

# Assignment 2

## Question 1 :

**Q1.** Read the section on Diglossia in the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter of 'An Introduction to Sociolinguistics' by R Wardaugh (5<sup>th</sup> ed) carefully. Comment on the following statement from the section “ People living in a diglossic community do not usually regard diglossia as a ‘problem.’ It becomes a problem only when there is a growth of literacy, or when there is a desire to decrease regional and/or social barriers ...” Do not constraint your reading to the above book. You can also draw examples from any other languages that you know or come across.

**A1.** Diglossia reinforces social distinctions. It is used to assert social position and to keep people in their place, particularly those at the lower end of the social hierarchy. Any move to extend the L variety, to make the population literate in any variety, is likely to be perceived to be a direct threat to those who want to maintain traditional relationships and the existing power structure. Hence becomes a problem only when there is a growth of literacy, or when there is a desire to decrease regional and/or social barriers . The linguistic situations in Haiti and Greece are intimately tied to power relationships among social groups. Traditionally, in each country the H variety has been associated with an elite and the L variety with everyone else.

In Haiti, any attempt to develop literacy had to confront directly the issue of whether to increase the amount of Standard French taught or to ‘elevate’ the L variety, Haitian Creole, into a national language. Haitian Creole was eventually recognized as a national language in 1983, with prestigious French, of course, the other. Both languages were made official in 1987. There has been an ongoing debate about the most appropriate orthography (spelling system) for Haitian Creole: about the use of certain letters and accents, and about whether the differences between French and Haitian Creole should be minimized in the orthography for Haitian Creole or whether that orthography should be as transparent as possible in relating letters to sounds, particularly the sounds of the most widespread variety of Haitian Creole. French, though not widely used, has such prestige that, virtually any proposal for an orthography for creole has created resistance both to the adoption of the orthography and to the use of creole as a medium of instruction in school. The double resistance comes from both the masses and the educated elite minority. The masses see the officialization of written and spoken creole in school as limiting their access to French and, consequently, their social and economic mobility. The elites, who already know creole, do not see the point of teaching it, in any form, in school.

In Greece, ‘Conservative’ Greeks want to resolve any differences in favor of the H variety, but ‘liberals’ favor the L variety. The twentieth century witnessed a long and sometimes bitter struggle between supporters of the two varieties. Religious authorities condemned a 1921 translation of the New Testament into Demotic Greek and this action led to rioting in the streets of Athens. One consequence of the language disagreement was that, when the ‘liberal’ government of the 1960s was overthrown by the ‘colonels’ in 1967, the former government’s program to extend the uses of Dhimotiki was superseded by restoration of use of the H variety, Katharévousa, for example in

education, and the suppression of Dhimotiki because of its association with 'left-wing' views. With the return to constitutional government in 1975 the H was superseded in turn by the L, Dhimotiki was declared the official language of Greece in 1976, and Katharévousa disappeared almost entirely from public view. The new model for Greece seems to be based on the variety spoken in Athens. Today, the opponents of this new Greek language based on the L variety attack it for being impoverished and cut off from its roots, which are said to be the former H variety and Ancient Greek (Frangoudaki, 1992). The two most recent Greek dictionaries, the Dictionary of Modern Greek Language (DOMGL) and the Dictionary of Common Modern Greek (DOCMG) show that the process of standardization continues. The DOMGL finds its roots in Katharévousa and the DOCMG in Dhimotiki. However, both point to eventual unification around the variety spoken in Athens and an end to the H–L division.

But again a diglossic situation may not always be unstable. The two main examples are that of Switzerland and India. Switzerland is a multilingual country, with German, French, and Italian its three official languages. Strong constitutional protection is provided for German, the H variety of which is taught in the schools and used in official publications, newspapers, literature, and church services. This allows the German Swiss to communicate with speakers of German elsewhere in Europe and gives them access to everything written in Standard German. However, the Germans in Switzerland can also assert their independence of other Germans through use of their L variety. This is their own distinctive unifying spoken variety of German, one in which they take a special pride. The continuation of the High German–Swiss diglossic situation depends very much on the continued effectiveness of educating Swiss German children to use High German in the schools so as to encourage diglossia there. Some Swiss do worry that such teaching of High German may not always produce the desired results and that any quest for identity through increased use of Swiss German might lead to growing cultural isolation from other users of German.

In India too, we have a diglossic situation wherein English, the H variety is taught in schools and used in most official publications, newspapers, day-to-day work and literature. The L variety depends on the state. Although most official publications are also available in the L variety, English is still held in high regard in all societies and people who speak fluent English are usually held in high regard disregarding the fact that English was the language of their colonisers.

## Question 2 :

**Q2.** List out the number of languages/language varieties in your repertoire. Also map how and where you use each of them. Form a team of two members. Each member of the team has to observe the other member's language use in the following social contexts :

- a) Mess (or any other eating place such as canteen etc).
- b) Play ground
- c) Class room discussions with other students
- d) Market place (conversing with the shop keepers)
- e) Telephonic conversations with their families/friends.

Report your findings. The observations should be properly noted down. Your conclusions of their usage should be based on what you observe in the data thus gathered.

**A1.** The following observations can be concluded from my assessment of my team member :

**English :**

- Mess : In the presence of people who donot understand Bengali.
- Mess : In the presence of people who do understand Bengali except in the presence of Sayar.
- Marketplace : Everywhere except to the shopkeeper at JC , VC and BBC. English in the rest of the places because honestly he goes only to malls or supermarkets where the staff are trained in English.
- Play ground : Ususally doesn't get time to play due to assignment but plays Basketball during morning PT. Basketball being an American game and him being half American himself, compelled to speak English in the presence of people like himself.
- Class room discussions with other students : Sits beside Yashass who shares only English as a common element between their almost disjoint repertoire. Also sits beside Shelly in Linguistics class and English is usually preffered language.
- Workspace : Again except in the presence of Sayar which is rare.

**Bengali :**

- Still waiting.....
- With Sayar.
- Parents and family members : Except his sister which leaves out only his mom and dad.

**Bhindi ( pidgin comprising of Bengali lexicons mixed with Hindi and without proper knowledge of both) :**

- Marketplace : Examples include only VC, JC and BBC. English in the rest of the places because honestly he goes only to malls or supermarkets where the staff are trained in English.

The following observations can be concluded from my assessment of myself :

**English :**

- Mess : In the presence of people who donot understand Bengali or Hindi.
- College : While conversing with the proffessors in classroom situation or otherwise.
- College : While speaking to classmates who donot understand Bengali or Hindi.
- Workspace : Again except in the presence of Sayar which is rare.

**Bengali :**

- With peers who understand Bengali.
- With parents, siblings and other family members in general.
- With Sayar.

**Hindi :**

- Marketplace : With shopkeepers in general Hindi is more common as it is usually mutually intelligible.
- Public Transport : To strike a conversation with the co-passengers.
- Strangers : Well mostly than not, they know Hindi and it is the default language I set staying in Jharkhand which is a Hindi majority state.
- Playground : Usually play with people who know Hindi and are comfortable with it. Emotional recations are in Hindi too.