

Diglossia

Or

Diglossia as Low and High Varieties of Language

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Diglossia refers to a linguistic situation in which a community or society uses two distinct varieties of the same language for different functions or contexts. These varieties, known as the "low" and "high" varieties, are characterized by their levels of prestige, formality, and social significance. Let's explore the features of each variety:

1. Low Variety: *→ spoken mostly used*

The low variety, also known as the "vernacular", "colloquial", or "popular" language, is the informal form of the language. It is primarily used in everyday conversations, informal settings, and among family and friends. Here are some key characteristics of the low variety:

a. Pronunciation and Phonetics: The pronunciation in the low variety may exhibit regional accents, dialectal variations, and relaxed speech patterns. It may have simplified phonetic features compared to the high variety.

b. Grammar and Vocabulary: The low variety often has simplified grammatical structures and a broader vocabulary. It may include slang, colloquialisms, and expressions specific to particular regions or communities.

c. Register and Style: This variety allows for a more relaxed, spontaneous, and expressive style of communication. It is flexible and adaptable, enabling speakers to use creative language forms to convey emotion, humor, or familiarity.

d. Social Context: The low variety is typically associated with informal social situations, such as conversations among friends, casual gatherings, or relaxed settings. It is often used by the majority of the population and reflects the local culture and identity.

2. High Variety: *professional language* *standard*

The high variety, also referred to as the “standard”, “formal”, or “prestige” language, is the more formal and prestigious form of the language. It is used in official settings, formal writing, education, and other contexts that require elevated language usage. Here are some key features of the high variety:

a. Pronunciation and Phonetics: The high variety aims for a standardized pronunciation and phonetic system. It often aligns with the pronunciation taught in schools or considered prestigious by educated speakers.

b. Grammar and Vocabulary: The high variety typically adheres to a stricter set of grammar rules, with complex sentence structures and a more precise vocabulary. It may include technical or specialized terms commonly used in academic, legal, or administrative domains.

c. Register and Style: The high variety emphasizes clarity, precision, and adherence to formal conventions. It follows established rules of grammar, syntax, and usage. It is more suitable for professional communication, public speaking, or official documents.

d. Social Context: The high variety is associated with formal settings, such as educational institutions, government offices, courtrooms, and media broadcasting. It is often linked to higher education, social status, and cultural prestige.

In a diglossic situation, both the low and high varieties of the language serve different purposes and cater to distinct social contexts. It is important to note that the low variety is not considered inferior or less valuable than the high variety; they each have their own roles and functions within a community's linguistic landscape. Understanding and appreciating the dynamics of diglossia can provide insights into the complexities and richness of language use in diverse societies.

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