyon days of the post-First World War spirit of tolerant democracy and held in place in the post-Second World War period by Soviet power, have proved to be unstable after the collapse of the Soviet empire.

These diverse historical circumstances have produced many different kinds of multilingual mixes, sometimes stable and sometimes volatile and short-lived. The most common result of this **language contact** has been **language conflict**, producing pressure from one language on speakers of other languages to adopt it. This pressure, whether the conscious result of a planned policy or the effect of a multitude of unplanned factors, has produced challenges to social structure that many people have begun to worry about. The study of **language maintenance** and of **language shift** has thus become a central concern of sociolinguists interested in multilingual societies.

Language loyalty and reversing language shift

Many people nowadays have become troubled by the extinction of various species of animals and birds, and lists of endangered species are regularly publicized. Linguists have noticed that languages too are in danger of dying, and for some time have been studying **language loyalty,** the ability (or lack of it) of speakers of a language to stand up to the pressure of more powerful languages. They have expressed distress at the threatened fate of **endangered languages,** languages that are no longer being passed on to children as native languages, but are spoken by a contracting and aging group of adults.

One early major study looked at what happened to the immigrant and indigenous languages of the United States when faced by the inexorable power of English. Most American immigrant languages were slowly sapped of their strength as younger speakers shifted to English not just in the public domains, but also in their own community and homes. Some factors appeared to speed up the process or slow it down. The greatest resistance to language shift was found in groups that chose to isolate themselves both linguistically and culturally from the mainstream. Two clear cases were isolationist Mennonite Christian groups (especially Hutterian and Old Order Amish) and the ultra-orthodox Hassidic Jews, both of whom rejected not just the language but also the dress and social conduct of their new country. In these cases, the isolation was self-imposed.

A second group that maintained their languages were those

who were segregated and isolated by the outside society and whose access to the easy social mobility that other immigrants enjoyed was obstructed by social discrimination. The clearest cases here were the indigenous Native Americans and the various Spanish-speaking indigenous and immigrant groups. When they were denied access to jobs, housing, and education, they were at the same time cut off from easy access to the English that was assumed to be the way to assimilation.

Language shift has been studied in many parts of the world. There are groups that have worked actively to reverse the seemingly inevitable language shift that occurs when small weak languages, or the languages of marginalized groups, come into contact with large powerful languages used and favoured by the majority or dominant group. There have been many attempts to correct this loss of linguistic diversity. A commonly cited case is the national effort to revive the use of Irish in Ireland, a nationalistically inspired and state-supported initiative to preserve Irish in the western areas (the *Gaeltacht*) where it was still spoken, and to teach it through the schools in the other areas where there were few speakers left. In the English-speaking areas, students continue to learn Irish at school, but to use it very little outside school or afterwards. Even in the *Gaeltacht* there has been a continued loss, largely because of the failure to combine social and economic planning with linguistic. At first, the continuing poverty of the area led Irish speakers to move away to the cities or emigrate, in both cases switching to English; later, economic development plans brought in English speakers looking for jobs.

More successful was the **revitalization** of Hebrew, a strong ideologically based process realized between 1890 and 1914, mainly in Ottoman Palestine, by returning Zionists who were looking to build a new nation using an old language. In agricultural settlements, in new towns like Tel Aviv, and in communal settlements, Hebrew was revitalized. It had the component of **vitality** or natural intergenerational transmission restored after some 1700 years during which it had only been learned as an additional language. Building on the widespread knowledge of the continually enriched written language, and driven by the force of their ideological commitments, the revivers were successful in establishing modern Hebrew as the language used for all purposes in Israel today.

Activities aimed at **reversing language shift** are sometimes private and small (as with the few hundred enthusiasts working to revive the Cornish language) but often public and political. The efforts to save French language, culture, and identity in Quebec threaten to divide the province from the rest of Canada. In Spain, the post-Franco policy of granting semi-autonomy to the regions has led to strong government-supported campaigns for Basque and Catalan. In the Baltic States, the collapse of the Soviet Union has permitted the restoration of the power of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian. We shall return to discuss this issue later when we talk of language planning and policy.

Language and ethnic identity

Why does multilingualism and language contact entail so much emotional reaction? The answer lies not in the practical communicative realm, but in the symbolic function of languages and varieties. One of the most common ways of identifying a person is by his or her language. Because language is inherently involved in socialization, the social group whose language you speak is an important identity group for you. There are other markers of ethnic identity, such as food or clothing or religion. But language has a special role, in part because it organizes thought and in part because it establishes social relations.

Multilingual societies inevitably face conflict over language choice. Some aspects of concern for language choice can be explained practically, politically, or economically. The speakers of a language are in a stronger position when their language is used for national or international communication, or for government, or for trade and commerce, or for education. But the role of language in establishing social identity adds an additional, non-material dimension to the conflict.

Ethnic groups regularly use language as one of their most significant identifying features. There are some groups, like the Frisians in the north of the Netherlands, who are hard put to find other features that distinguish them from their neighbours. Commonly, the name of an ethnic group and its language are the same. Most ethnic groups believe that their language is the best medium for preserving and expressing their traditions.

One of the paradoxical effects of this connection of language and ethnicity may be understood by looking at the case of post-Franco Spain. With the granting of some degree of autonomy to the provinces, Catalan and Basque have once again been recognized as official languages in their own autonomous regions. The result of this new territorial policy has been to create problems for people who are ethnically Basque or Catalan but live outside the regions, and for people who are Castilian speakers but live within them.

As we will note in the next section, conflict over choice of language often accompanies the development of a new nation.

Language and politics

Language is regularly used in the exercise of political power. A government can attempt to control its minority groups by banning their language, as Turkey bans the use of Kurdish by one its larger minorities. By requiring that voting material be made available in Spanish and other minority languages, the US Federal Voting Act tried to increase minority participation in government. By offering extra pay to federal Civil Servants who knew both English and French, the Canadian government attempted to weaken the demand for Quebec separatism. By requiring all its citizens to pass examinations in Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian, the newly independent Baltic states attempted to redress the balance of power for indigenous citizens over the large Russian minority populations that were dominant during the period of Soviet rule. The issue of language choice is most critical in the case of a newly independent state, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

There are more subtle uses of language in politics. The use of a regional or a social dialect by a political leader is often a claim to a specialized ethnic identity. South American politicians sometimes claim greater regional identity by using more Indian features in their Spanish. Labour Party politicians in England have sometimes used regional accents to mark a dissociation from middle-class speech and values. Anwar Sadat backed away from Pan-Arabism by using more Egyptian vernacular in his speech when the norm for Arab public speech is the Classical language.

Language rights

The issue of language or linguistic rights provides an opportunity to attempt to take an ethical rather than a scientific view of language contact and conflict. There are a number of possible approaches. One, favoured by some linguists, puts emphasis on the right of a language, like any other endangered species, to survive. Because every language incorporates some unique features derived from the rich and varied experience of human beings, **language loss** (i.e. the loss of all its speakers) is held to be as serious as the loss of an animal or bird species. There are two possible ways of dealing with this. Most commonly, anthropological linguists have worked to preserve, in a grammar, dictionary, and collections of texts, as much of the language as possible while there is still one speaker alive. More recently, linguists have provided support to the speakers of the language in their efforts at reversing language shift.

The second approach is to focus not on the rights of the language as an abstraction but on the rights of the speakers of the language. Here, we may distinguish between the rights of the speakers of a language to use it, and their rights to maintain it by teaching it to their children.

The first of these issues concerns the rights of linguistic minorities or of individuals who do not speak the national or official languages of a political unit. To the extent that a state recognizes the right of its citizens and other inhabitants to access to work, health care, housing, education, justice, and democracy, so it must take care to deal with the potential lessening or blocking of these rights for those who do not speak, read, or write the official or national language or languages. There are several ways this right may be recognized. One is the provision of adequate instruction in the official or national language or languages to all who do not control it—not just children, but new immigrants and temporary foreign workers. A second is the provision of interpreting and translating services to those who have not yet had the opportunity to learn the national language. This first language right, therefore, is the right to learn the national language, and in the meantime, to be assisted in dealing with those situations where lack of control of it leads to serious handicaps.

A second right is not to be discriminated against, in access to work, education, justice, or health service, on the basis of being identified as a member of a group speaking another language or variety. This refers to the way in which linguistic minority members, however competent they may be in the standard language, are often classified as 'bilinguals' and afforded lower status. It also refers to the way in which speakers of an unfavoured dialect or accent or other variety of a language are automatically recognized as 'different' on linguistic grounds, and discriminated against. It should be noted that this right is part of the larger right not to be discriminated against on the basis of group membership, religion, gender, ethnic group, or other factors irrelevant to the matter being decided.

A third right concerns the right of a group of speakers of a language to preserve and maintain their own favoured language or variety, and to work to reverse any language shift to the status or prestige variety. Here, there are some more complex issues. One is the potential conflict between the rights of individuals and groups. A group may wish to preserve its language, but individual members may prefer to shift to the dominant language, which is generally a language more able to deal with modern life and economic success. Another is the issue of who should pay for the reverse shift efforts. Should it be the language community, and should it be provided outside the regular school system? Examples of this are the Greek and Chinese afternoon schools in the USA and some other countries, the Jewish Day School movement that has grown up in the USA, Canada, Australia, Latin America, and elsewhere, and the international schools that operate in many countries. Or should it be the state, in programmes to provide bilingual education to as many minority groups as possible? In this issue of linguistic minorities, it is generally accepted that indigenous minorities, like the Native Americans in the United States, have a higher claim to maintaining language, religion, and culture, than do immigrant groups who came by choice.

Considering language rights takes us into major issues of language policy, which will be dealt with in Chapter 7.

Pidgins and creoles

A second aspect of language contact is the development of distinct varieties of language. A **pidgin** language is one that evolves in circumstances where there are limited relations between the speakers of different languages, such as a market, or where there is a special situation of power relations, being typical of the kind of master–slave relation on a plantation. It is a variety of language that is marked by the fact that it is not a native language of anyone, but is learned only in contact by people who normally continue to speak their own language inside their own community. The complexity of a pidgin varies according to the communicative demands placed on it; as there are increasing functional demands, there is a growth in the power and complexity of the pidgin to meet them.

A pidgin is a social rather than an individual solution. There are cases where individual speakers acquire only a limited control of a language in which they need to do business. Such, for instance, was the limited knowledge of Navajo developed by white traders. Each speaker made his own mistakes and compromises. The term 'pidgin' is better kept for social varieties with established norms.

A pidgin involves the mixture of two or more languages. Sometimes, the grammatical system is based more or less on one language and the vocabulary is largely taken from another. In all cases, the grammar is simplified, that is to say certain features of the base language are dropped. Many different pidgins have been identified and described, including, to name a few, Nigerian Pidgin English, Papuan Pidgin English, Vietnamese Pidgin French, New Guinea Pidgin German, Kenya Pidgin Swahili, Fanalago (a pidgin based on Zulu), and Chinook Jargon.

In many social circumstances, pidgins have become quite stable over time. Spoken only as second languages, and functioning in limited domains as **languages of wider communication**, they are learned informally in contact and used especially as trade languages. In multilingual areas where each of the existing language groups maintain their distinctiveness and do not intermarry, the pidgin continues.

In many cases, there is a further development. This occurs when, as a result of intermarriage of a couple whose native

languages are different but who both speak pidgin, the pidgin is spoken at home and learned by children as a first or mother tongue. In the terms of contemporary linguistic theory, this leads to some fundamental changes. Children acquiring the language do so in the same way that children acquire any other language, and it is believed that this involves the same appeal to innate linguistic capacity and universals that accounts for first language acquisition. New features emerge as a result both of this and of the growing complexity of the social circumstances in which the language is used. It is no longer just a contact language, with limited social functions, but is called on to deal with an increasingly wide range of social needs. The process is called **creolization**, as the language expands and develops, displaying greater phonological and grammatical complexity.

Some of the better-described creoles are Haitian Creole, Tok Pisin (a creolized version of a New Guinea Pidgin English), and Hawaiian Creole English; some of the most recently recognized include Berbice Creole Dutch and Palanquero (Colombian Creole Spanish). These creoles appear to have much the same grammatical complexity as other natural languages, although they of course show many of the characteristics of their original pidgin status, such as the blended phonology, and the existence of two or more grammatical and lexical bases.

A third stage of development can occur when speakers of a creole or pidgin are introduced, usually by education, to the standard language on which the creole or pidgin was originally based. There can ensue what has been labelled a **post-creole continuum**, in which the various levels of social and stylistic variation may be filled by a version of the standard language at the upper end and of the creole or pidgin at the lower end. A Jamaican may, in various social situations, choose the creole called Jamaica Talk or one of the various intermediate levels, or a standard Jamaican version of English, or may switch from one to the other as in other kinds of code switching.

One controversy in sociolinguistics has been over the origin of the variety of English associated with the speech of Afro-Americans. For many years, it was assumed to be a non-Standard social dialect, similar to and based on the Southern regional dialects of American English, and reflecting the social isolation and inadequate education of the former slaves. Some psychologists pointed to certain features, such as the absence of the copula (the verb 'to be') in the present tense, or different rules of verb agreement, or the use of the double negative, as evidence of linguistic inferiority and therefore justification for discrimination against speakers of the variety. Linguists pointed out that these features are common in standard languages (Russian and Hebrew do not use a copula in the present tense, French negatives are usually double), and show that these and other features support a theory that **Black English**, as they labelled it, derives from an original creole like the Gullah still spoken in some communities. From this, others argued for its status as a separate language, and called for its recognition and maintenance. The controversy over what is variously called Black English, Afro-American Vernacular English, or Ebonics has raged in American educational situations for at least thirty years.

Because of their lack of formal recognition, pidgins and creoles are often treated just as a local jargon and linguistic aberration. It is only recently that they have become an area of great interest to linguists interested to learn about universal tendencies in languages and to study language status, attitudes to language, and the importance of language to group identity. There are still many controversies about how to describe them and how to explain their creation and development. But it is their very marginality that makes them interesting to sociolinguistics, for they are most open to social influences and, lacking academies and educational establishments, the least likely to be formalized and restricted by normativistic rule-making.

Diglossia

A third aspect of language contact relates to the issue of functional allocation. With a handful of languages, two distinct varieties of the same language are used, side by side, for two different sets of functions. The term **diglossia** (modelled on the word *bilingual*, and using Greek rather than Latin forms) was coined originally to label this phenomenon. In the Arabic-speaking world, there is the contrast between the Classical language and regional dialect. The same pattern, more or less, occurs in the German-

speaking cantons of Switzerland with High German as the standard language and Swiss German as the vernacular, in Haiti with French and Haitian Creole, and in Greece with the literary variety, *katharévusa*, and the vernacular, *dhimotikí*. While there are somewhat different historical reasons for each, and while the functional distribution is somewhat different, they share a set of distinctions. In each case, the standard (or H, from Higher) variety is used for literacy and literary purposes and for formal, public, and official uses, while the vernacular (or L, from Lower) for informal conversation and daily use. Paralleling the differences in use are differences in form. The grammar of the L variety is generally simpler. For instance, fewer distinctions in the L variety are marked by the use of grammatical suffixes. There are also major differences in the vocabulary of the two varieties.

One of the major differences is understandably in the prestige of the two varieties. The H language is associated generally with a body of important literature and carries with it the prestige of a great tradition or religion. It is more stable, being protected from change by its association with written texts and by an educational system. It is also likely to be used over a wider region and thus can serve some unifying purpose. The L varieties are more localized and show dialectal variation and the tendency to change of unwritten dialects.

While developed originally to apply to cases of two varieties of the same language, the notion of diglossia can also be applied to the way in which two (or more) distinct languages come to divide up the domains in the linguistic repertoire of a speech community. In colonial situations, for instance, the language of the government takes on many of the attributes of an H language, while the various vernaculars fit the definition of an L language. For Navajo Indians, English fills the H function and Navajo the L. Another classic case is Paraguay, where Spanish is the H variety (used in literacy, education, and government, and associated with city life) and Guarani is the vernacular, spoken in the villages and used in the cities as a mark of informality and Paraguayan identity.

Diglossia thus refers to a society that has divided up its domains into two distinct clusters, using linguistic differences to demarcate the boundaries, and offering two clear identities to the members of the community. It is important also to note the political

situations in which diglossia often occurs, with the H language associated with power. Educational pressure is normally in the direction of the H variety, and those who cannot master it are usually socially marginalized. At the same time, the L variety maintains value as a marker of membership of a peer or ethnic group.

While the classical diglossic cases have been stable for a long time, sociopolitical changes are starting to have their influence. Reference has been made to the possible emergence of an intermediate variety of Arabic, a kind of Educated Standard Arabic. In many countries, too, the globalization of English has introduced a third significant language, so that triglossia or polyglossia is starting to emerge. This tendency confirms our central theme, the close intertwining of social and linguistic structure, so that changes in one are reflected in changes in the other.