

Sociolinguistics

MA English

- Sociolinguistics and Sociology of Language
- Methodological Concerns
- What is Variation
 - Factors Contributing to Variation
- Language Varieties
- Language and Dialect
- Facts about Dialects
- Kind of Dialects

- *Slides start from the last section of chapter 1 in Wardhaugh's book*

Sociolinguistics and the Sociology of Language

- Some investigators have found it appropriate to try to introduce a distinction between *sociolinguistics* or *micro-sociolinguistics* and the *sociology of language* or *macro-sociolinguistics*.
- **sociolinguistics** is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and of how languages function in communication;
- the equivalent goal in the **sociology of language** is trying to discover how social structure can be better understood through the study of language, e.g., how certain linguistic features serve to characterize particular social arrangements.

- Hudson (1996, p. 4) has described the difference as follows: sociolinguistics is ‘the study of language in relation to society,’ whereas the sociology of language is ‘the study of society in relation to language.’
- In other words, in sociolinguistics we study language and society in order to find out as much as we can about what kind of thing language is, and in the sociology of language we reverse the direction of our interest.

- Coulmas (1997, p. 2) says that ‘micro-sociolinguistics investigates how social structure influences the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlate with social attributes such as class, sex, and age.
- Macro-sociolinguistics, on the other hand, studies what societies do with their languages, that is, attitudes and attachments that account for the functional distribution of speech forms in society, language shift, maintenance, and replacement, the delimitation and interaction of speech communities.’

- The view I will take here is that both sociolinguistics and the sociology of language require a systematic study of language *and* society if they are to be successful.
- There is no sharp dividing line between the two, but a large area of common concern.

Methodological Concerns

- Sociolinguistics should encompass everything from considering ‘who speaks (or writes) what language (or what language variety) to whom and when and to what end’ (Fishman, 1972b, p. 46), that is, the social distribution of linguistic items, to considering how a particular linguistic variable might relate to the formulation of a specific grammatical rule in a particular language or dialect, and even to the processes through which languages change.
- Whatever sociolinguistics is, it must be oriented toward both data and theory: that is, any conclusions we come to must be solidly based on evidence.
- Above all, our research must be motivated by questions that can be answered in an approved scientific way.

- As part of an attempt to work out a set of principles, or axioms, which sociolinguistic investigations should follow, Bell (1976, pp. 187–91), drawing extensively on the work of Labov, has suggested eight as worthy of consideration:
- ***1. The cumulative principle.*** The more that we know about language, the more we can find out about it, and we should not be surprised if our search for new knowledge takes us into new areas of study and into areas in which scholars from other disciplines are already working.

- **2. *The uniformation principle.*** The linguistic processes which we observe to be taking place around us are the same as those which have operated in the past, so that there can be no clean break between *synchronic* (i.e., descriptive and contemporary) matters and *diachronic* (i.e., historical) ones.
- **3. *The principle of convergence.*** The value of new data for confirming or interpreting old findings is directly proportional to the differences in the ways in which the new data are gathered; particularly useful are linguistic data gathered through procedures needed in other areas of scientific investigation.

- **4. *The principle of subordinate shift.*** When speakers of a non-standard (or subordinate) variety of language, e.g., a dialect, are asked direct questions about that variety, their responses will shift in an irregular way toward or away from the standard (or superordinate) variety, e.g., the standard language, so enabling investigators to collect valuable evidence concerning such matters as varieties, norms, and change.
- **5. *The principle of style-shifting.*** There are no 'single-style' speakers of a language, because each individual controls and uses a variety of linguistic styles and no one speaks in exactly the same way in all circumstances.

- **6. *The principle of attention.*** ‘Styles’ of speech can be ordered along a single dimension measured by the amount of attention speakers are giving to their speech, so that the more ‘aware’ they are of what they are saying, the more ‘formal’ the style will be.
- **7. *The vernacular principle.*** The style which is most regular in its structure and in its relation to the history of the language is the vernacular, that relaxed, spoken style in which the least conscious attention is being paid to speech.
- **8. *The principle of formality (Observer’s Paradox).*** Any systematic observation of speech defines a context in which some conscious attention will be paid to that speech, so that it will be difficult, without great ingenuity, to observe the genuine ‘vernacular.’

- Wardaugh Chapter 2 + Other sources

Language Variation

Language Varieties

- No two speakers of a language speak exactly the same way
- No individual speaker speaks the same way all the time
- Language variety refers to the various forms of language triggered by social factors.
- Language may change from region to region, from one social class to another, from individual to individual, and from situation to situation. These actual changes result in the varieties of language.

Variety

- all languages exhibit internal variation, that is, each language exists in a number of varieties and is in one sense the sum of those varieties. But what do we mean by *variety*?
- Hudson (1996, p. 22) defines a variety of language as '*a set of linguistic items with similar distribution*,' a definition that allows us to say that all of the following are varieties: Canadian English, London English, the English of football commentaries, etc.
- A variety can therefore be something greater than a single language as well as something less, less even than something traditionally referred to as a dialect.

- Ferguson (1972, p. 30) offers another definition of variety: ‘any body of human speech patterns which is **sufficiently homogeneous** (similar) to be analyzed by available techniques of synchronic description and which has a sufficiently large repertory (production/performance/representation) of elements and their arrangements or processes with broad enough semantic scope to function in all formal contexts of communication.’
- ‘sufficiently homogeneous’ in this last quotation. Complete homogeneity is not required;

- Hudson and Ferguson agree in defining *variety* in terms of a specific set of ‘linguistic items’ or ‘human speech patterns’ (presumably, sounds, words, grammatical features, etc.) which we can uniquely associate with some external factor (presumably, a geographical area or a social group).

- Hymes (1974, p. 123) has observed that language boundaries between groups are drawn not on the basis of the use of linguistic items alone, because attitudes and social meanings attached to those items also count. He says:

Language variation

- No two speakers of a language speak exactly the same way
 - Between group variation = *intergroup variation*
- No individual speaker speaks the same way all the time
 - Within-speaker variation = *intraspeaker variation*

Factors that contribute to variation

- Social situation / Status
- Occupation / Profession
- Age
- Gender
- Geography
- Education
- Social status/class
- Ethnicity / Racial Origins

Language and Dialect

Dialect

- *A language variety, spoken by a speech community, that is characterized by systematic features (e.g., phonological, lexical, grammatical) that distinguish it from other varieties of that same language*

Idiolect: the speech variety of an individual speaker

Language

... dialect dialect dialect ...

... idiolect idiolect idiolect ...

- **Language** = a continuum of dialects
- **Dialect** = a continuum of idiolects

Misconceptions about 'dialect'

- Dialect ≠ 'substandard'
- Dialect ≠ 'incorrect'
- Dialect ≠ 'slang'

FACT: Everyone speaks a dialect

Language vs. dialect?

- Linguistic criterion
 - Mutual intelligibility
 - YES? = dialects
 - NO? = languages
- e.g., British vs. American vs. Irish vs. Australian (= dialects of English)

L1...D1 L1...D2 L1...D3 L1...D4 L1...Div L2...Diii L2...Dii L2...Di L2...L2

Piedmontese, (Italy)



Facts about dialects

- All languages consist of dialects (a language is a group of dialects; to speak a language is to speak a dialect of that language)
- Therefore, everyone speaks at least one dialect
- Dialect differences are usually minor and dialects of a language are usually mutually intelligible
- Dialects are geographically, socially, politically determined

Facts about dialects

- Dialect variation is a matter of **difference, not deficit**.
- Nonstandard dialects are “self-contained” systems, with their regular phonological and syntactic rules.
- Nonstandard dialects of English are close relatives to SE, sometimes reflecting older forms of SE.

Language vs. Dialect

Language (prestige) and dialect (stigma)

The stigmatization of the term dialect

1. I don't speak dialect
2. in reality, all speakers of English speak some dialect, regardless of its social status.

Most speakers use a variety of different dialects or styles in different situations.

- Writing
- Colloquial speech (with friends, family)
- Formal speech (with strangers, authority figures)

LANGUAGE AND DIALECT

- What is the difference between language and dialect?
 - Variety is a term used for to replace both terms
 - Hudson says “a set of linguistic items with similar distribution”
 - Variety is some linguistic shared items which can uniquely be associated with some social items

Everybody speaks a dialect

Accent → differences in pronunciation between one variety of a language and another

Dialect

1. a variety of language used by a group whose linguistic habit pattern both reflect and are determined by shared regional, social, or cultural perspectives.
2. all the differences between varieties of a language, those in pronunciation, word usage, syntax, and variation of the given community.
3. to apply to all varieties, not just to non-standard varieties

Kinds of dialect

1. Regional dialect

2. Social dialect

❖ It is possible in a given community, people speak more than one dialect.

Social dialects

Factors such as occupation, place of residence, education, income, racial or ethnic origin, cultural background, caste, religion related to the way people speak.

Social dialect originate from social groups and depend on a variety of factors; social class, religion, and ethnicity.

Social dialects: examples

e.g.

1. Caste in India often determines which variety of a language a speaker use.
2. Christian, Muslim and Jewish in Baghdad speak different variety of Arabic.
3. Ethnic group in America, e.g. Labov's work in NY.
4. Speakers of Jewish and Italian ethnicity differentiated from the standard variety or Black English.

Regional Dialect

Very distinctive local varieties → regional dialect

1. It is reflected in the differences in pronunciation, in the choice and forms of words, and in syntax.
2. There is a dialect continuum.
3. Various pressures-political, social, cultural, and educational- serve to harden current national boundaries and to make the linguistic differences among states
4. Dialect geography → term → used to describe attempts made to map the distributions of various linguistic features

Accent

- Dialect must not be confused with ‘accent’.
Standard English is spoken in a variety of accents. RP is the English accent that has achieved certain eminence.
 - a. associated with a higher social or educational background
 - b. most commonly taught to students EFL
 - c. other names for this accents: the Queen’s English, Oxford English, BBC English.

Why do some dialects have more prestige than others?

Some dialects have more prestige

1. Historical factors
2. Other factors

Such dialect is called 'standard' or 'consensus dialects.'

This designation :

1. Externally imposed
2. The prestige of a dialect shifts as the power relationship
3. The prestige of the speakers shift

Dialect: Prestige and Stigma

- A **prestige variety** is a dialect associated with mainstream social prestige – for example a dialect that sounds “educated” or “sophisticated”
- A **stigmatized variety** is a dialect associated with negative features, from a mainstream social perspective: e.g. “uneducated” “lower class”

Standard vs. non standard language

Nothing to do with differences between formal & colloquial (bad language)

Standard language

1. Variety of English, used in print, taught in schools to non-native speakers.
2. Spoken by educated people & used in news broadcast.
3. The centralization of English political and commercial life at London
4. Gave the prominence over other dialects

Standard English → widely codified grammar & vocabulary

RP → developed largely in the English public schools & required of all BBC announcers (BBC World Service)

Standard language

1. A small number of regional differences
2. Standard Scottish \neq standard English
English \neq American standard

British : I have got

American : I have gotten

English : It needs washing

Scottish : It needs washed

Speech Community

***A speech community* is a group of people who share a set of rules and norms for communication and interpretation of speech.**

“Rules and norms” includes everything from intonation and vocabulary, to body positioning and eye contact

Ottenheimer pg. 94 – “A speech community is a group of people who share one or more varieties of language and the rules for using those varieties in everyday communication.”

The idea of a **speech community** allows us to do two things:

- 1) Focus on a smaller social unit than all the speakers of a language.
- 2) Get away from the idea that one language = one culture

Can we belong to more than one speech community?

- Wardaugh Chapter 2

- Haugen (1966a) has pointed out that *language* and *dialect* are ambiguous terms. Ordinary people use these terms quite freely in speech; for them a dialect is almost certainly no more than a local non-prestigious (therefore powerless) variety of a real language.
- The situation is further confused by the distinction the French make between *un dialecte* and *un patois*. The former is a regional variety of a language that has an associated literary tradition, whereas the latter is a regional variety that lacks such a literary tradition. Therefore *patois* tends to be used pejoratively; it is regarded as something less than a dialect because of its lack of an associated literature.

- Haugen points out that, while **speakers of English have** never seriously adopted *patois* as a term to be used in the description of language, they have **tried to employ both *language* and *dialect* in a number of conflicting senses. *Dialect* is used both for local varieties of English, e.g., Yorkshire dialect, and for various types of informal, lower-class, or rural speech. ‘In general usage it therefore remains quite undefined whether such dialects are part of the “language” or not. In fact, the dialect is often thought of as standing outside the language. . . . As a social norm, then, a dialect is a language that is excluded from polite society’ (pp. 924–5). It is often equivalent to *nonstandard* or even *substandard*, when such terms are applied to language, and can **connote various degrees of inferiority, with that connotation of inferiority carried over to those who speak a dialect.****

- We can observe too that questions such as ‘Which language do you speak?’ or ‘Which dialect do you speak?’ may be answered quite differently by people who appear to speak in an identical manner.
- Gumperz ‘a bewildering array of language and dialect divisions.’
- He further adds: ‘sociohistorical factors play a crucial role in determining boundaries.’
 - Hindi and Urdu in India,
 - Serbian and Croatian in Yugoslavia [of that date],
 - Fanti and Twi in West Africa,
 - Bokmål and Nynorsk in Norway,
 - Kechwa and Aimara in Peru, to name just a few,
- All of these are recognized as discrete languages both popularly and in law, yet they are almost identical at the level of grammar.

- The Hindi–Urdu situation that Gumperz mentions is an interesting one. **Hindi and Urdu are the same language, but one in which certain differences are becoming more and more magnified for political and religious reasons.** Hindi is written left to right in the **Devanagari script**, whereas Urdu is written right to left in the **Arabic–Persian script**. Whereas Hindi draws on **Sanskrit for its borrowings**, Urdu draws on **Arabic and Persian sources**. **Large religious and political differences make much of small linguistic differences.** The written forms of the two varieties, particularly those favoured by the elites, also emphasize these differences. **They have become highly symbolic of the growing differences between India and Pakistan.** (We should note that the situation in India and Pakistan is in almost direct contrast to that which exists in China, where mutually unintelligible Chinese languages (called ‘dialects’ by the Chinese themselves) are united through a common writing system and tradition.)

- Perhaps some of the difficulties we have with trying to define the term *language* arise from trying to subsume various different types of systems of communication under that one label. An alternative approach might be to acknowledge that there are different kinds of languages and attempt to discover how languages can differ from one another yet still be entities that most of us would want to call languages rather than dialects. It might then be possible to define a dialect as some sub-variety of one or more of these entities.

- One such attempt (see Bell, 1976, pp. 147–57) has listed seven criteria that may be useful in discussing different kinds of languages. **According to Bell, these criteria**
 - 1. standardization,**
 - 2. vitality,**
 - 3. historicity,**
 - 4. autonomy,**
 - 5. reduction,**
 - 6. mixture, and**
 - 7. *de facto* norms)**may be used to distinguish certain languages from others.

- *Standardization* refers to the process by which a language has been codified in some way. That process usually involves the development of such things as grammars, spelling books, and dictionaries, and possibly a literature.
- Standardization also requires that a measure of agreement be achieved about what is in the language and what is not.
 - Once standardized, change is resisted (it'd undo what has been done)
 - It's now possible to teach it in a deliberate manner.
 - Also takes on ideological dimensions – social, cultural, and sometimes political – beyond the purely linguistic ones.
 - In Fairclough's words (2001, p. 47) it becomes 'part of a much wider process of economic, political and cultural unification . . . of great . . . importance in the establishment of nationhood, and the nation-state is the favoured form of capitalism.'

What makes a variety standard?

- Haugen (1966a) has indicated certain steps that must be followed if one variety of a language is to become the standard for that language.
 - Formal Considerations
 - Codification
 - the development of such things as grammars and dictionaries
 - Elaboration
 - the use of the standard in such areas as literature, the courts, education, administration, and commerce
 - Functional Considerations
 - a norm must be selected and accepted because neither codification nor elaboration is likely to proceed very far if the community cannot agree on some kind of model to act as a norm. That norm is also likely to be – or to become – an idealized norm, one that users of the language are asked to aspire to rather than one that actually accords with their observed behaviour.
 - Selection of the norm may prove difficult because choosing one vernacular as a norm means favoring those who speak that variety.

- Standardization has other benefits
 - It unifies individuals and groups within a larger community
 - it can be employed to reflect and symbolize some kind of identity: regional, social, ethnic, or religious.
 - A standardized variety can also be used to give prestige to speakers, marking off those who employ it from those who do not,
- It still may not be at all easy for us to define *Standard English* because of a failure to agree about the norm or norms that should apply.

- Trudgill (1995, pp. 5–6) defines Standard English as follows
 - Standard English is that variety of English which is usually used in print, and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations. The difference between standard and nonstandard, it should be noted, has nothing in principle to do with differences between formal and colloquial language, or with concepts such as ‘bad language.’ Standard English has colloquial as well as formal variants, and Standard English speakers swear as much as others.

- Power of a strong Standard
 - Standard English is so powerful that it exerts a tremendous pressure on all local varieties, to the extent that many of the long-established dialects of England and the Lowlands English of Scotland have lost much of their vigour.
 - There is considerable pressure on them to converge toward the standard.
 - This latter situation is not unique to English: it is also true in other countries in which processes of standardization are under way.

- Governments sometimes very deliberately involve themselves in the standardization process by establishing official bodies of one kind or another to regulate language matters or to encourage changes felt to be desirable.
 - Académie Française in 1635
 - the codification of French spelling, vocabulary, and grammar.
 - Its goal was to fashion and reinforce French nationality, a most important task considering that, even two centuries later in the early nineteenth century, the French of Paris was virtually unknown in many parts of the country, particularly in the south.

- Standardization is sometimes deliberately undertaken quite rapidly for political reasons.
 - In the nineteenth century Finns developed their spoken language to make it serve a complete set of functions. They needed a standardized language to assert their independence from both Swedes and Russians. They succeeded in their task so that now the Finnish language has become a strong force in the nation's political life and a strong marker of Finnish identity among Germanic tongues on the one side and Slavic tongues on the other.

- The standardization process occasionally results in some languages actually achieving more than one standardized variety.
 - Norwegian is a good example with its two standards, Nynorsk and Bokmål. In this case there is a special problem, that of trying to unify the two varieties in a way that pleases everyone.
- Countries with two or more competing languages that cannot possibly be unified (by some means) may tear themselves apart, as we saw in Yugoslavia, or periodically seem to come very close to doing that, as with Belgium and Canada

- **Standardization is also an on-going matter**, for only ‘dead’ languages like Latin and Classical Greek are standardized for all time.
 - Living languages change and the standardization process is necessarily an on-going one. It is also one that may be described as more advanced in languages like French or German and less advanced in languages like Bahasa Indonesia and Swahili.
 - Hindi is still in the process of being standardized in India. That process is hindered by widespread regional resistance to Hindi out of the fear that regional languages may be submerged or, if not submerged, quite diminished.

- The standardization process is also obviously one that attempts either to reduce or to eliminate diversity and variety. However, there may well be a sense in which such diversity and variety are ‘natural’ to all languages, assuring them of their vitality and enabling them to change (see chapter 8). To that extent, standardization imposes a strain on languages or, if not on the languages themselves, on those who take on the task of standardization. That may be one of the reasons why various national academies have had so many difficulties in their work: they are essentially in a no-win situation, always trying to ‘fix’ the consequences of changes that they cannot prevent, and continually being compelled to issue new pronouncements on linguistic matters.

- Unfortunately, those who think you can standardize and ‘fix’ a language for all time are often quite influential. They often find ready access to the media, there to bewail the fact that English, for example, is becoming ‘degenerate’ and ‘corrupt,’ and to advise us to return to what they regard as a more perfect past. They may also resist what they consider to be ‘dangerous’ innovations, e.g., the translation of a sacred book into a modern idiom or the issue of a new dictionary. Since the existence of internal variation is one aspect of language and the fact that all languages keep changing is another, we cannot be too sympathetic to such views.

Vitality

- *Vitality*, the second of Bell's seven criteria, refers to the existence of a living community of speakers. This criterion can be used to distinguish languages that are 'alive' from those that are 'dead.'
- How much affinity people have with their language. How much is it a *part of them*.
- *Vitality* because of cultural, religious or historical reasons.

Historicity

- *Historicity* refers to the fact that a particular group of people finds a sense of identity through using a particular language: it belongs to them. Social, political, religious, or ethnic ties may also be important for the group, but the bond provided by a common language may prove to be the strongest tie of all.

Autonomy

- *Autonomy* is an interesting concept because it is really one of feeling. A language must be felt by its speakers to be different from other languages. However, this is a very subjective criterion. Ukrainians say their language is quite different from Russian and deplored its Russification when they were part of the Soviet Union. Some speakers of African American Vernacular English maintain that their language is not a variety of English but is a separate language in its own right and refer to it as *Ebonics*. In contrast, speakers of Cantonese and Mandarin deny that they speak different languages: they maintain that Cantonese and Mandarin are not autonomous languages but are just two dialects of Chinese.

Reduction

- *Reduction* refers to the fact that a particular variety may be regarded as a sub-variety rather than as an independent entity.
- Speakers of Cockney will almost certainly say that they speak a variety of English, admit that they are not representative speakers of English, and recognize the existence of other varieties with equivalent subordinate status. Sometimes the reduction is in the kinds of opportunities afforded to users of the variety. For example, there may be a reduction of resources; that is, **the variety may lack a writing system**. Or there may be considerable restrictions in use; e.g., **pidgin languages are very much reduced in the functions they serve** in society in contrast to standardized languages.

Mixture

- *Mixture* refers to feelings speakers have about the ‘purity’ of the variety they speak. This criterion appears to be more important to speakers of some languages than of others, e.g., more important to speakers of French and German than to speakers of English.

de facto norms

- Finally, having *de facto norms* refers to the feeling that many speakers have that there are both ‘good’ speakers and ‘poor’ speakers and that the good speakers represent the norms of proper usage. Sometimes this means focusing on one particular sub-variety as representing the ‘best’ usage, e.g., Parisian French or the Florentine variety of Italian. Standards must not only be established (by the first criterion above), they must also be observed.

- If we apply the above criteria to the different varieties of speech we observe in the world, we will see that not every variety we may want to call a language has the same status as every other variety. English is a language, but so are Dogrib, Haitian Creole, Ukrainian, Latin, Tok Pisin, and Chinese. Each satisfies a different sub-set of criteria from our list. Although there are important differences among them, we would be loath to deny that any one of them is a language. They are all equals as languages, but that does not necessarily mean that all languages are equal! The first is a linguistic judgment, the second a social one.

- trying to decide whether something is or is not a language or in what ways languages are alike and different can be quite troublesome. However, we usually experience fewer problems of the same kind with regard to dialects. There is usually little controversy over the fact that they are either regional or social varieties of something that is widely acknowledged to be a language. That is true even of the relationship of Cantonese and Mandarin to Chinese if the latter is given a ‘generous’ interpretation as a language.

- A final comment seems called for with regard to the terms *language* and *dialect*. A dialect is a **subordinate** variety of a language, so that we can say that Texas English and Swiss German are, respectively, dialects of English and German. The language name (i.e., *English* or *German*) is the **superordinate** term.

vernacular and koiné

- Petyt (1980, p. 25) defines the former as ‘the speech of a particular country or region,’ or, more technically, ‘a form of speech transmitted from parent to child as a primary medium of communication.’ If that form of speech is Standard English, then Standard English is the vernacular for that particular child; if it is a regional dialect, then that dialect is the child’s vernacular.

Koiné (**Koine** ('kɔɪni:))

- A *koiné* is ‘a form of speech shared by people of different vernaculars – though for some of them the *koiné* itself may be their vernacular.’
- Wikipedia: is a standard language or dialect that has arisen as a result of contact between two or more mutually intelligible varieties (dialects) of the same language

Regional Dialects

- I can clear up a possible confusion in the use of the terms "lingua franca" and "koinè". A "lingua franca" is any language that is used as a medium of communication among peoples who don't share a common language. So English has become a lingua franca for many people. French is still a lingua franca in many parts of Africa, as is Arabic. Cree became a lingua franca among Indian tribes of Western Canada. A "koinè" is simply a compromise...it is usually a kind of "compendium" of various local dialects into a single linguistic form. A Koinè is therefore a combination of various dialectal forms into a single variety. **Professor[®] Robert A. Papen**

- There may even be very distinctive local colourings in the language which you notice as you move from one location to another. Such distinctive varieties are usually called *regional dialects* of the language.
- there are ‘unsharp borders between dialect areas’ ***Dialect Continuum*** What you have is a continuum of dialects sequentially arranged over space: A, B, C, D, and so on. Over large distances the dialects at each end of the continuum may well be mutually unintelligible, and also some of the intermediate dialects may be unintelligible with one or both ends, or even with certain other intermediate ones. In such a distribution, which dialects can be classified together under one language, and how many such languages are there?

Dialect geography

- When a language is recognized as being spoken in different varieties, the issue becomes one of deciding how many varieties and how to classify each variety. *Dialect geography* is the term used to describe attempts made to map the distributions of various linguistic features so as to show their geographical provenance.

- the term *dialect*, particularly when it is used in reference to regional variation, should not be confused with the term *accent*.
- One English accent has achieved a certain eminence, the accent known as *Received Pronunciation* (or RP), the accent of perhaps as few as 3% of those who live in England.
- The most generalized accent in North America is sometimes referred to as *General American* or, more recently, as *network English*, the accent associated with announcers on the major television networks.

- As a final observation I must reiterate that it is impossible to speak English without an accent. There is no such thing as an ‘unaccented English.’ RP is an accent, a social one rather than a regional one.

Social Dialects

- Whereas regional dialects are geographically based, social dialects originate among social groups and are related to a variety of factors, the principal ones apparently being social class, religion, and ethnicity.
- Studies in *social dialectology*, the term used to refer to this branch of linguistic study, confront many difficult issues, particularly when investigators venture into cities. Cities are much more difficult to characterize linguistically than are rural hamlets; variation in language and patterns of change are much more obvious in cities, e.g., in family structures, employment, and opportunities for social advancement or decline. Migration, both in and out of cities, is also usually a potent linguistic factor.

Styles, Registers, and Beliefs

- The study of dialects is further complicated by the fact that speakers can adopt different *styles* of speaking. (Due to situation – Formal to informal)
- *Register* is another complicating factor in any study of language varieties. Registers are sets of language items associated with discrete occupational or social groups. Surgeons, airline pilots, bank managers, sales clerks, jazz fans, and pimps employ different registers.