UNIT 1 VARIATION AND VARIETIES

Structure

1.0   OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to make you aware that

- Language is a dynamic entity subject to variation and change.
- Variation and language change occurs through a period of time.
- English has emerged from a tribal language to an international language.
- There is continution in which we can see the development of English from a pidgin to a 'standardized' variety.

1.1   INTRODUCTION

It must be quite clear by now that language by its nature is dynamic and variable. There is no such thing as uniformity in language. Not only does the speech of one community differ from that of another, but the speech of different individuals of a single community, even members of the same family, is marked by individual peculiarities. These individual pecurarities are known as the **'idiolect'**.

Where constant communication takes place among the people speaking a language, individual differences become merged in the general speech of the community, and a certain conformity prevails. The differences may be slight if the separation is slight and we may have merely local **dialects**. On the other hand, they may become so considerable as to render the language of one district unintelligible to the speakers of another. In this case we may have the development of separate **languages**. Even where the differentiation has gone this far, it is usually possible to recognise a sufficient number of common features which the resulting languages still retain in common to indicate that at one time they were one.

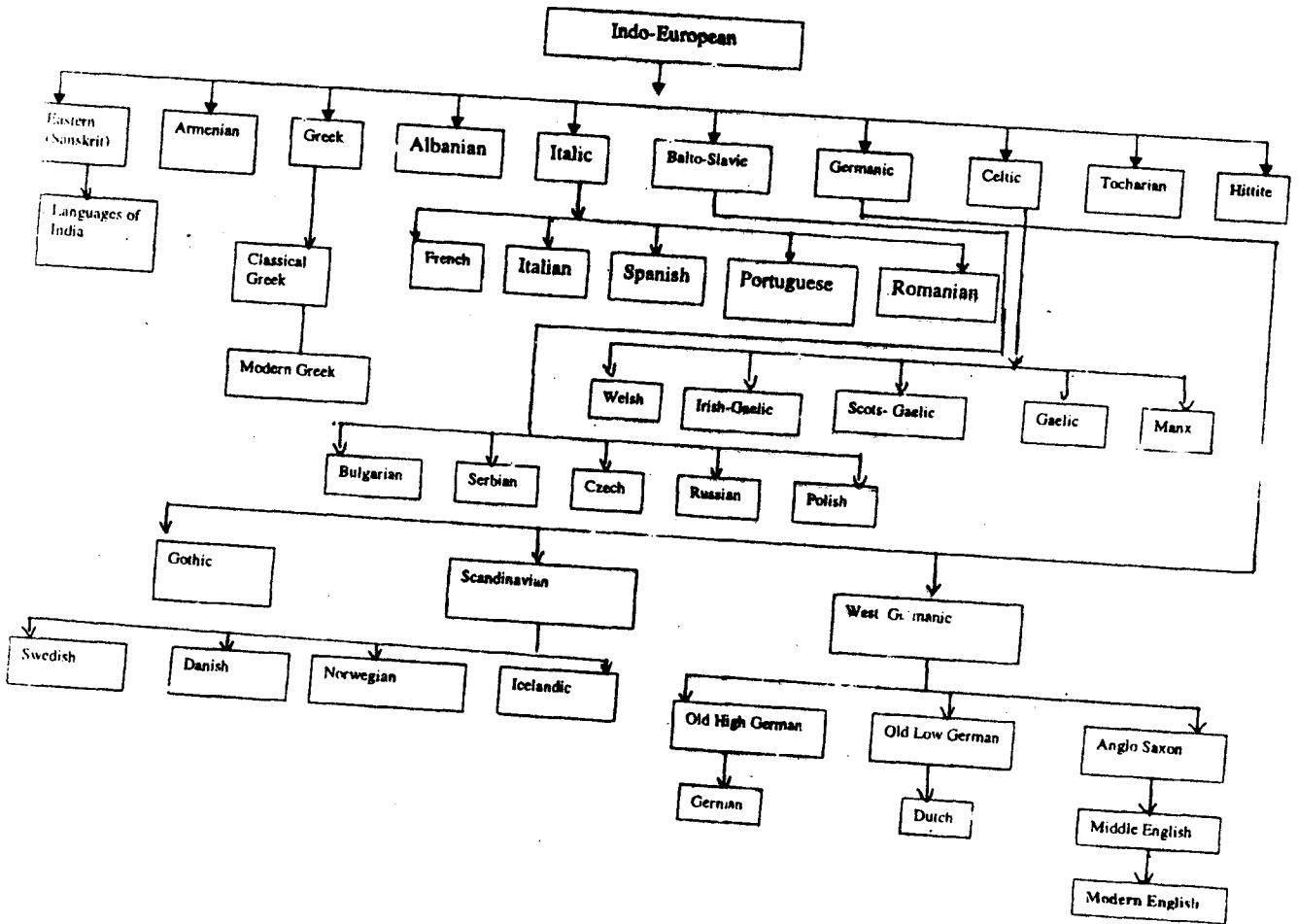## 1.2   THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY OF LANGUAGES

The languages thus brought into relationship by descent or progressive differentiation from a parent speech are conveniently called a *family of languages*. Various names have been used to designate this family. A century ago the term *Aryan* was

commonly employed which has now been generally abandoned. A more common term is *Indo-Germanic* which however is also objected to as giving undue emphasis to the Germanic languages. The term now most widely employed is *Indo-European* suggesting more clearly the geographical extent of the family. The parent tongue from which the Indo –European languages have sprung had already become divided and scattered before the dawn of history. There is moreover no written record of the common Indo-European language.

The surviving languages show various degrees of similarity to one another, bearing a more or less direct relationship to their geographical distribution. They accordingly fall into eleven groups: *Indian, Iranian, Armenian, Hellenic, Albanian, Italic, Balto-Slavic, Germanic, Celtic, Hittite,* and *Tocharian.* Germanic is of special interest to us, as it is from West Germanic that English originates.

The descent of Modern English and its relation to the other members of the family can be shown in tabular form.:

The evidence within the surviving languages also suggests a common ancestry. The resemblance within the languages are quite striking as is evident from the following comparisons of the word *father* and the verb *to be* across five languages:

Old English	Gothic	Latin	Greek	Sanskrit
fæder (father)	*fadar*	*pater*	*pater*	*pitar*
neta (nephew)	-	*nepos*	-	*napat*
feor (far)	*ʃairra*	-	*pera*	*paras*
faron (go, fare)	*faran*	*(ex) perior*	*perao*	*pr-*
full (full)	*fulls*	*plenus*	*pleres*	*purna*
fearh (pig)	-	*porcus*	-	-
Feper (feather)	-	*penna*	*pleron*	*patra-*
fell (skin)	*fill*	*pellis*	*pelía*	-

To be
Old English	Gothic	Latin	Greek	Sanskrit
eom (am)	*im*	*sum*	*eimi*	*asmi*
eart (art)	*is*	*es*	*ei*	*asi*
is (is)	*ist*	*est*	*esti*	*asti*
sindom (are)	*sijum*	*sumus*	*esmen*	*smas*
sindom (are)	*sijup*	*estis*	*este*	*stha*
sindom (are)	*sind*	*sunt*	*eisi*	*santi*

1.3 ENGLISH: ITS ORIGIN AND DEVLOPMENT

This topic has been dealt with in Block 2. We recapitulate it here to delineate for you the spread of English all over the world. After this brief discussion about the family history of English, we can proceed to the English language proper. We are so accustomed to thinking of English as an inseparable adjunct to the English people that we tend to forget that it has been the language of England only for a short period of its history. Since its introduction into Britain in about the middle of the fifth century it has had a career of only about 1500 years. Yet this part of the world has been inhabited for thousands of years. During this long stretch of time the presence of a number of cultures with individual languages of their own, can be detected. But unfortunately little can be said about the early languages of England. About the Paleolithic and Neolithic humans not much is known and their language has also not survived. The first people in England about whose language we have definite knowledge are the Celts. Celtic was probably the first Indo-European tongue spoken in England and was divided into two branches —Gaelic and Brythonic. The language in England before English was Latin which was the result of the Romanisation of the island.

The Germanic Conquest. About 449 an event occurred that profoundly affected the course of history - the invasion of Britain by some Germanic tribes. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (731) tells as that the Germanic tribes which conquered England were the Jutes, Saxons and Angels. In the beginning the Celts called their Germanic conquerors Saxons indiscriminately. From the beginning however writers never called their language anything but *Englisc* (English) The word is derived from the name of the Angels (Old English *Engle*) but is used indiscriminately for the language of all the invading tribes. In a like manner the land and its people are called *Anglecynn* (Angle-kin). From about the year 1000 *England* (Land of the Angels) begins to take its place. *English* is thus older than *England*.

The origin and position of English. The English language as it is spoken today has risen from the dialects spoken by the Germanic tribes who invaded England. The evolution of English in the 1500 years of its existence has been an unbroken one.

Within this development however it is possible to recognise three main periods - from 450 to 1150 is the **Old English Period**; from 1150 to 1500 the **Middle English period**; the language since 1500 is called **Modern English**. (See Block 2)

The dialects of Old English: Old English was not an entirely uniform language. Not only were the earliest written texts different but the language differed somewhat from one locality to another. In all, we can identify four dialects in Old English: *Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon* and *Kentish*. Of these Northumbrian and Mercian were spoken in the region spoken north of the Thames and inhabited by the Angels. They possess certain features in common and are sometimes collectively known as Anglian. Little is known of Kentish which was the dialect of the Jutes in the southeast. The only dialect in which there is an extensive collection of texts is West Saxon which was the dialect of the Jutes in the south west. Nearly all of Old English literature still preserved today is in this dialect. With the ascendancy of the West Saxon Kingdom, the West Saxon dialect attained something of the position of a literary standard. The Norman conquest however cut short this movement and when in the late Middle English period a standard English once again began to develop, it was on the basis of a new dialect, East Midland, which in turn was a descendent of Old Mercian.

The dialects of Middle English: Middle English was a period of momentous changes (already discussed in Block 2). One striking characteristic of Middle English was its great variety, not only in the spoken forms of the language but also in written literature. In the absence of a standard medium, the writers naturally wrote in the dialects of that part of the country to which they belonged. The language differed from county to county and sometimes between different parts of the same county. The features characteristic of a given dialect did not cover the whole territory; some extended into adjoining districts or may be were characteristic of another dialect as well. Consequently it is rather difficult to mark dialectal divisions or dialectal boundaries. It is however customary to distinguish four principal dialects of Middle English: *Northern, East Midland, West Midland* and *Southern*. Generally speaking the Northern dialect extended as far south as the Humber; East and West Midland together covered the area between the Humber and the Thames; and Southern occupied the districts south of the Thames including the West Saxon and Kentish districts of Old English. The peculiarities that distinguished these dialects were partly matters of pronunciation, partly of vocabulary and partly of inflection. Dialectical differences were more pronounced between the Northern and Southern divisions; the Midland dialects often occupied an intermediate position tending towards one or the other in those districts lying nearer to the adjacent dialects.

The rise of Standard English: Out of this variety of local dialects there emerged toward the end of the fourteenth century a written language, that in the course of the fifteenth century won general recognition and has since become the recognised standard in both speech and writing. **It was the East Midland type of speech**, particularly the dialect of the metropolis London that became the basis for the formation of this standard. Several causes contributed to this result. In the first place the Midland dialect of English occupied a middle position between the extreme divergences of the north and the south. Secondly, the East Midland district was the largest and the most populous of the major dialectal areas. A third factor was the presence of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge in this region. But by far the most influential factor in the rise of standard English was the importance of London as the capital of England. It was the social, commercial, political, intellectual and religious centre of England and witnessed a steady exchange of ideas and idioms. By the fifteenth century London speech was accepted as the standard in writing though considerable diversity still existed in the spoken dialects.

Modern English: The survey of the English language in the Modern era gets complicated not only because of the addition of an international angle, but also because of the radical changes in vocabulary, meaning, pronunciation and grammar

of Indian languages. Speakers of Hindi habitually pronounce words like *station* with an initial vowel [iste: en]. Words and phrases that strike British and American speakers as strange are natural expressions of cultural contexts absent in the West - expression such as these *bow my forehead, fall at your feet, policewala, mother of my daughter*. It follows logically that the varieties of English spoken in Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, etc. will be conditioned by the culture and native languages of their own countries.

Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong: The development of English in these regions is interesting because of the influence of Chinese, Malay, Tamil and the language policies of the various governments. In Malaysia, Bhasa Malay was promoted as the official language but political gains were offset by growing alienation in international commerce, science, etc. This has led to a quiet re-emphasis on English. In Singapore the relationship between English and the Asian languages has been the reverse of that in Malaysia. English being one the four official languages, it has become the medium of social, political, commercial, educational interaction.

In **Hong Kong** English is much less used for oral communication than in Singapore. English in Singapore and Malaysia is marked by the omission of *be* both as a copula (*This coffee house-very cheap*) and auxiliary (*my brother-working*), differences of syntax in the word order of questions (*May I ask where is the counter?*) and difference of stress.

The Caribbean: The countries of the Caribbean also face multilingual situations which makes the solution to social problems involving language appear more difficult. The question of whether Jamaican Creole is a separate language or a point on a continuum that includes Jamaican English is a politically charged issue with implications for educational policy, legal system and mass media. Any survey of the history of English in the Caribbean would have to take into account the arrival of settlers in James Town, Virginia in 1607 and in Bermuda two years later; the Spanish presence in the Caribbean has left its heritage in Puerto Rico, Belize Panama and Guyana where Spanish and English survive side by side. For most of the anglophone Caribbean (Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, the Leeward Islands, Windward Islands) the most relevant languages in contact are those of the West Coast of Africa – Ewe, Twi, Efik, Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa and other African languages spoken by the slaves brought to the islands in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century. Loan words and translations of African metaphors enrich the vocabulary. *Na:ma* (meat), *juk* (poke), *door-mouth* (a doorway), *strong-eye* (determined), *reggae*. In addition to syllable timed rhythm, final syllables in Jamaican English have rising tone reflecting the West African tone language spoken by the slaves who carried their own phonology into their interpretation of a Germanic Language with light and heavy stress.

South Africa: The present Republic of South Africa has been occupied successively by Bushmen, Hottentots, Bantus, Portuguese, the Dutch and the English. From these sources and especially from Dutch and its South African development, *Afrikaans*, the English language has acquired several features. While *apartheid* and *veldt* have become a part of the English vocabulary, *biltong* (meat), *lekker* (nice), *gogga* (insect), *donga* (ravine), *kopje* (hill) remain uniquely South African with little international appeal. In pronunciation, South African English has been influenced by Afrikaans and to a lesser extent by numerous Scottish school masters. To Afrikaans it owes the modification of certain vowels [*pen*] for *pin*, [*kɛb*] for *cab* etc, the high pitch and the tendency to omit one or more consonants at the end of a word – *tex* for *text*.

West and East Africa: West African English is remarkable for its variety. With as yet no identifiable standard, it is difficult to draw the line between an incorrect usage and a local variant. In Nigeria, English exists alongside Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and scores of smaller langauges. The distinctive accent of Nigerian English has been influenced by the first language of the people – Yoruba and Igbo in the South and

under pressure from different factors. Chief among these is the tremendous growth of science which has added a new range of words to the English vocabulary. The influences of films, broadcasting, automobile, computers, the two World Wars have been as intensive as it has been extensive. However, it is to widespread penetration of the language in the various parts of the former British Empire, as well as in the United States that attracts the most attention. Differences of culture, locale and utility have produced different varieties of English in different parts of the world, which are distinct from the language of England. In many areas English has become a second language, used alongside one or more local language for public purposes, communication, entertainment, etc. In India, for example, English is one of the official languages along with Hindi and eighteen recognised national languages. A distinction is usually made between English as a second language and English as a foreign language. A German or a Norwegian learning English learns it as a foreign language, uses it for communicating with foreigners and rarely with their own countrymen. An Indian however learns English as a second language and uses it to communicate with other Indians. The distinction between a second language and a foreign language is not sharp and the distinction gets fuzzy in most cases.

1.4 INTERNATIONAL VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

The world-wide expansion of English means that it is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world today. The English speaking world can be broadly divided into the following areas :

North America: The English of the United States and Canada has major differences with standard British English. The original inhabitants being outnumbered and dominated by the English speakers exerted little or no influence on the language. In the United States the language shows great dialectal differentiation, with differences in the West being less sharp than on the Atlantic Coast. Three main dialect areas are usually recognised - Northern, Midland and Southern. As would be expected Canadian English has much in common with American English while retaining a few features of British pronunciation and spelling.

Australia and New Zealand: Here also the native language had hardly exerted any influence on the language of the settlers. The language here shows little regional variation, though there are social variations in Australia in term of accent. Australian English is not only characterised by interesting differences of vocabulary but varies strikingly in pronunciation from the received standard of British English. Australian *hay* might register to Americans as *high* or *basin* as *bison*. Some words from aboriginal languages like *Kangaroo* and *boomerang* have become general English but *wambat* (an animal) is still typically Australian as is *larrikan* (rowdy loafer), *bush* (back country), *swag* (tramp's bundle). The distinctive characteristics of Australian pronunciation and the uniformity of the language throughout the continent are attributed to the fact that the early settlers were chiefly prisoners and adventurers drawn from the lower classes of England

South Asia: The region includes India. Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The problems and prospects of Indian English were summarised by Raja Rao exactly fifty years ago "One has to convey in a language, usage that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up, but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bi-lingual.....". Peculiarities of syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation which the British regarded with condescension during the days of the Raj have now been widely accepted. Certain pronunciation result from the influence

of Indian languages. Speakers of Hindi habitually pronounce words like *station* with an initial vowel [iste: en]. Words and phrases that strike British and American speakers as strange are natural expressions of cultural contexts absent in the West - expression such as these *bow my forehead, fall at your feet, policewala, mother of my daughter*. It follows logically that the varieties of English spoken in Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, etc. will be conditioned by the culture and native languages of their own countries.

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Hausa in the North. *Follow* is pronounced as [*fɔ/ɔ*] due to vowel harmony in Igbo, while Hausa speakers tend to breakup clusters by inserting vowels so that screw becomes [*sukuru*], *beat* and *bit* have the same tense vowel. This produces a large number of homophones in Nigerian and other African varieties – *leave-live, seen-sin, Don't sleep on the floor-Don't slip on the floor*. Typical lexical items in Nigerian English reflect aspects of the cultural background by way of borrowings *head-tie* (woman's headdress), *juju music* (a type of dance music). Extension and narrowing of meaning occur in *corner* (bend in the road), *globe* (bulb), *environment* (neighbourhood). Some words and expressions have wide currency throughout West African English – *balance* (change), *bata* (shoe), *give kola* (offer bribe), *have long legs* (have influence), and sometimes it becomes difficult to distinguish between general West African usage and a national variety – Nigerian English, Ghanian English, etc. One may also note the formation with plural suffix of words that are not normally count nouns – *equipments, aircrafts, deadwoods*,etc; after some verbs *to* is dropped from the following infinitive – *enable him do it*; standard English transitive verbs gain particles and become phrasal verbs – *voice out (I am going to voice out my opinion), discuss about (we will discuss about that later)*.

In East Africa the most important African language is the Bantu Kiswahili due to which the East African variety of English has acquired some of its characteristic phonological patterns – for example the lack of [ʒ] and [θ] as in *this/thing* which is pronounced as *zis siŋ*. Some verbs that are phrasal in standard English lose the adverbial particle but keep the meaning of the phrasal verb – *Her name cropped in the conversation* for **cropped up**, *I picked him outside his house* instead of **picked him up**. Some nouns in Kenyan and Tanzanian speech have a plural form but are treated as singular:- *behaviours, laps, minds, noses, popcorns*. In *My noses are stuffed up*, the influence of Bantu is clear since there is no single word for nostril in Bantu.

The above survey of the varieties of English describe language variation not only through time but also across space. As has already been mentioned, dialects are varieties of English co-related to particular spatial points. If the geographical barriers between regions are slight, then dialectical variations between regions are also negligible and the speech of one region is largely comprehensible to the inhabitants of the neighbouring regions. But if geographical barriers are significantly large, then with time dialects develop into separate independent languages and a great deal of comprehensibility between varieties is lost. As for instance Swedish and Danish which today are independent languages have both originated from Scandinavian. Within a particular geographical area (country), at any given point of time, there are many dialects in existence. One of these dialects due to social, political, economic or intellectual reasons wins predominance over the others dialects and becomes the received *standard language* of the country. Grammars of the variety are written, it is used for all scholarly and written purposes. In short, it becomes the language of the educated class. So it is interesting to note that the standard language of a country gets its exalted status for purely political or social reasons. There is nothing intrinsic in the language variety which makes it qualitatively superior to the other prevailing dialects. In Britain standard speech is best exemplified by the speech of those educated in the public schools. It is class rather than a regional variety. The standard variety of Britain in not the same as the standard variety of USA, Canada, Australia or India. Due to the spread of English to many parts of the world, the speech of Britain is no longer considered the norm by which others must be judged. Indian English or Canadian English is just as "standard" as that of London and Oxford. In countries where English is a first language there is a solid core of common usage which makes "Standard World English" plausible. Regional varieties are marked in spoken speech, many of them being matters of accent. But if we examine the more formal uses of language, especially the style of written language the differences become very small. There is therefore a standard literary language throughout the English speaking communities and it is this, if anything, which deserves the title Standard English.

1.5 PIDGINS AND CREOLES

This brings us to two interesting varieties of language which despite their origin as a social variety progress further to become established as geographical or regional varieties. Pidgins and Creoles are results of extreme forms of language contact situations. There happen numerous situations in life when due to certain reasons (mainly economic) speakers of different languages come together but have no common language between them to communicate with each other. For instance, situations which arose when slaves from different parts of Africa, speaking different languages were brought to America, or the situations which arose when sailors from different linguistic backgrounds met on a ship to live and work together. In such situations the necessities of communication require the birth of a new code. This new code which is no one's mother tongue and contains elements from numerous languages is called *pidgin* and the process by which it happens is called *pidginisation*.

Reduction and *Simplification* are the two process by which pidiginisation proceeds. In English-based pidgins the main features taken over are *lexical*; but the new language draws on English only minimally for *phonology* and *grammar*. A pidgin preserves the absolutely minimal grammatical structures needed for effective communication and reduces redundancy to almost nil. The various pidgins spoken all over the world often resemble one another in structure, rather than the dominant languages from which they are derived. One result of this typical pidgin structure is that an English-based pidgin is generally not considered to be a dialect of English, but to be a different language in its own right, though there is an area of overlap - e.g. in Jamaica with its continium of usage from creole to standard English, the intermediary *'mesolects'* are thought of as dialects of English.

The great simplification of pidgin structures is seen in both phonology and grammar. The number of phonemes is reduced--for example in Jamaican pidgins *block* and *black* become identical, as do *beer* and *bear, pour* and *poor, farm* and *form*. The morphological system is also much simplified. Both nouns and verbs have only one form - there is no distinction between singular and plural. English-based pidgins draw most of their vocabulary from English, but also make changes to it. Words are often used with new meaning like West African *chop* means *to eat* and *bif* means *animal, meat*.

Pidgins fulfill a wide range of functions: in West Africa, English based pidgins are used for all normal language functions along with standard English and the local languages and some speakers use pidgins more frequently than their native language.

Initially a pidgin is nobody's mother tongue. But since this is the only language of communication and interaction among a diverse group of people, the frequency of its use slowly increases as does the number of its speakers. The pidgin no longer remains only the language of the work place but also becomes the language of the home. It is then passed on to the newer generations who learn the pidgin as their mother-tongue. A functional switch of languages takes place, and when this happens, a pidgin becomes a *Creole*.

The process of *Creolisation* is the reverse of the process of pidginisation. A pidgin is a highly reduced language, strictly confined to the work place. But when it develops into a Creole, a functional expansion of the language takes place and it becomes the language of the home, of the market, of personal and informal interaction. Because of increased demands on the language, its vocabulary expands, grammatical structures become more elaborate, and *elaboration* and *expansion* take place – possessive markers, markers of intensity, tense markers, pronominal forms all come in, but in an altered form from that of the parent pidgin.

The next stage in the development of the language may be called *de-creolisation* - when the language acquires a standard form, is taught in educational institutions, is officially institutionalised, or it approaches the standard forms of an already existing

standard language. This produces a very fluid linguistic scene in the country where speakers have varying degrees of proficiency in the various languages. The languages at the top of the hierarchy (the Standard forms) are called *Acrolect*, those at the bottom are called *Basilect*, while those inbetween are called *Mesolect*. The general movement in society is upward. The majority speak the *basilect*. But with increase in education, the community as a whole makes deliberate efforts to move towards the *acrolect*. Therefore there is a usage continuum in society. As this happens, the process of decreolisation gains momentum and the language moves towards the structures of a standard language.

Of the approximately 125 pidgins and creoles spoken throughout the world, more than thirty five are English based. Historical settlement and colonization produced two major groups of English based pidgins--creoles—the *Atlantic group* and the *Pacific group*. The Atlantic creoles were established in West Africa and the Caribbean and the Pacific varieties are those of the South Sea Islands, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Hawaii and the coasts of South-East Asia.

1.6   SOCIAL VARIETIES OF LANGUAGE

Till now we have confined our discussion to varieties and variations which arise in language due to geographical reasons. But language is not a phenomena which exists in a vacuum. It is an essential element of the social fabric and the primary medium of social interaction and communication. An individual living in society has different *roles* at different times in his/her life. These roles are of two types - *actualised* and *ideologised* which together constitute the *Role Repertoire* of an individual. To perform the various roles in life an individual takes recourse to different codes. *Verbal Repertoire* is the sum total of all codes the speaker has acquired experientially and symbolically. As in Role Repertoire, so in Verbal Repertoire there are some codes which we actually use while there are others which we aspire to use. Here the question of *access* comes in. Those who have access to a larger variety of roles have access to a greater variety of verbal codes. The relationship between social life and actual language use has been the subject of varied and extensive debate.

Role-relationship is another aspect of life which determines social use of language. In all role-relationships there is a tacit agreement on approved codes of behaviour. In transactional interaction (e.g. between a customer and a seller) the roles are rigidly defined with very little scope for flexibility in the use of language. But in the role-relationship between a father and a son there is an element of informality. In such *personal interactions* language use in more fluid and there is less emphasis on mutual rights and obligations.

These interactions are further categorized in terms of *situation*. Malinowski and Firth provided a detailed analysis of situation. Firth uses the term *context of situation* which has the flowing components:

Participants
Locale
Topic
Attitude (of the participants)

Analysing participants is not merely a matter of naming them but analysis of them in terms of their age, gender, education, social status, etc.

Locale may either be a classroom, a playing field, a railway platform. Locale together with topic define *setting* which can either be formal or informal. Depending on the degree of formality the use of language varies. The context of situation is not static and therefore language use also remains fluid.

13

To arrive at a higher level of social analysis another term commonly used is *Domain*. It is a typical sphere of activity and can be divided into many sub-spheres. These include family, neighbourhood, school, work place, commerce and trade, government and administration. These sub-spheres are then further divided according to the context of situation, role relationship, etc. The division continues till we arrive at the individual user of language.

Apart from domain, role-relationship, situation etc. social reality can be analysed through the concepts of *speech act* and *speech event*. A speech act is a minimal speech unit which is socially meaningful in a given interaction, for example, a polite question. A speech event can be seen as a bundle of speech acts. In other words it is a substantial amount of speech which covers a particular event, a specific situation or a special role- relationship.

An important notion in the social use of language is that of *Function*. Each time we use language in any kind of situation, in any kind of interaction, that particular use of language is meant to perform some communicative function. The classic model of language function was given by Roman Jakobson, who suggested seven functions of language, later reduced to three by M. Halliday (1) *Ideational (2) Indexical (3) Interaction management.* Naming segments of reality to enable us to constitute and talk about the world around us is the **ideational** function of language. When our use of language reflects our personality and conveys information about us (eg. educational, social status, etc.) then this is **indexical** use of language. Each person when in interaction with others uses language to indicate, establish or maintain social relationships—in short to manage our affairs in social life.

The next important concept is that of the forms of language determined by *use*. These forms are also called *Registers*. Halliday stipulates that any discourse can be analysed in terms of (a) *field* of discourse (subject), (b) *mode* of discourse (written/spoken) (c) *Style* (formal/informal). In recent years the term *functional variety* is preferred by scholar instead of the term *register*. Functional variations of language lead to what is known as *interpersonal variation*, that is, the same individual using different codes at different times, in different situations. Language use here is determined by the *field* of discourse, what function the speaker has to perform, role relationship with the hearer and so on. In the case of multilingual speakers the case becomes even more complicated.

Interpersonal variation of language stipulates that no two individuals speak in the same way. If this kind of variation is taken to its extreme limit it leads to what is called *ideolect*, that is, the view that any use of language is highly idiosyncratic. Inter and intra personal variation is by and large systematic and context bound, and can therefore be studied and analysed.

1.7   VARIATION STUDIES

Using norms like social class and contextual styles, sociolinguistics determine the co-relation between language use and social structures. Social classes are constructed on the basis of several parameters like income, profession, education, area of residence, age, gender, etc. Social classes like upper class (UC) - upper middle class (UMC), lower working class (LWC) are identified but this classification can vary from one community to another.

In 1958 Fischer studied the variable *-ing*. He found that this variable has two variants *[iŋ]* and *[In}*. He conducted a study on a small sample of twelve boys and twelve girls in a school. His independent variables were gender, model vs typical students

and the degree of formality. He worked on casual verbs like *singing* and *jumping* and formal verbs like *learning* and *educating*. His findings were as follows: (1) boys use *[In]* more than girls; (2) typical students use the *[In]* form more than model students; (3) *[In]* is associated with situations of informality; (4) casual verbs are more prone to taking the *[In]* form. These four conclusions were inter-related and higher levels of generalisations were arrived at on the basis of these conclusions, i.e *[iŋ]* is the standard form and girls tend to be more correct in their pronunciation. This very small study however drew attention to some important facts—that correlation can be established between dependent and independent variables; that higher order of generalisations are possible from small statistical studies. This study also focussed attention on the fact that the formality of situation has a great bearing on speech. An increase in formality produces a movement towards the standard form, but this standard form itself is dynamic as discussed earlier. Earlier the *[In]* form was considered more prestigious and was written as *in'* instead of *(ing)* in poetry. The standardisation of the variant *ing* is the result of changes in ideology and socio-political structures—for instance the spread of English and the democratisation of the English speaking world.

In 1966 Labov studied the variable *r* and its variants (See Block 7). In his research in New York Labov observed the realisation of *r* to be ascendent and asociated with the speech of the UMC. He also observed that more and more young people were using the *[r]* because of the spread of standard American pronunciation through education. Other studies correlating languages patterns with social class have been conducted by Trudgill, Gumperz, Jehangiri, Bickerton and Bailey, Wardaugh and others.

1.8 LET US SUM UP

The above discussions have made it clear that language is a heterogeneous and dynamic phenomena. Its forms and variation depend not only on geographical factors but also on social structure and behaviour. Each user of language in his/her own way is a creative user of language, varying linguistic codes according to situation, context, hearer, norms of acceptability and propriety, etc. This constant interaction between social reality and language use produces a dynamic, fluid environment where language and language use become complex and challenging objects of study.

1.9 KEY WORDS

Variable	a linguistic item which has various forms (variants). The different forms of the variable may be related to differences in **style** or to differences in the **socio-economic background, education, age,** or **gender** of the speaker. There are variables in **phonology, morphology, syntax** and **lexicon.**
Idiolect	the language system of an individual as expressed by the way s/he speaks or writes within the over all system of a particular language.
Family of languages	a 'family of languages' is a set of languages deriving from a common ancestory or parent, e.g. Indo-European family consists of 'daughter' languages—Sanskrit, Greek, Latin.
Pidgin	a language which develops as a **contact language** when groups of people who speak different languages come into contact and communicate with one another, as when foreign

traders communicate with the local population or workers on plantations or in factories communicate with one another or with their bosses. A pidgin usually has a limited vocabulary and a very reduced grammatical structure which may expand when a pidgin is used for a long period of time.

Creol   a pidgin language which has become the natural language of a group of speakers, being used for all or many of their daily communicative needs. Usually, the sentence structures and vocabulary range of a creole are far more complex than those of a pidgin. Creoles are usually classified according to the language from which most of their vocabulary comes, eg. English-based, French-based, Portuguese-based, and Swahili-based creoles.   '

Mesolect   a term used by some in the study of the development of CREOLE languages, to refer to intermediate linguistic varieties (or tects) which fall between **acrolect** and **basilect**.

Acrolect   a term used in the study of creole languages to refer to a prestige or standard variety. **Basilects** are remote from the prestige variety and can be contrasted with the mesolect.

Verbal repertoire   the speech varieties (languages, dialects, sociolects, styles, register) which an individual knows.

Role-relationship   the relationship which people have to each other in an act of communication and which influences the way they speak to each other. For example a junior colleague will use more deferential language towards his/her boss.

Domain .   an area of human activity in which one particular speech variety or a combination of several speech varieties is regularly used. For example, situations in which the persons talking to one another are members of the family would belong to the *family domain*.

Speech act   an analysis of the role of utterances in relation to the behaviour of the speaker and hearer in interpersonal communication.

Speech event   the basic unit for the analysis of spoken interaction. Speech events are governed by rules and norms for the use of speech, which may be different in different communities.

Register   a variety of language defined according to its use in social situations.

1.10   READING LIST

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1.11   QUESTIONS

1.   What is the difference between dialect and ideolect? Explain with examples.
2.   What is the process that leads to pidginization and creolization?
3.   In studies of language variation, a large geographical barrier is often seen as a
     factor in the development of different varieties of a language. Which area,
     i.e. phonology, lexicon, syntax would vary the most? Why? Give examples
     to substantiate your answer.
4.   What is standard English? What gives rise to a standard language?