

Language Acquisition- How human language passes from one generation to Another?

- *When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the “human essence,” the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man . . .* —Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind*
- Children figure out complex rules of grammar just from hearing (or seeing, in the case of sign language) language around them
- Evidence suggests that language acquisition proceeds in the same stages across languages over the same period.
- Noam Chomsky was the first to argue that first language acquisition in human infants proceeds the way it does because we are cognitively predisposed to acquire language. He observed that the input available to children—the language they hear around them—does not provide enough information alone for the child to learn the complex set of grammatical rules needed to produce and understand a language. Much research in the field of first language acquisition supports this poverty of the stimulus argument that children do not receive enough data to acquire language simply from what they hear spoken around them.
- By the time a normal human child is 4-5 years of age, he/she/they acquire the complicated grammatical system of the language to which he/she/they are exposed.
- LAD- Language acquisition device. Our brains are wired to acquire language. We have a special language center in our brains. For most humans, it is in the left hemisphere of the brain.

Language has a biological basis-

- Noam Chomsky proposed that language acquisition in humans has a strong biological basis and that humans are predisposed to acquire language.
- In his reply to Skinner’s verbal behavior in 1959, entitled review of verbal behavior, Chomsky showed that language is a complex cognitive system that cannot be acquired by behaviorist principles.
- Poverty of stimulus argument

Language has Biological, Cognitive, and Social Foundations

- First language acquisition has a strong biological basis.
- The human brain, the left hemisphere for most, is specialized in acquiring language. All normal human children acquire language on a predictable timeline, like mental and physical growth.
- Many scholars believe that there is a biologically programmed sensitive period or critical period during which young children can acquire their first language successfully. If children are not exposed to human language during this period, it becomes difficult for them to acquire language, and it affects their mental and cognitive growth.
- Social Foundation- Socialization and learning of social behavior of language.

Language acquisition-timeline

- In utero- perception of low-frequency property of sound e.g. rhythm, pitch.
- 0-2 months- Phonetic distinction between sounds e.g. [p] vs [b].
- 2-3 months- cooing- instead of crying, use sounds to get attention. Mutual gaze, simultaneous or alternating vocalization with the caregiver, social games like peekaboo.
- 6-8 months- babbling- cvcv structure (reduplicated)
- 8-12 months- communicative gestures e.g. pointing at objects
- 10-14 months- Babbling, not reduplicated (babbling)
- 12 months- Gesture+ sound combination with consistent communicative function. First word, and first word turns into a conversation with the caregiver. Also known as the holophrastic stage.
- 18-24 months- two words
- 2-3 years- telegraphic speech
- 4-5 years- the process of language acquisition is complete.

Language and Brain

- The human brain is the most complex organ of the human body. The surface of the brain is the cortex, also known as ‘grey matter’.
- Consisting of billions of neurons (nerve cells) and glial cells (which support and protect the neurons).
- The cortex is the decision-making organ of the body.
- Somewhere in the grey matter resides the grammar that represents our knowledge of the language.
- The brain is composed of a right hemisphere and a left hemisphere, joined by the corpus callosum, a network of more than 200 million fibres. The corpus callosum allows the two hemispheres of the brain to communicate with each other.

Contralateral Brain Function-

- In general, the left hemisphere controls the right side of the body, and the right hemisphere controls the left side of the body.

- Similarly, sensory information from the right side is received by the left hemisphere and vice-versa.
- This is referred to as Contralateral Brain Function.

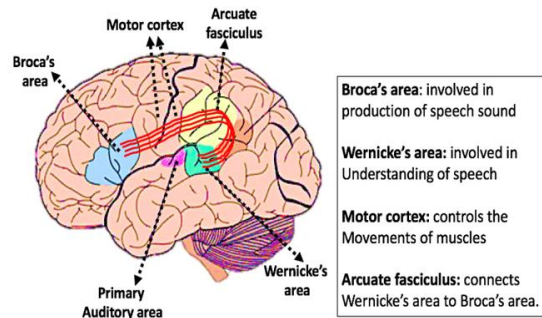
Localization of Cognitive Abilities-

- Specific areas of the brain are responsible for specific functions or activities.
- It is not a new thought; in the 19th century, Franz Joseph Gall proposed this theory. He proposed that language is located in the frontal lobes of the brain because, as a young man, he had noticed that the most articulate and intelligent of his fellow students had protruding eyes.
- He put forth a Pseudoscientific theory called 'Organology'. That came to be known as Phrenology later, which is the practice of determining personality traits, intellectual capacities, and other matters by examining the bumps on the skull.

How we acquire language? Language centers in human Brain

- For most of the human beings, language centres are located in the left hemisphere of the brain.
- Anatomy of Language
- There are several areas of the brain that play a critical role in speech and language.
- Broca's area, located in the left hemisphere, is associated with speech production and articulation. Our ability to articulate ideas, as well as use words accurately in spoken and written language, has been attributed to this crucial area.
- Wernicke's area is a critical language area in the posterior superior temporal lobe that connects to Broca's area via a neural pathway. Wernicke's area is primarily involved in comprehension. Historically, this area has been associated with language processing, whether it is written or spoken.
- Arcuate Fasciculus- Connects Broca's area and Wernicke's area.
- The angular gyrus allows us to associate multiple types of language-related information, whether auditory, visual or sensory. It is located in close proximity to other critical brain regions such as the parietal lobe, which processes tactile sensation, the occipital lobe, which is involved in visual analyses and the temporal lobe, which processes sounds. The angular gyrus allows us to associate a perceived word with different images, sensations and ideas.

Language centres-



Parts of the Brain that controls Speech

What is Grammar that we acquire as a Result of Language Acquisition?

- Grammar is the set of rules that enables a speaker to comprehend, construct and express grammatically correct sentences in a language.
- Grammar is a complex system of rules that governs how speakers organize sounds into words and words into sentences. (Sign languages also have grammar and differ from spoken language only in terms of the modality). Basic components of grammar are **Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, and Semantics**.

What Is Grammatical?

- When we talk about the grammar of a language, we mean the set of rules a speaker knows that allow him or her to produce and understand sentences in the language. A grammatical sentence is therefore a possible sentence in the language. An ungrammatical sentence is one that is impossible in a given language, one that a native speaker of that variety would never utter naturally.
- Foggy purple ideas sleep feverishly on the muddy grounds.....
- Is it grammatical? Is it meaningful? Is it making sense?
- "Colourless green ideas sleep furiously" (Noam Chomsky 1957 Syntactic Structures)

Universal Grammar (UG)

- The theory of Universal Grammar functions on the premise that we all acquire a complex grammatical system, regardless of how and where we are raised. This suggests that we all tackle language acquisition with the same

basic cognitive hardwiring to accomplish that task. think about it—if we were not predisposed to acquire this complex grammatical system, then we would have to learn it consciously. But we do not, we acquire language, naturally.

- If we are all hardwired in some way to acquire language, what is the nature of this hardwiring? the study of descriptive grammar provides insights into this question because it helps us understand the core grammatical rules that we use to produce and understand language.
- These core grammatical rules must have similar properties across languages, forming a kind of basic grammatical “blueprint.” these core properties make up what linguists refer to as **Universal Grammar (UG)**. One of the goals of modern linguistics is to study languages in order to learn more about what they have in common and to learn more about UG. UG is **hypothesised** to be part of human cognition.
- According to Evans and Nicholson (2009) even the universals vary a lot and there can be very few universals if at all that applies to all languages.

How do we account for Similarities and Differences-

- All languages seem to combine subjects and predicates to form larger units, clauses. Word order within the clause, however, can differ across languages e.g. English has SVO, Hindi has SOV.

All languages also appear to share some of these universal principles:

- They all have subjects and predicates.
- They all have nouns and verbs.
- They all use a subset of sounds from a much wider possible group of sounds humans make that could be used for language.
- They all have some way of asking questions, negation, and command.

Linguistic Parameters account for differences

- We can think of a parameter as a metaphorical on–off switch. We can account for certain facts about the differences between languages by proposing that in one language a parameter might be set “on” and in the other, “off.” this means that the differences among languages, which seem dramatic, are trivial. Whether a language has SVO or SOV order is a possible parameter: e.g. English and Hindi.

Prescriptive Vs Descriptive Grammar

- **Prescriptive grammar-** is a set of rules that prescribes or defines how we are supposed to speak, typically according to some authority (your older sibling, your teacher, your parents, writing or grammar handbook). prescriptive rules have positive social value, and sentences that do not conform to prescriptive rules often have negative social value. While teaching English, it is very common for instructors to say that you should not split your infinitives i.e. should not insert an adverb between *to* and verb (**to quickly go, or to boldly act**); they insist that the correct usage is – **to go quickly and to act boldly**. Or that one should not use double negatives.
- **Descriptive grammar-** It describes the rule system we use to produce sentences, regardless of the social value we may attach to those sentences.
- Watch the old movie ‘chupke-chupke’ it has a very hilarious take on prescriptive grammar and people’s fixation with ‘pure’, ‘standard’ and ‘correct’ language.
- Language keeps going through constant changes and modifications. It also varies from region to region; therefore, what is grammatical at a given time and place (region) might vary at others.

What is Linguistics

- Linguistics is scientific study of language. Scientific here means examining data, forming hypothesis that explains the data, then testing the hypothesis against more data, and drawing inferences.

Core areas of Linguistic studies: -

- **Phonetics:** Study of speech sounds, their physical properties, acoustics, and reception by human auditory system.
- **Phonology:** Study of sound system and constraints on sounds and combination of sounds in any language
- **Morphology:** Study of word formation process and word structures.
- **Syntax:** study of grammatical sentence structure in a language
- **Semantics:** Study of meaning
- **Pragmatics:** Study of intended meaning of a speaker in a given context.
- Linguistics has various overlaps with different disciplines that gives rise to various inter-disciplinary areas of study like Semiotics and Philosophy of Language, Historical Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Computational linguistics, Neurolinguistics, Forensic Linguistics etc.

Key phases in linguistic study-

- c.500 BC: Panini and his followers in India produce oral treatises on phonetics and language structure. Later, independent traditions of language study develop in Europe.

- 1786: founding of modern linguistics, based on a seminal speech by Sir William Jones concerning the relations between Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and other ancient languages. Linguistics enters a historical phase in which principles of language comparison and classification emerge.
- Early twentieth century: structuralism predominates in linguistics. 'Structuralists' like Ferdinand de Saussure in Europe and Leonard Bloomfield and others in the USA were concerned with internal systems of languages rather than with historical comparisons.
- 1957: Generative linguistics is founded with the publication of Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*. Linguistics shifts to a psycho-biological stage, with interest in the way in which children acquire languages based on an abstract 'universal grammar' common to all languages.

Linguistic Competence & Performance-

- With the start of the Psycho-biological phase in the study of Linguistics. Linguistic studies abstracted language from the social context as the emphasis was on the Psycho-biological phenomenon that made the acquisition of language possible and on the structures that could be constructed from a finite set of rules thus acquired.
- In a frequently cited passage, Chomsky (1965: 3) characterised the focus of the linguist's attention on an idealised competence:

"Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely **homogeneous speech community**, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such **grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors** (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance".

- **Linguistic Competence:** Ability to produce infinite grammatical sentences from a set of finite rules acquired.
- **Performance:** Application of the acquired linguistic knowledge in actual utterance.
- There is a difference between competence and performance due to contexts, situations, social settings etc.

Social approach to Language

- The social approach tries to account for what can be said in a language, by whom, to whom, in whose presence, when and where, in what manner and under what social circumstances (Fishman 1971; Hymes 1971; Saville-Troike 1982: 8)
- Language acquisition is not only a cognitive process it is also a social process.
- Dell Hymes (1971) was the principal objector to the dominance of Chomsky's characterisation of what constituted the study of linguistic competence. He suggested that a child who might produce any sentence whatever without due regard to the social and linguistic context would be 'a social monster' (1974b: 75) who was likely to be institutionalised. Hymes coined the term '**communicative competence**' to denote our ability to use language appropriately in different settings.

Relation Between Language and Society

- **Language is not only Denotational it is Connotational as well:** Connotation is a term which refers to the process of conveying meaning, other than literal or explicit meaning that is **Denotation**. Connotative meaning is the cultural or emotional associations that a word has. It can be both negative and positive.
- **Language is Indexical:** It is indexical of one's social class, status, region of origin, gender, age group and so on. In the sociolinguistic sense, this indexical aspect of language refers to certain features of speech (including accent), which indicate an individual's social group (or background); the use of these features is not exactly arbitrary since it signals that the individual has access to the lifestyles that are associated with that type of speech.
- **Language Influences thought and Cognition:** Most of the scholars agree that language influences cognition and thought to some extent. Linguists feel safer in accepting a 'weak form' of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: that our language influences (rather than completely determines) our way of perceiving things. But language does not grip communities so strongly as to prevent at least some individuals from seeing things from different perspectives, from forming new thoughts and ideas.

Sociolinguistics & Sociology of Language

- **Sociolinguistics** is a broad area of study in linguistics, focusing on language in society for the light that social contexts throw upon language.
- **Sociology of Language** is primarily considered to be a sub-part of sociology, which examines language use for its ultimate illumination of the nature of societies.
- Sometimes the distinction between the two orientations is expressed by the terms macro- and micro-sociolinguistics. Here **macro sociolinguistics** focuses on broad patterns like multilingualism in a country and its impact on education or impact of multilingualism on economic development, language policy etc. while **micro sociolinguistics** focuses on finer pattern as regional variations, variation in language due to social factors, Language contact and formation of new varieties, etc.

- For most part we cannot chart out the exact distinction between the domains of two orientations, many scholars consider them as *alter egos* of each other. It is difficult to ascertain where one ends and the other begins.

Language is an essential and ubiquitous component of our lives.

- Why? Can you imagine a day without language? Even when you don't speak a word?
- Languages have been used by human being for more than 40000 years.
- Even music, mathematics and art needs language to study, interpret, analyse, and criticise them. You think, assess, reflect, and plan in language.
- There are about 7000 languages in the world, spoken and signed.
- According to ethnologue there are around 142 language families out of which 6 are major.
- In India we have six language families represented, namely Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, Austroasiatic, Tai-Kadai, and Great Andamanese.
- In India we have 22 scheduled languages, around 1635 (2001), 1369 (2011) mother tongues (19569 was returned in the raw data). 121 languages with more than 10,000 speakers (2011).
- According to Ethnologue India has 460 languages of which 447 are living and 13 are extinct.

Language is one of the defining traits of humankind

- Language is unique to the human species. No other species has any communication system that can be compared in scale, complexity, subtlety and adaptability to human language.
- Language is tied up to human reason, cognition, thought, and culture.
- Cognition** refers broadly to the mental processes that take in information from the environment, use it to form representations of reality in the mind, and apply this stored knowledge in activities such as thinking, speaking, and remembering. In order to use language, we must be able to perceive, comprehend, plan, produce, and recall linguistic units, such as phonemes, morphemes, words, and sentences. We also need the ability to perceive, comprehend, plan, and produce behaviours, experiences, actions, etc. to participate in the culture of the society.
- It is also embedded into our physiology. The way we produce sounds is constrained by the movement possible by the human oral-nasal apparatus.
- Language processes are largely centred in the brain. Therefore, language shares characteristics with other cognitive functions, e.g. it is both learnable and adaptable.
- Language is innate to humans; we are born with the ability to acquire languages.

language is functional; it is a tool of human communication

- What ever we have to convey in a day, in a life time, or in a civilization we use language for that.
- Language is the repository of collective knowledge.
- Orality is primary, writing came afterwards. *Ashtadhyayi* was composed by Panini in 5th century BCE orally. It is considered to be the first grammar in the world.

Language forms a part of our social behaviour-

- We use language to show solidarity, bonding, distance, hierarchy, honour, prestige, desirability etc.
- It also reflects our place i.e. who belongs where? In society.
- When children acquire language, they do so by using it as a tool of social interaction within particular social settings. The social component of human language is also reflected in how language is used and structured.

Using Language is an inherently Interactional Task-

- Not only are we listening to our conversational partner and picking upon the many subtleties of word choice, sentence structure, rate of speech, and intonation, we are also constantly assessing when and how to take a turn, and how to communicate our message so that the person to whom we are speaking (the addressee) will correctly interpret what we are saying.
- We use different linguistic structures and constructions to get our point across. The interactional component of language is both deep and subtle. The language structures reflect our interactional needs.

Language is structured to take advantage of human creativity-

- All languages are constructed in a way that allows for the creation of novel utterances; any language can produce an infinite number of sentences.
- We can say anything in any language that no one has heard before!
- Poems, puzzles, songs, stories etc.
- Use of words in novel ways e.g. 'way' in English language is used to intensify certain quantifiers e.g. 'way too much', 'way too many' etc. but young speakers of English also use it to intensify adjectives e.g. 'way cool', 'way crazy', 'way unfair' etc.
- Words like 'garda', 'khatam', or 'bhayankar' in Bihari Hindi.

Language is dynamic and adaptable- Language changes

- Language is in constant process of change- to you the speech of your grand parents will appear old fashioned. When they were your age they never used a lot of words that you use and in the same sense in which you use them today.
- New words enter language constantly, meanings also get modified or completely changed.
- old English, language used in 'Canterbury Tales' and how we speak today will appear like two different languages almost (written almost 600 years ago by Geoffrey Chaucer). Even the English in 'King Henry' of Shakespeare that was written around 300 years back appears very different.
- E.g. *"Now, fie upon my false French! By mine honour in true English, I love thee, Kate: by which honour I dare not swear thou lovest me; yet my blood begins to flatter me that thou dost, notwithstanding the poor and untempering effect of my visage"*.

Language Change-

- **All aspects of language can undergo change-** Sounds can enter a language or fall out of use. Sentence structures can shift in interesting ways. Words can develop into prefixes, suffixes, or other small linguistic units. Word meanings can be broadened, narrowed, or otherwise shifted. The social implications of using particular words and phrases can change over time, as can larger patterns, such as how we structure and present information.
- **Language adapts to the world around it-** The words *email*, *nanotechnology*, *cell phone*, and *Internet* are just a few of the terms that reflect the technological changes that swept over us in the late twentieth century. Changes in vocabulary can reflect social changes as well. The English word *spinster*, meaning an unmarried woman past the age of marrying, has vanished from everyday vocabulary in most of modern society, together with the idea that there is an age of marrying and that marriage and family are the primary goals of a woman's life.
- **Language Contact and Change:** The words *example*, *adopt*, *huge*, *number*, *French*, *Norman*, and *invasion* all came into English from French!

Language is structured and systematic

- Language is constantly in the process of change still regular and recurring patterns form the basis of linguistic structure.
- Past tenses in English
- Singular-plural
- No Language is perfectly systematic, there are always some irregularity in pattern that can be explained in terms of History. Irregularities in language usually result from language change.

Design Features of Human Language

Hockett's design features describe the basic properties of the rule system shared by all human languages. In particular, the ability to combine discrete units into larger units, forms the foundation of what linguists call grammar. A grammar is a complex system of rules that governs how speakers organize sounds into words and words into sentences. (Sign languages also have grammar and differ from spoken language only in terms of modality).

- (From Charles Hockett 1960, 1966)
- **Semanticity-** Specific signals can be matched with specific meanings. In short, words have meanings. The **Linguistic sign** comprises of '**Signifier**' (the word for a concept) and '**Signified**' (the concept denoted by the word)- Swiss Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.
- **Arbitrariness-** There is no logical connection between the form of the signal and the thing it refers to. For example, *dog* in English is *Hund* in German and *perro* in Spanish.
- **Discreteness-** Messages in the system are made up of smaller, repeatable parts rather than indivisible units. a word, for example, can be broken down into units of sound.
- **Displacement-** The language user can talk about things that are not present—the messages can refer to things in remote time (past and future) or space (here or elsewhere).
- **Productivity-** Language users can understand and create never-before-heard utterances.
- **Duality of patterning-** A large number of meaningful utterances can be recombined in a systematic way from a small number of discrete parts of language. For example, suffixes can be attached to many roots, and words can be combined to create novel sentences.

Few Key Terms....before we begin the discussion-

- **Variety:** A set of linguistic items with similar social distribution.
- **Language:** Sum total of all the varieties/dialects including "standard Language". E.g. English (Language) it contains Yorkshire English, Cockney English, American English, Indian English etc.
- **Dialect:** Variety of language according to the user i.e. user's social location and geographical location. (everybody speaks a dialect).

- According to Einar Haugen (1966), in English the term dialect was borrowed in the Renaissance, as a learned word from Greek.
- in popular understanding today a variety of a language which is not used for literary purposes, is mostly unwritten. (**-prestige**), (**-standardization**) is a dialect.
- “A language is a dialect with an army and navy”Max Weinreich.

What is Standard Language?

- We can have following definitions given by different Linguists-
- Ferguson (1961) defines a standard as a single widely accepted norm, used with only minor modifications or variations for all purpose of language use.
- Garvin and Mathiot (1963) defines a standard language as a ‘codified form of a language accepted by and serving as a model to a larger speech community.
- Language Standardization can be regarded as the process of language unification and norm setting in a given community, affecting written as well as spoken norms.
- However we can say that standard is a variety of language, use of which is unified in writing, grammar and lexicon. A standard is thus a set of widely accepted rules serving as norms more particularly in the written form.

What makes a variety “Standard”

- **Language Standardization activity involves preparing normative rules for the guidance of the speakers and writers. In order to get a standardized variety following process is followed-**
- **Selection** - somehow or other a particular variety gets selected as the one to be developed into a standard language. It may be an existing variety, such as the one used in an important political or commercial centre, but it could be an amalgam of various varieties. The choice is a matter of great social and political importance, as the chosen variety necessarily gains prestige and so the people who already speak it share in this prestige. However, in some cases the chosen variety has been one with no native speakers at all - for instance, Classical Hebrew in Israel and the two modern standards for Norwegian (Haugen 1994).
- **Codification** - some agency such as an academy must have written dictionaries and grammar books to 'fix' the variety, so that everyone agrees on what is correct. Once codification has taken place, it becomes necessary for any ambitious citizen to learn the correct forms and not to use in writing any 'incorrect' forms that may exist in their native variety.
- **Elaboration of function** - it must be possible to use the selected variety in all the functions associated with central government and with writing: for example, in parliament and law courts, in bureaucratic, educational and scientific documents of all kinds and, of course, in various forms of literature. This may require extra linguistic items to be added to the variety, especially technical words, but it is also necessary to develop new conventions for using existing forms - how to formulate examination questions, how to write formal letters, and so on.
- **Acceptance** - the variety has to be accepted by the relevant population as the variety of the community - usually, in fact, as the national language. Once this has happened, the standard language serves as a strong unifying force for the state, as a symbol of its independence of other states (assuming that its standard is unique and not shared with others), and as a marker of its difference from other states. It is precisely this symbolic function that makes states go to some lengths to develop one.
- “Standardization is triumph of written language over spoken language”written language is accessible to few, thus standard language is a resource/commodity available for few, it has high value that makes it coveted.
- Standard language in usage is indexical of carefulness, education, and social status.

Weeding of ‘impurity’-setting boundaries and standards

- Standardization is an ideological process-be it of language or community/nation.....
- Standardized language has its roots in the prescriptive rule bound grammars, speech of upper middle class and upper class.
- Standardization is an inherently biased phenomenon....it is always at advantage of some and disadvantage of others i.e. Mainstream Vs Periphery, Centre Vs Borders, Urban Vs Rural, Rich Vs Poor.....
- At times “non-standard language” is used as a mark of resistance in works of art e.g. “we don’t need no education”Pink Floyd.

Dialect definition:-

- **Dialect:** Dialect is the term that is often used to distinguish between the standard variety, which is considered to be “the Language” and other varieties of a language.
- The term dialect also refers to varieties of a language that are not written or even to languages that are not written, do not have literature, are not uniform, standardized and are not used for official purposes.

- In a way we can say that we all speak dialect, as we have stated above that all the varieties/ dialects of a language constitute the language, that ways all of us even those who claim to speak the near standard variety- speak a variety/ dialect.
- In terms of dialect geography a dialect is a variety of language which is spoken in a particular region and is different from other varieties.

Types of Dialects-

- **Sociolects**- Dialect/variety according to social factors like socio-economic class, age, gender, education etc.
- **Regional Dialect**- Dialect/variety according to region
- **Genderlect**- Dialect/Variety according to gender
- **Idiolect**-Dialect/Variety spoken by an individual, speech habits peculiar to an individual.

Variation in Dialects-

- **Sociolects**- The variation that we see in language due to social factors like age, gender, class, etc. are known as social dialects or sociolects.
- **Regional dialects**: Varieties of a language which are region specific are known as regional dialect or regional variety e.g. Yorkshire English, Bihari Hindi etc.
- **Dialects** differ from each other on three major factors- Lexical (difference in words), Phonological (difference in sounds and sound combinations allowed), Grammatical (difference in sentence construction i.e. what may be considered a grammatically correct sentence)

Imperative forms also differ from the standard			
Standard variety	Pernem Variety	English	
<i>vac</i>	<i>zā</i>	'go' (2 P.SG)	
<i>yə</i>	<i>ye/ye</i>	'come' (2 P.SG)	
<i>hāḍ</i>	<i>āṇ/hāḍ</i>	'bring' (2 P.SG)	
<i>paḷay</i>	<i>bag^h</i>	'see' (2 P.SG)	

The infinitive (of purpose) suffix *-pāk* of the standard variety becomes *-Ūk* in the Pernem variety and *-čāk* in the Kankon variety.

Standard Variety	Pernem Variety	Kankon Variety	English
<i>rāḍ'pāk</i>	<i>rāḍūk</i>	<i>rāḍčāk</i>	'to cook'
<i>jev'pāk</i>	<i>jevāk/jevūk</i>	<i>jevčāk</i>	'to eat'
<i>hāspāk</i>	<i>hāsūk</i>	<i>hāščāk</i>	'to laugh'
<i>d^harpāk</i>	<i>d^harūk</i>	<i>d^harčāk</i>	'to send'
<i>āmudpāk</i>	<i>hām^aḍūk</i>	<i>hām^aḍučāk</i>	'to drive away (cattle)'
<i>čidḍupāk</i>	<i>čidḍūk</i>	<i>čidḍučāk</i>	'to press'

Isoglosses and Dialect Continuum

- The virtual (not physically existing) lines that define the geographic/regional boundary of a linguistic item are known as **isoglosses**. Boundaries of major varieties/languages will have several isoglosses on the boundary.
- When varieties of a language are spoken together in a geographical region so that they form a continuum, this continuum is known as **dialect continuum**. In dialect continuum region any two adjacent varieties are mutually intelligible but varieties on the farthest end or even those that are far off from each other are not mutually intelligible e.g. German dialect continuum from Amsterdam to Vienna.
- In the Indian case (now divided into Pakistan, India and Bangladesh), several distinct languages exist with long traditions of literary production, including Sindhi, Kashmiri, Hindi, Rajasthani, Panjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali and others (see Map). These autonomous, regional languages do show sharp breaks in terms of their grammar, so that it is possible to differentiate one from the other. However, in terms of everyday, informal speech at the village level there are no such sharp breaks. Gumperz (1971: 7) speaks of a chain of mutually intelligible varieties from the Sind (in the north-west) to Assam (in the northeast). These form the Indo-Aryan **Language Continuum**.
- The Indo-Aryan languages spoken from the East to the west of India- if we take two neighbouring languages from this region, say, Magahi and Bhojpuri they will be mutually intelligible to a certain extent but if we take Bangla and Sindhi from the far ends they will not be mutually intelligible.

How do we define if it is a variety of a language?

- Mutual intelligibility? Danish and Norwegian are pretty intelligible mutually but they are two languages! So are Hindi and Urdu! Different varieties of Chinese are unintelligible to each other but they are considered varieties of the same language!
- Shared Cultural and Historical features (both linguistic and non-linguistic)- Hindi and Urdu share a lot of socio-cultural history also linguistic features but they are still two languages for most speakers!
- Acceptance of speakers (more than anything else)
- But the most important thing to remember is that whether a language is considered to be a variety of another language or not depends on socio-political and to a certain extent economic situation at a given time.

- **Linguistic Nationalism/Assertion of Linguistic identity-** When a group wants to assert their independent identity after political independence they start using their dialect to assert that and do away with the standard language. As in the case of Ukraine and Ukrainian which was considered to be a dialect of Russian before independence but then it became the marker of the independent identity of Ukraine.
- **Dialectization-** The phenomenon where a closely related language or variety or even a different language is said to be the dialect of another more dominant language is called **dialectization**.

Diglossia:

- **Diglossia:** The term was coined by Charles Ferguson in 1959. Diglossia in the classical sense describes a unique situation in societies where there are two distinct varieties of a language meant for distinct usage i.e. one that is considered to be the 'high variety' is highly standardized & codified, has respected literature and is learned by formal education. It is used for writing literature, publishing textbooks, education, media, formal situations like speeches etc. and the other that is considered to be 'the low variety' is acquired naturally and is used for general conversations and informal situations with everyone. E.g. **classical Arabic** and **colloquial Arabic** in **Arab countries**, **sadhu Bhasha Bangla** and **calit Bhasha Bangla** in **Bengal** or **Standard Hindi** and **Bihari Hindi** in **Bihar**.
- By *extension Diglossia can also describe the situation where two languages that are not linguistically varieties of each other are treated in this manner e.g. Bhojpuri and Hindi in Bihar. Or to even situations where two languages that are not related* to each other (Bhojpuri is a variety of Hindi in the census and is linguistically closely related to it) like Hindi and English in India have unequal prestige attached to them and one is preferred over the other (English is preferred over Hindi in this case).
- * Joshua Fishman (1967) gave an extension to diglossia to include unrelated languages e.g. Spanish (H) and Guarani (L) in Paraguay.
- *Hindi and English belong to Indo-Aryan and Germanic families respectively but both families are part of the larger Indo-European language family. Still, the languages are very different and mutually unintelligible from each other.

Register-

- The term register is often used in Sociolinguistics to refer to '**varieties according to use**' in contrast with dialects, defined as '**varieties according to user**'. The same person may use different linguistic items to express the same meaning at different occasions or contexts. E.g. Job Interview, speaking to your parents, talking to your friends, football match commentary etc.
- Dialect shows **who** or **what** you are, Register shows what you are **doing**.
- Each time we speak or write we not only locate ourselves in relation to the rest of society, but we also relate our act of communication itself to a **complex classificatory scheme of communicative behaviour**.
- Remember three important aspects are used to determine the register-
Field- It is concerned with the purpose or the subject matter of the communication. (Why and What?)
Mode- It refers to the means by which communication is taking place i.e spoken/written. (How?)
Tenor- It refers to relation between the participants in communication.

Some examples-

- Different registers are employed to show the relation between addressee and the speaker i.e. whether they have the relation of power, hierarchy or of solidarity e.g. when you write a letter to inform your friend about something and when you write a letter to your teacher to inform about the same thing. Or when you talk to your friends about something and you talk to your parents about the same thing
- I am writing to inform you....."
- I just wanted to tell you....."

See the following sentences as well- (Some people were missing from the hostel)

- **From a friend:** Where were you last night? I rang to see if you wanted to come for a movie?
- **In court from a lawyer:** could you tell the court where were you on the night of Friday the seventeenth of March?
- **From a teacher:** I know some of you went out after curfew hours last night, will you tell me where were you?

Use of different Registers-

- In case of same information, use of different registers depends predominantly on two factors- **Addressee** and **context**
- These relations can be of 'power' or hierarchy as in whether the addressee is socially/economically or professionally subordinate/junior, equal or superior to the speaker.
- Solidarity- what is the relation between speaker and addressee- from very intimate to very distant.
- Apart from that what influences use of a certain register are **age**, and **social background** of the addressee.
- One person's dialect/variety can be other person's register e.g. for a speaker of a non-standard variety of a language, standard variety is a register that he/she employs at certain occasions only.

Jargon-

- Every occupation, profession, science and trade have terms that are specific to them or we can say specific professional slang term associated with that particular area. Such terms are known as Jargons e.g. in Linguistics we have terms like- diglossia, morpheme, ad stratum, restricted code etc. Jargons are used for ease and clarity of communication and when the speakers want to identify themselves with people they share interest with. Jargons are also called **argots**.

Slangs-

- Slangs are mark of informal speech. Slangs are something that everyone uses and recognises, but nobody can define accurately. It is a part of language that is more metaphorical, vivid, playful, elliptical, and short lived than ordinary language. It can introduce new words into a language by combining with new meanings e.g. **spaced-out, bang-on, rip-off, nuts, cool, stoned, rave** etc. those of you who know local Hindi will know many more in it.....one from Bihari Hindi **Garda!**
- Slangs are often coined and used by young speakers.

Verbal Repertoire:

- **Verbal Repertoire:** Gumperz (1968:125) defines verbal repertoire as the totality of dialects and superposed variants regularly used within a speech community.
- The verbal repertoire must include the linguistic resources employed in the community. The fact to remember here is that, just because a speech community possesses certain varieties doesn't mean that all those varieties will be accessible to all the members of the community equally. The accessibility of different varieties depends on the position of an individual within the social system.
- We can define an individuals verbal repertoire as all the languages, varieties, and registers that are used by the individual.

Indo-Aryan Language Continuum-(unshaded area)



What is a sociolinguistic variable?

- The Sociolinguistic Variables are, Fasold (1990) says, a set of alternatives that can be employed as different ways of saying the same thing. However, the alternatives or variants have social significance. More specifically, a Sociolinguistic variable is a linguistic element that co-varies not only with other linguistic elements but also with a number of extralinguistic independent variables like social class, age, gender, ethnicity or contextual style, etc.
- William Labov, a US Linguist, argued that language involved 'structured heterogeneity'. By this, he meant that language contained systematic variation which could be characterised and explained by patterns of social differentiation within speech communities.
- Social factors like class, age, education, gender, ethnicity, etc., are independent variables.
- The linguistic items that vary due to social factors are dependent variables.
- `Example of Sociolinguistic variable- Post-vocalic /r/ in New York English.

Social Class-

- What is Social Class? Socio-economic condition i.e. social and economic affluence or lack of it, and behavioural patterns, interests, and values associated with it.
- Two most prominent theories by- **Karl Marx's** and **Max Weber's**
- Marx drew a fundamental distinction between those who produce capital or goods/services and those who control the production of capital which others produce. The former are the working class (**Marx's proletariat, derived from**

a word meaning 'worker') and the latter, the middle class and upper class (**Marx's capitalists**). Though now, we mostly think of it as a function of a person's personal wealth and occupation.

- Substructure (base)-Superstructure-The one who dominates substructure dominates superstructure.
- Standard and values given to different varieties of languages are determined by superstructure
- Max Weber's theory of social class held that it was based on a person's **status**, measured in terms of their lifestyle, life choices and life chances in addition to economic wealth and occupation (as per Marx).
- Weber defines class as a composite of economic wealth, lifestyle- linguistic (and other social) behaviour, individual's agency, attitudes, and aspirations. These factors can be used to a varying degree in order to better understand the social meaning of the patterns of variation we find.

Look up "*genteel poverty*" and "*upstarts*"

- Another important feature of social class that we inherit from the Weberian tradition is that however we define class it allows for the possibility of individual mobility.

How social class influences Linguistic behaviour?

- Class is a very important factor that determines the variety of language that we speak. Social class in terms of socio-economic condition/level determines our chances of access to education, place of residence, different social institutions like Bank, public Library, Universities etc. also, people from different field of interests and professions e.g. doctors, academicians, artists, writers, laborers, rikshaw-pullers etc. Thus, making our speech more like people from the same social class in a different area or even in a different part of the world (if you speak standard variety of the same language, variations are minor) than with people from the same area but different social class. Thus, the speech, as you go lower in the social strata will become more localized/ less standardized.
- In terms of Social science research, class is divided in four segments LC-Lower class, WC-working class (can be sub divided into lower, middle and upper), MC- Middle class (can be sub divided into lower, middle and upper), UC-upper class. These segments are drawn keeping the income (in many researches it can be the only parameter), profession, education, value of house of individuals into account.

Age as a Social factor in language variation-

- Language tends to vary with age of speakers. In terms of standard/slangs, formal/informal, and also in certain grammatical features e.g. using truncated forms like- in/ing, a'int etc.
- **Real time study:** when speech samples are taken from speakers of a speech community at an interval of few years to study the variation over a period of time. In this type of study we can also use archived speech data as data for comparison. It is diachronic study. It tells us about historical changes in speech.
- **Apparent time study:** when at a given point of time speech samples are collected from different age groups in a speech community. It is synchronic study. It tells us about variation in speech due to age at a given time, It also tells us about change in progress at a given point of time.

E.g. in my study on CHB (contact Hindi of Bihar), **out of total 64 respondents in age group of 15-30, 39 were young women and 25 were young men. Out of 39 young women 35 had fronted /ə/ in there speech. Among young men 18 had fronted /ə/. In elderly speakers the number of /ə/ fronting takes a sharp dip, out of 31 women in the age group of 45-65 only 5 had fronted /ə/ out of which 3 were speakers of Urdu, and out of 45 men in the same age group 9 had fronted /ə/ out of which 5 were speakers of Urdu.**

- Apart from this study of language variation according to age of the speakers is an upcoming area of study that includes **language of youth**.

Education as a social factor in language variation-

- Education is another important social variable that determines the variety of language that we speak to a large extent. Education or the lack of it determines the variety to which we have access, whether we have access to the standard language/variety through formal education or not (as education is imparted in formal languages/varieties only), it also determines the peer group that we form to a large extent, education is also a very important factor that provide socio-economic mobility which itself can intern influence speech variety of an individual. Education as a sociolinguistic variable is studied to find the impact of education on the speech of individuals in a community or speakers of any particular language e.g. it is more likely for more educated speakers in Bihar to have the fricatives /ʃ/ and /z/ in their speech than less educated speakers.

Points to remember-

- Linguistic exclusion (not having access to valued linguistic resources) lead to marginalization and social exclusion.
- Socio-economic background determines access to linguistic resources and in turn to availability of opportunities (for higher education, better employment etc.) and life chances.