

***“ 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 ...”***

Diglossia is a situation in which two languages (or two varieties of the same language) are used under different conditions within a community, often by the same speakers.

According to Charles Ferguson,

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation.

Diglossia requires that different languages (note that here a language could be entirely different, a dialect or even a different variety of the same language) have different functions. The high variety may be an older stage of the same language (as in medieval Europe, where Latin remained in formal use even as colloquial speech diverged), an unrelated language, or a distinct yet closely related present day dialect (e.g. Standard German alongside Low German; literary Katharevousa versus spoken Demotic Greek; literary Tamil versus spoken Tamil and Indonesian, with its *Baku* and *Gaul* forms).

What it does is that it creates a sense of pride associated with the H language and a feeling of inferiority towards those using the L variety. This feeling could become so profound that people may completely deny that they use the L variety even though most of their informal conversations are carried out in that variety. It creates bubbles of interaction norms where only that particular language fits in its “social bubble”. A social hierarchy comes into the scene. {You do not use an H variety in circumstances calling for an L variety, e.g., for addressing a servant; nor do you usually use an L variety when an H is called for, e.g., for writing a ‘serious’ work of literature. You may indeed do the latter, but it may be a risky endeavor.} This feeling of prestige towards the H variety creates a virtual barrier between the elite (usually the ones who use the H variety) and

the people who speak only the variety(vernaculars).The L variety often shows a tendency to borrow learned words from the H variety, particularly when speakers try to use the L variety in more formal ways. The result is a certain admixture of H vocabulary into the L. On other occasions, though, there may be distinctly different pairs of words, i.e., doublets, in the H and L varieties to refer to very common objects and concepts.

But till both the parties stay independently(on linguistic grounds) and interact only for some specific, essential issues and do not converse very often, diglossia doesn't pose a problem. But as soon as there's a attempt to decrease the barriers which exist due to social or regional differences, things start becoming a little more heated up. When certain languages lack registers for scientific and technical domains, and therefore attempt to create them, problems arise. Users educated in an H-variety such as English, French, German, Russian (or another language) are loath to give these up and adopt vocabulary from another source, even if it is their 'mother tongue,' since the vocabulary created for this in the mother tongue may be as strange as that of a 'foreign' language. These speakers may be said to have a 'vested interest' in maintaining the status quo, and may engage in various sorts of resistance to the implementation of change, especially for the purposes of modernization. They have this vested interest because the language they already know represents for them 'cultural capital' whereas the one that the planners wish to replace it with does not.

For example, let's say that I am in a casual conversation with our maid. If I use words from the H language(English in my case) which is a result of me commonly conversing in that variety because of the growth of literacy , she definitely won't be comfortable talking to me and would only share specific and important details. And this isn't a problem till I want to keep a transactional relationship with her. But as soon as I want to break these social barriers, she will start feeling left out because of language differences. She will feel a definite need to use the H variety to get respect and prestige which she is not getting because she feels the ones using the H variety are superior than those using the L one. Basically, in this scenario as the H variety naturally comes into my daily conversation(a result of growing literacy), the gap with L variety speakers widens and the problem becomes evident enough to be noticed. It may also exist when people who speak only the L variety start getting education in the H variety and are unable to express themselves due to the existing barriers. This is very closely related to what happened in the situation with Arabic.

The official language is used in schools, colleges and universities and all different subjects at all stages of education are studied by official language. Also, it recorded all literary and artistic creations, and all scientific and technical innovations.

Moreover, books, newspapers and magazines are written by using official language and it is used by all media, including the language issued by the official command and announcements. Perhaps the weakness of students in the Arabic language is caused by diglossia; it costs us a few years of our children age, they spend the first five years to learn the vernacular, and then spend the past ten or twelve following in learning standard language and half of total is required if what we learn was one language. Diglossia is dangerous because it affects on Arabic learning clearly and directly so the students cannot master speaking skill by using the standard fluently and use vocabulary in the context of oral expressions. The risk of slang in the classroom environment is appeared when it is used, either by the teacher or student who share in falling into the trap of this diglossia. It appears only in aspects of oral expression when the student tries to express issues or to answer oral questions and they resort to include phrases and vocabulary that is not based on language correctly, or vocabulary deviate in their voice performance for the right way to standard linguistic sound. No matter how much the teacher tries, the difference between what the text says in the H variety from what he/she tries to explain to the students in L variety, differences will occur and will cause problems. Though I am not very sure about the following idea but in my view the problem also exists in the achievement of Arabic language among students because they acquired the public spoken dialect firstly, then learn the standard. Thus, the child understands any language at the first two to three years of his life, but the teenager who taught for many years by experienced teachers does not possess such a child's linguistic efficiency. Also, the language is not just academic subject, but it is a necessary means to study other materials prescribed in the curriculum, and it helps students to be able to rest other materials that support their achievement by reading and understanding, while the weakness in learning the language leads to refrain from reading, and to weaken the process of communication between teacher and his/her student.

I cite this example directly from Introduction to Sociolinguistics by Ronald Wardhaugh where power shifts lead to language change. The Greeks have still not entirely solved the problems associated with their two varieties: 'conservative' Greeks want to resolve any differences in favor of the H variety, but 'liberals' favor the L variety. (It was at one time said that you could judge a Greek's social and political attitudes by the way he or she declined third-declension nouns!) 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.

Ebonics is a really hot issue. Due to the latent (and sometimes not-so-latent) racism that is still undeniably alive and sick in America, there may be the existence of a sort of a "false reverse diglossia", to possibly coin a phrase. By that I mean a situation where some upper class whites feel that blacks use AAVE either because they are too lazy to learn the "right way" to speak (which is ironic because it just shows how uneducated they are on the matter) or that their use of AAVE is some code to which whites are not privy. This issue has been addressed by numerous hip-hop artists, perhaps most famously the notable and blunt album from the group Public Enemy, titled "Fear of a Black Planet".

Wardhaugh also cites two other examples, one in Haiti while the other in Switzerland. While the situation in Haiti(diglossia between the L variety, the Haitian creole and the H variety, Standard French where speakers of both the varieties showed resistance towards a decrease in social barriers because the H speaking elite didn't want French to be taught in schools as they already knew it while the L speakers saw prestige in learning french and saw this attempt as an attempt to divide the two communities in pride) results in conflicts due to a difference in prides in the two varieties, the situation in Switzerland shows that when different varieties have different forms of pride, a stable diglossic situation arises(diglossia between Swiss and Standard German where people are proud that they can speak the two languages for different reasons:Standard German to interact with more people in Europe and Swiss German to distinguish themselves from other Europeans) .

Another example is that of South Asia where those who don't control English, don't have power. Many small groups are now demanding English medium, in order to get more power. State educational systems that try to impose use of state language are trying to deny power to minority groups which lights up a serious issue.

Considering the social aspect, Central Asia gives a good picture where diglossia could cause problems. Russian previously dominated the H domains of science and

technology. Countries like Uzbekistan etc. will have trouble replacing the terminology and developing new registers. Russian will continue to represent power and freedom, even as it did during Soviet period. For the local languages to compete they'll have to be willing to borrow and loan-translate terminology; to use acronyms, blends, and abbreviations; let the scientists and users develop the registers, rather than have an Academy provide.

If we look at the situation in India at the time of Independence where boundaries were marked on the basis of language, we get a picture of the current situation of consistent uprisings against Hindi being the official language especially brought up by the Tamil people. Diglossias tend to remain stable in places like India but minor changes occur: domains may get 'taken over' by another language. In new domains, L-variety may take over. Language shift may occur, domain by domain (but only very slowly).

Tamil is not about to take over domains of English, But English may take over some domains of Tamil—especially domain of literacy in Tamil!

I would close my comment on this topic but not before citing this example closely related to us and a very recent one indeed. It's the language our current Prime Minister uses to address the public. He relates to the masses by using the language the majority is comfortable with. But let's say that there arises a situation where the H speaking elite and the I speaking majority decide to decrease the social barriers between each other. What this will do is create a dilemma for the prime minister about the language he should use for public speeches. This is a perfect example where diglossia creates a problem when an attempt to decrease barriers is made. It's like choosing between whom to please and which language to give a higher status to.