9

Language in Society

> Language is a city to the building of which every human being brought a stone.
>
> **RALPH WALDO EMERSON,** *Letters and Social Aims*, 1876

Dialects

> A language is a dialect that has an army and a navy.
>
> **MAX WEINREICH** (1894–1969)

All speakers of English can talk to each other and pretty much understand each other. Yet, no two of us speak exactly alike. Some differences are the result of age, sex, social situation, and where and when the language was learned. These differences are reflected in word choices, the pronunciation of words, and grammatical rules. The language of an individual speaker with its unique characteristics is referred to as the speaker's **idiolect**. English may then be said to consist of anywhere from 450 million to 850 million idiolects, or the number of speakers of English (which seems to be growing every day and is difficult to estimate).

Like individuals, different groups of people who speak the same language speak it differently. Bostonians, New Yorkers, Texans, blacks in Chicago, whites in Denver, and Hispanics in Albuquerque all exhibit variation in the way they speak English. When there are systematic differences in the way groups speak a language, we say that each group speaks a **dialect** of that language. Dialects are *mutually intelligible* forms of a language that *differ in systematic ways*. *Every*

speaker, whether rich or poor, regardless of region or racial origin, speaks at least one dialect, just as each individual speaks an idiolect. A dialect is *not* an inferior or degraded form of a language, and logically could not be so because a language is a collection of dialects.

It is not always easy to decide whether the differences between two speech communities reflect two dialects or two languages. Sometimes this rule-of-thumb definition is used: When dialects become mutually *un*intelligible—when the speakers of one dialect group can no longer understand the speakers of another dialect group—these dialects become different languages.

However, this rule of thumb does not always jibe with how languages are officially recognized, which is determined by political and social considerations. For example, Danes speaking Danish and Norwegians speaking Norwegian and Swedes speaking Swedish can converse with each other. Nevertheless, Danish and Norwegian and Swedish are considered separate languages because they are spoken in separate countries and because there are regular differences in their grammars. Similarly, Hindi and Urdu are mutually intelligible "languages" spoken in Pakistan and India, although the differences between them are not much greater than those between the English spoken in America and the English spoken in Australia.

The recent history of Serbo-Croatian, the language of the former nation of Yugoslavia, illustrates the factors that can determine if a particular way of speaking is considered to be a dialect or a language. From a linguistic point of view, Serbo-Croatian is a single Slavic language: Even though Croats use Roman script (like English) while Serbs use Cyrillic script (like Russian), in speech the varieties are mutually intelligible, differing slightly in vocabulary just as the British and American English dialects do. But from a sociopolitical point of view, following the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the Serbo-Croatian language "broke up" as well. After years of conflict, the two now-independent nations declare that they speak not just different dialects but different languages.

On the other hand, linguistically distinct languages in China, such as Mandarin and Cantonese, although mutually unintelligible when spoken, are nevertheless referred to as dialects of Chinese in the media and elsewhere because they have a common writing system that can be read by all speakers (because it's ideographic—see chapter 11), and because they are spoken in a single country.

It is also not easy to draw a distinction between dialects and languages on strictly linguistic grounds. Dialects and languages reflect the underlying grammars and lexicons of their speakers. It would be completely arbitrary to say, for example, that grammars that differ from one another by, say, twenty rules represent different languages whereas grammars that differ by less than twenty rules are dialects. Why not ten rules or thirty rules? In reality, what one finds is that there is no sudden major break between dialects. Rather, dialects merge into each other, forming a **dialect continuum**. Imagine, for example, a traveler journeying from Vienna to Amsterdam by bicycle. She would notice small changes in the German spoken as she bicycled from village to village, and the people in adjacent villages would have no trouble communicating with one another. Yet by the time our traveler reached Dutch-speaking Amsterdam, she would realize

that the accumulated differences made the German of Vienna and the Dutch of Amsterdam nearly mutually unintelligible.

Because neither mutual intelligibility, nor degree of grammatical difference, nor the existence of political or social boundaries is decisive, it is not possible to precisely define the difference between a language and a dialect. We shall, however, use the rule-of-thumb definition and refer to dialects of one language as mutually intelligible linguistic systems, with systematic differences among them.

As we will discuss in the next chapter, languages change continually but these changes occur gradually. They may originate in one geographic region or in one social group and spread slowly to others, and often over the life spans of several generations of speakers. Dialect diversity develops when the changes that occur in one region or group do not spread. When speakers are in regular contact with one another, linguistic properties spread and are acquired by children. However, when some communication barrier separates groups of speakers—be it a physical barrier such as an ocean or a mountain range, or social barriers of a political, racial, class, educational, or religious kind—linguistic changes do not spread so readily, and the differences between groups are reinforced and grow in number.

Dialect leveling is movement toward greater uniformity and less variation among dialects. Though one might expect dialect leveling to occur as a result of the ease of travel and mass media, this is not generally the case. Dialect variation in the United Kingdom is maintained although only a few major dialects are spoken on national radio and television. There may actually be an increase in dialects in urban areas, where different groups attempt to maintain their distinctness and group identity.

Regional Dialects

> Phonetics . . . the science of speech. That's my profession. . . . (I) can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshireman by his brogue. I can place any man within six miles. I can place him within two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets.
>
> **GEORGE BERNARD SHAW,** *Pygmalion,* 1912
>
> The educated Southerner has no use for an r except at the beginning of a word.
>
> **MARK TWAIN,** *Life on the Mississippi,* 1883

When various linguistic differences accumulate in a particular geographic region (e.g., the city of Boston or the southern area of the United States), the language spoken has its own character. Each version of the language is referred to as a **regional dialect**. The hypothetical journey from Vienna to Amsterdam discussed previously crossed regional dialects. In the United States, most dialectal differences are based on geographic region.

The origins of many regional dialects of American English can be traced to the people who settled in North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Because they came from different parts of England, these early settlers already spoke different dialects of English, and these differences were carried to the original thirteen American colonies. By the time of the American Revolution, there were three major dialect areas in the British colonies: the Northern dialect spoken in New England and around the Hudson River; the Midland dialect spoken in Pennsylvania; and the Southern dialect. These dialects differed from one another and from the English spoken in England in systematic ways. Some of the changes that occurred in British English spread to the colonies; others did not.

How dialects develop is illustrated by the pronunciation of words with an *r* in different parts of United States. As early as the eighteenth century, the British in southern England were dropping their *r*'s before consonants and at the ends of words. Words such as *farm*, *farther*, and *father* were pronounced as [fa:m], [fa:ðə], and [fa:ðə], respectively. By the end of the eighteenth century, *r*-drop was a general rule among the early settlers in New England and the southern Atlantic seaboard. Close commercial ties were maintained between the New England colonies and London, and Southerners sent their children to England to be educated, which reinforced the *r*-drop rule. The *r*-less dialect still spoken today in Boston, New York, and Savannah maintains this characteristic. Later settlers, however, came from northern England, where the *r* had been retained; as the frontier moved westward, so did the *r*. Pioneers from all three dialect areas spread westward. The mingling of their dialects leveled many of their dialect differences, which is why the English used in large sections of the Midwest and the West is similar.

Regional phonological or phonetic distinctions are often referred to as different **accents**. A person is said to have a Boston or Brooklyn or Midwestern accent, a Southern drawl, an Irish brogue, and so on. Thus, *accent* refers to the characteristics of speech that convey information about the speaker's dialect, which may reveal in what country or in what part of the country the speaker grew up, or to which sociolinguistic group the speaker belongs. People in the United States often refer to someone as having a British accent or an Australian accent; in Britain they refer to an American accent.

The term *accent* is also used to refer to the speech of non-native speakers, who have learned a language as a second language. For example, a native French speaker's English is described as having a French accent. In this sense, *accent* refers to phonological differences caused by one's native language. Unlike regional dialect accents, such foreign accents do not reflect differences in the speech of the community where the language was learned.

Regional dialects may differ not only in their pronunciation but also in their lexical choices and grammatical rules. A comedian once remarked that "the Mason-Dixon line is the dividing line between *you-all* and *youse-guys*." In the following sections we discuss the different linguistic levels at which dialects may vary.

Phonological Differences

> I have noticed in traveling about the country a good many differences in the pronunciation of common words. . . . Now what I want to know is whether there is any right or wrong about this matter. . . . If one way is right, why don't we all pronounce that way and compel the other fellow to do the same? If there isn't any right or wrong, why do some persons make so much fuss about it?
>
> **LETTER QUOTED IN "THE STANDARD AMERICAN,"** in J. V. Williamson and V. M. Burke, eds., *A Various Language,* 1971

A comparison of the *r*-drop and other dialects illustrates the many phonological differences among dialects of American English. These variations created difficulties for us in writing chapter 4 (phonetics), where we wished to illustrate the different sounds of English by using key words in which the sounds occur. As mentioned, some people pronounce *caught* [kɔt] with the vowel [ɔ] and *cot* [kat] with [a], whereas others pronounce them both [kat]. Some pronounce *Mary*, *merry*, and *marry* the same; others pronounce the three words differently as [meri], [mɛri], and [mæri]; and still others pronounce two of them the same. In the southern area of the country, *creek* is pronounced with a tense [i] as [krik], and in the north Midlands, it is pronounced with a lax [ɪ] as [krɪk]. Many speakers of American English pronounce *pin* and *pen* identically, whereas others pronounce the first [pĩn] and the second [pɛ̃n].

The pronunciation of British English (or many dialects of it) differs in systematic ways from pronunciations in many dialects of American English. In a survey of hundreds of American and British speakers conducted via the Internet, 48 percent of the Americans pronounced the mid consonants in *luxury* as voiceless [lʌkʃəri], whereas 96 percent of the British pronounced them as voiced [lʌgʒəri]. Sixty-four percent of the Americans pronounced the first vowel in *data* as [e] and 35 percent as [æ], as opposed to 92 percent of the British pronouncing it with an [e] and only 2 percent with [æ]. The most consistent difference occurred in the placement of primary stress, with most Americans putting stress on the first syllable and most British on the second or third in polysyllabic words like *cigarette*, *applicable*, *formidable*, and *laboratory*.

The United Kingdom also has many regional dialects. The British vowels described in the phonetics chapter are used by speakers of the dialect called RP for "received pronunciation" because it is "received" (accepted) in the court of the monarch. In this dialect, *h* is pronounced at the beginning of both *head* and *herb*, whereas in most American English dialects *h* is not pronounced in *herb*. In some British English dialects the *h* is regularly dropped from most words in which it is pronounced in American, such as *house*, pronounced [aʊs], and *hero*, pronounced [iro]. As is true of the origin of certain American dialects, many of the regional dialects of British English, such as the West Country dialect, the East Anglia dialect, and the Yorkshire dialect, are not deviations from the "standard" dialect spoken in London, but are direct descendants of earlier varieties that existed alongside London English as far back as the eleventh century.

English is the most widely spoken language in the world (as a first or second language). It is the national language of several countries, including the United States, large parts of Canada, the British Isles, Australia, and New Zealand. For many years it was the official language in countries that were once colonies of Britain, including India, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and the other "anglophone" countries of Africa. There are many other phonological differences in the various dialects of English used around the globe.

Lexical Differences

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Regional dialects may differ in the words people use for the same object, as well as in phonology. Hans Kurath, an eminent dialectologist, in his paper "What Do You Call It?" asked:

> Do you call it a *pail* or a *bucket*? Do you draw water from a *faucet* or from a *spigot*? Do you pull down the *blinds*, the *shades*, or the *curtains* when it gets dark? Do you *wheel* the baby, or do you *ride* it or *roll* it? In a *baby carriage*, a *buggy*, a *coach*, or a *cab*?

People take a *lift* to the *first floor* (our *second floor*) in England, but an *elevator* in the United States; they fill up with *petrol* (not *gas*) in London; in Britain a *public school* is "private" (you have to pay), and if a student showed up there wearing *pants* ("underpants") instead of *trousers* ("pants"), he would be sent home to get dressed.

If you ask for a *tonic* in Boston, you will get a drink called *soda* or *soda-pop* in Los Angeles; and a *freeway* in Los Angeles is a *thruway* in New York, a *parkway* in New Jersey, a *motorway* in England, and an *expressway* or *turnpike* in other dialect areas.

Dialect Atlases

Linguist Hans Kurath published **dialect maps** and **dialect atlases** of a region on which dialect differences are geographically plotted (see Figure 9.1). The dialectologists who created the map noted the places where speakers use one word or another word for the same item. For example, the area where the term *Dutch cheese* is used is not contiguous; there is a small pocket mostly in West Virginia where speakers use that term for what other speakers call *smearcase* (from the Dutch word *smeerkaas*, a compound made from the verb *smeren* "to spread" and *kaas* "cheese").

In similar maps, areas were differentiated based on the variation in pronunciation of the same word, such as [krik] and [krɪk] for *creek*. The concentrations defined by different word usages and varying pronunciations, among other linguistic differences, form **dialect areas**.

A line drawn on the map to separate the areas is called an **isogloss**. When you cross an isogloss, you are passing from one dialect area to another. Sometimes several isoglosses coincide, often at a political boundary or at a natural barrier such as a river or mountain range. Linguists call these groupings a *bundle* of isoglosses. Such a bundle can define a regional dialect.

DARE is the acronym for the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, whose chief editor was the distinguished American dialectologist Frederick G. Cassidy (1907–2000). This work represents decades of research and scholarship by Cassidy and other American dialectologists and is a major resource for those interested in American English dialects. Its first four volumes, covering *A* through *Sk*, are published; volume 5, covering *Sk* through *Z*, is due to be published in 2011. Its purpose is described on its Web site as follows:

> The *Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)* is a reference tool unlike any other. Its aim is not to prescribe how Americans should speak, or even to describe the language we use generally, the "standard" language. Instead, it seeks to document the varieties of English that are **not** found everywhere in the United States—those words, pronunciations, and phrases that vary from one region to another, that we learn at home rather than at school, or that are part of our oral rather than our written culture. Although American English is remarkably homogeneous considering the tremendous size of the country, there are still many thousands of differences that characterize the various dialect regions of the United States. It is these differences that *DARE* records.

While Professor Cassidy did not live to see the completion of DARE, he took his life's work with him to the grave, where on his tombstone is inscribed "On to Z!"

Syntactic Differences

Dialects can also be distinguished by systematic syntactic differences. In most American dialects, sentences may be conjoined as follows:

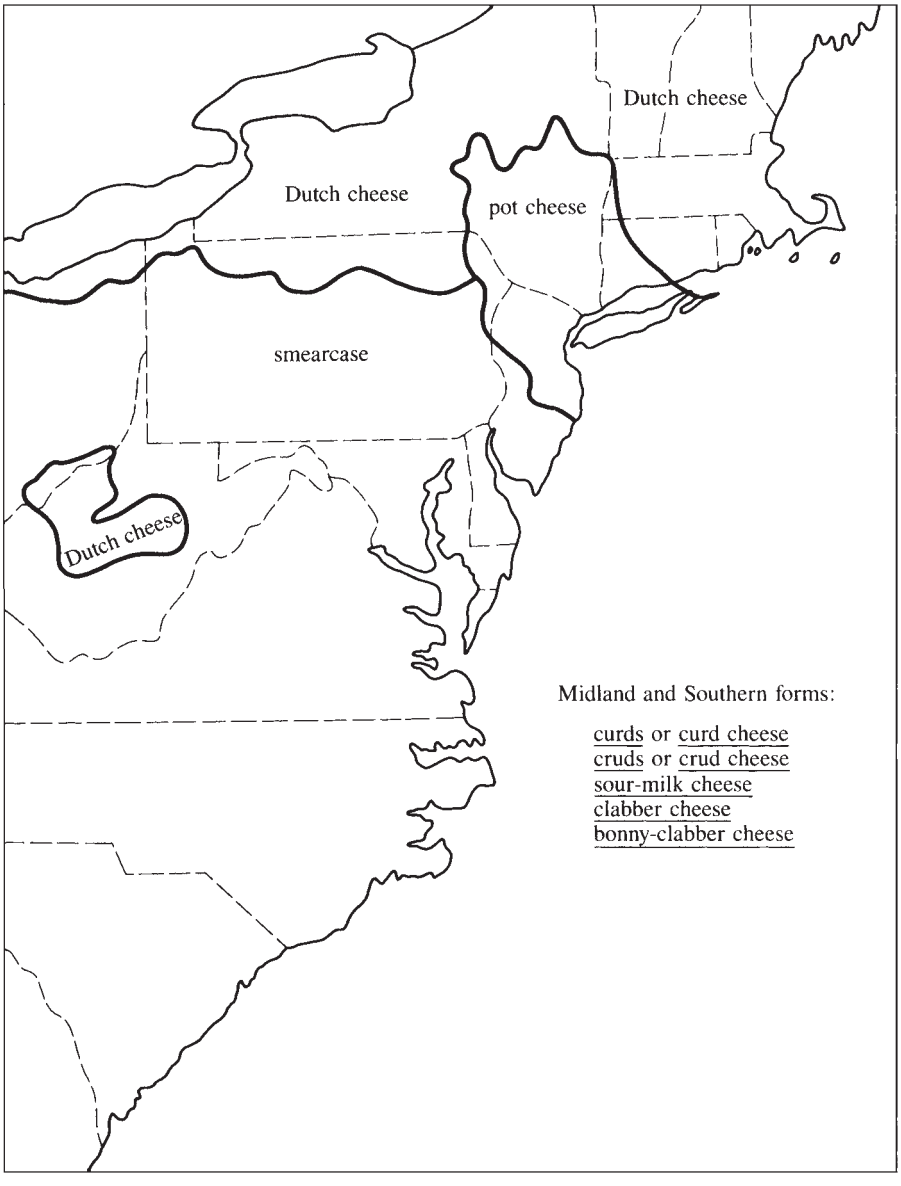


FIGURE 9.1 | A dialect map showing the isoglosses separating the use of different words that refer to the same cheese.

Kurath, Hans. *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, copyright © 1949. Reprinted with permission of University of Michigan Press.

1. John will eat and Mary will eat. → John and Mary will eat.

In the Ozark dialect of southern Missouri, the following conjoining is also possible:

2. John will eat and Mary will eat. → John will eat and Mary.

In (1) the VP *will eat* in the first conjunct is deleted, while in (2) the VP in the second conjunct is deleted. Most dialects of English allow deletion of only the first conjunct and in those dialects *John will eat and Mary* is ungrammatical. The Ozark dialect differs in allowing the second VP to delete.

Speakers of some American dialects say *Have them come early!* where others would say *Have them* ***to*** *come early!* Many speakers of the latter dialect also exhibit "double modals," and expressions like *He* ***might could*** *do it* or *You* ***might should*** *go home* are grammatical. While Aux recursion (see chapter 2) is permitted in all English dialects, most dialects constrain verb phrases to contain no more than one modal verb.

Some of the dialects that permit double modals (e.g., Appalachian English) also exhibit double objects (e.g., *I caught me a fish*); and *a*-prefixing with progressives, *He came a-runnin'*. Several distinguishing syntactic characteristics contribute to a *bundle* of syntactic isoglosses that separate these regional dialects.

In some American English dialects, the pronoun *I* occurs when *me* would be used in other dialects. This difference is a syntactically conditioned morphological difference.

Dialect 1	**Dialect 2**
between you and I	between you and me
Won't he let you and I swim?	Won't he let you and me swim?
*Won't he let I swim?	

The use of *I* in these structures is only permitted in a conjoined NP, as the starred (ungrammatical) sentence shows. *Won't he let me swim?*, however, is grammatical in both dialects. Dialect 1 is growing, and these forms are becoming Standard English, spoken by TV announcers, political leaders, and university professors, although language purists still frown on this usage.

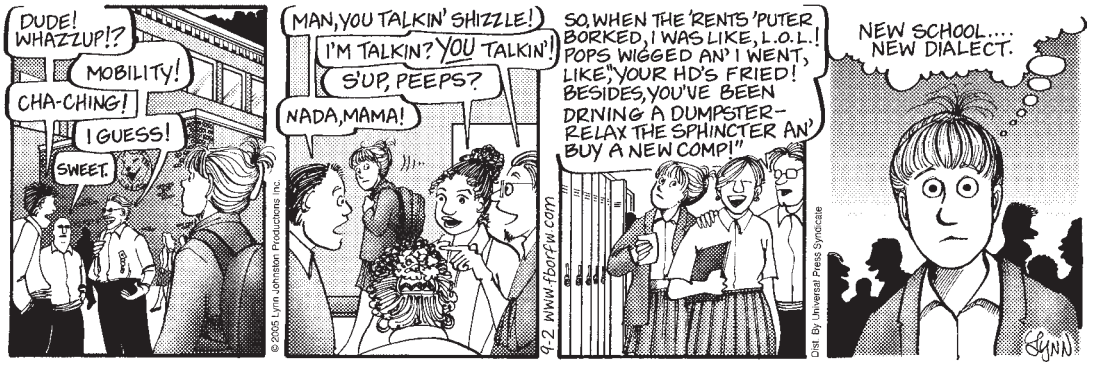
In British English the pronoun *it* in the sentence *I could have done it* can be deleted. British speakers say *I could have done*, which is not in accordance with the syntactic rules of American English. American English, however, permits the deletion of *done it*, and Americans say *I could have*, which does not accord with the British syntactic rules.

Despite such differences, we are still able to understand speakers of other English dialects. Although regional dialects differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntactic rules, the differences are minor when compared with the totality of the grammar. Dialects typically share most rules and vocabulary, which explains why the dialects of a language are mutually intelligible.

Social Dialects

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1922



In many respects, social boundaries and class differences are as confining as the physical barriers that often define regional dialects. It is therefore not surprising that different dialects of a language evolve within social groups.

The social boundaries that give rise to dialect variation are numerous. They may be based on socioeconomic status, religious, ethnic or racial differences, country of origin, and even gender. Middle-class American and British speakers are often distinguishable from working-class speakers; in Baghdad the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish groups all speak different varieties of Arabic; in India people often use different dialects of a standard regional language such as Hindi, Gujarati, or Bengali depending on the social *caste* they belong to; in America, many speakers of African descent speak a different dialect than those of European, Asian, or Hispanic descent; and, as we shall see, women and men each have their own distinguishing speech characteristics.

Dialect differences that seem to come about because of social factors are called **social dialects**, as opposed to *regional dialects*, which are spawned by geographical factors. However, there are regional aspects to social dialects and, clearly, social aspects to regional dialects, so the distinction is not entirely cut and dried.

The "Standard"

We don't talk fancy grammar and eat anchovy toast. But to live under the kitchen doesn't say we aren't educated.

MARY NORTON, *The Borrowers*, 1952

Even though every language is a composite of dialects, many people talk and think about a language as if it were a well-defined fixed system with various dialects diverging from this norm. This is false, although it is a falsehood that is

widespread. One writer of books on language accused the editors of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, published in 1961, of confusing "to the point of obliteration the older distinction between standard, substandard, colloquial, vulgar, and slang," attributing to them the view that "good and bad, right and wrong, correct and incorrect no longer exist." In the next section we argue that such criticisms are ill founded.

Language Purists

> A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and the Bible; and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon.
>
> **GEORGE BERNARD SHAW,** *Pygmalion,* 1912

Prescriptive grammarians, or language purists, usually consider the dialect used by political leaders and national newscasters as the correct form of the language. (See chapter 6 for a discussion of prescriptive grammars.) This is the dialect taught in "English" or "grammar" classes in school, and it is closer to the written form of the language than many other dialects, which also lends it an air of superiority.

Otto Jespersen, the great Danish linguist, ridiculed the view that a particular dialect is better than any other when he wrote: "We set up as the best language that which is found in the best writers, and count as the best writers those that best write the language. We are therefore no further advanced than before."

The dominant, or **prestige**, dialect is often called the standard dialect. **Standard American English (SAE)** is a dialect of English that many Americans *nearly* speak; divergences from this "norm" are labeled "Philadelphia dialect," "Chicago dialect," "African American English," and so on.

SAE is an idealization. Nobody speaks this dialect; and if somebody did, we would not know it, because SAE is not defined precisely (like most dialects, none of which are easy to clarify). Teachers and linguists held a conference in the 1990s that attempted to come up with a precise definition of SAE. This meeting did not succeed in satisfying everyone's view of SAE. SAE was once represented by the language used by national news broadcasters, but today many of them speak a regional dialect or a style of English that is not universally accepted as "standard." For example, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) once used mostly speakers of RP English, but today speakers of Irish, Welsh, Scottish, and other regional dialects of English are commonly heard on BBC programs. The BBC describes its English as "the speech of educated professionals."

A standard dialect (or prestige dialect) of a particular language may have social functions. Its use in a group may bind people together or provide a common written form for multidialectal speakers. If it is the dialect of the wealthy, influential, and powerful members of society, this may have important implications for the entire society. All speakers who aspire to become successful may be required to speak that dialect even if it isn't their own.

In 1954 the British scholar Alan Ross published *Linguistic Class-Indicators in Present-Day English*, in which he compared the speech habits of the English

upper class, whom he labeled "U," with the speech habits of "non-U" speakers. Ross concluded that although the upper class had words and pronunciations peculiar to it, the main characteristic of U speech is the avoidance of non-U speech; and the main characteristic of non-U speech is, ironically, the effort to sound U. "They've a lovely home," for example, is pure non-U, because it is an attempt to be refined. Non-U speakers say "wealthy" and "ever so"; U speakers say "rich" and "very." Non-U speakers "recall"; U-speakers simply "remember."

Non-U speech habits often include **hypercorrections**, deviations from the norm *thought* to be "proper English," such as pronouncing *often* with a [t], or saying *between you and I*, while U speakers, who are generally more secure about their dialect, say [ɔfə̃n] and *between you and me*. Ironically, in some cases non-U speech is so pervasive it eventually becomes part of the prestige dialect, as we are seeing today with *often* and *between you and I/me*.

No dialect, however, is more expressive, less corrupt, more logical, more complex, or more regular than any other dialect or language. They are simply different. More precisely, dialects represent different set of rules or lexical items represented in the minds of its speakers. Any judgments, therefore, as to the superiority or inferiority of a particular dialect or language are social judgments, which have no linguistic or scientific basis.

To illustrate the arbitrariness of "standard usage," consider the English *r*-drop rule discussed earlier. Britain's prestigious RP accent omits the *r* in words such as "car," "far," and "barn." Thus an *r*-less pronunciation is thought to be better than the less prestigious rural dialects that maintain the *r*. However, *r*-drop in the northeast United States is generally considered substandard, and the more prestigious dialects preserve the *r*, though this was not true in the past when *r*-drop was considered more prestigious. This shows that there is nothing inherently better or worse about one pronunciation over another, but simply that one variant is perceived of as better or worse depending on a variety of social factors.

Banned Languages

Language purists wish to prevent language or dialect differentiation because of their false belief that some languages are better than others, or that change leads to corruption. Languages and dialects have also been banned as a means of political control. Russian was the only legal language permitted by the Russian tsars, who banned the use of Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Georgian, Armenian, Azeri, and all the other languages spoken by national groups under the rule of Russia.

Cajun English and French were once banned in southern Louisiana by practice if not by law. Even as recently as August 8, 2006, Mary Tutwiler writes in a blog entitled "The French Connection," "Many local French speakers were so traumatized by the experience of being punished for speaking their mother tongue in school that they suppress their linguistic knowledge in public."

For many years, American Indian languages were banned in federal and state schools on reservations. Speaking Faroese was formerly forbidden in the Faroe Islands. A proscription against speaking Korean was imposed by the Japanese during their occupation of Korea between 1910 and 1945. Throughout history many languages and dialects have been banned to various degrees.

In France, a notion of the "standard" (the dialect spoken in Paris) as the only correct form of the language is promoted by the French Academy, an official

panel of "scholars" who determine what usage constitutes the "official French language." Some years ago, the Academy enacted a law forbidding the use of "Franglais," which are words of English origin like *le parking*, *le weekend*, and *le hotdog*. The French, of course, continue to use them, and because such words are notorious, they are widely used in advertising, where being noticed is more important than being correct. Only in government documents can these proscriptions be enforced.

In the past (and to some extent in the present), a French citizen from the provinces who wished to succeed in French society nearly always had to learn the prestigious Parisian French dialect. Then, several decades ago, members of regional autonomy movements demanded the right to use their own languages in their schools and for official business. In the section of France known as l'Occitanie, the popular singers sing in Langue d'oc, a Romance language of the region, both as a protest against the official language policy and as part of the cultural revival movement.

In many places in the world (including the United States), the use of sign languages of the deaf was once banned. Children in schools for the deaf were often punished if they used any gestures at all. The aim of these schools was to teach deaf children to read lips and to communicate through sound. This view prevented early exposure to language. It was mistakenly thought that children, if exposed to sign, would not learn to read lips or produce sounds. Individuals who become deaf after learning a spoken language are often able to use their knowledge to learn to read lips and continue to speak. This is, however, very difficult if one has never heard speech sounds. Furthermore, even the best lip readers can comprehend only about one-third of the sounds of spoken language. Imagine trying to decide whether *lid* or *led* was said by reading the speaker's lips. Mute the sound on a TV set and see what percentage of a news broadcast you can understand, even if recorded and played back in slow motion, and even if you know the subject matter.

In recent years in the United States, a movement has arisen to establish English as an official language by amending the Constitution. An "Official English" initiative was passed by the electorate in California in 1986; in Colorado, Florida, and Arizona in 1988; and in Alabama in 1990. Such measures have also been adopted by seventeen state legislatures. This kind of linguistic chauvinism is opposed by civil rights minority-group advocates, who point out that such a measure could be used to prevent large numbers of non-English-speaking citizens from participating in civil activities such as voting, and from receiving the benefits of a public education, for which they pay through taxes. Fortunately, as of this writing, the movement appears to have lost momentum.

African American English

> The language, only the language. . . . It is the thing that black people love so much—the saying of words, holding them on the tongue, experimenting with them, playing with them. It's a love, a passion. Its function is like a preacher's: to make you stand up out of your seat, make you lose yourself and hear yourself. The worst of all possible things that could happen would be to lose that language.
>
> **TONI MORRISON,** interviewed in *The New Republic,* March 21, 1981

Most regional dialects of the United States are largely free from stigma. Some regional dialects, like the *r*-less NewYorkese, are the victims of so-called humor, and speakers of one dialect may ridicule the "drawl" of southerners or the "nasal twang" of Texans (even though not all speakers of southern dialects drawl, nor do all Texans twang).

There is, however, a *social* dialect of North American English that has been a victim of prejudicial ignorance. This dialect, **African American English** (**AAE**),[1] is spoken by a large population of Americans of African descent. The distinguishing features of this English dialect persist for social, educational, and economic reasons. The historical discrimination against African Americans has created the social boundaries that permit this dialect to thrive. In addition, particularly in recent years, many blacks have embraced their dialect as a means of positive group identification. AAE is generally used in casual and informal situations, and is much more common among working class people. African Americans from middle class backgrounds and with higher levels of education are now more likely to be speakers of SAE. U.S. President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama are cases in point.

Since the onset of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, AAE has been the focus of national attention. Some critics attempt to equate its use with inferior genetic intelligence and cultural deprivation, justifying these incorrect notions by stating that AAE is a "deficient, illogical, and incomplete" language. Such epithets cannot be applied to any language, and they are as unscientific in reference to AAE as to Russian, Chinese, or Standard American English. The cultural-deprivation myth is as false as the idea that some dialects or languages are inferior. A person may be "deprived" of one cultural background, but be rich in another.

Some people, white and black, think they can identify the race of a person by speech alone, believing that different races inherently speak differently. This belief is patently false. A black child raised in Britain will speak the British dialect of the household. A white child raised in an environment where AAE is spoken will speak AAE. Children construct grammars based on the language they hear.

AAE is discussed here more extensively than other American dialects because it provides an informative illustration of the morphological and syntactic regularities of a dialect of a major language, and the systematic differences from the so-called standard dialects of that language. A vast body of research shows that there are the same kinds of linguistic differences between AAE and SAE as occur between many of the world's major dialects.

Phonological Differences between African American English and SAE

Because AAE is not a single, monolithic dialect, but rather refers to a collection of tightly related dialects, not everything discussed in this section applies to all speakers of AAE.

r-Deletion

Like several dialects of both British and American English, AAE includes a rule of *r-deletion* that deletes /r/ everywhere except before a vowel. Pairs of words like *guard* and *god*, *nor* and *gnaw*, *sore* and *saw*, *poor* and *Poe*, *fort* and *fought*,

[1]AAE is actually a group of closely related dialects also variously called African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Black English (BE), Inner City English (ICE), and Ebonics.

and *court* and *caught* are pronounced identically in AAE because of this phonological rule. There is also an *l-deletion* rule for some speakers of AAE, creating identically pronounced pairs like *toll* and *toe*, *all* and *awe*, *help* and *hep*.

A *consonant cluster reduction* rule in AAE simplifies consonant clusters, particularly at the ends of words and when one of the two consonants is an alveolar (/t/, /d/, /s/, /z/). The application of this rule may delete the past-tense morpheme so that *meant* and *mend* are both pronounced as *men*, and *past* and *passed* (*pass* + *ed*) may both be pronounced like *pass*. When speakers of this dialect say *I pass the test yesterday*, they are not showing an ignorance of past and present-tense forms of the verb, but are pronouncing the past tense according to this rule in their grammar.

The deletion rule is optional; it does not always apply, and studies have shown that it is more likely to apply when the final [t] or [d] does not represent the past-tense morpheme, as in nouns like *paste* [pest] as opposed to verbs like *chased* [tʃest], where the final past tense [t] will not always be deleted. This has also been observed with final [s] or [z], which will be retained more often by speakers of AAE in words like *seats* /sit + s/, where the /s/ represents plural, than in words like *Keats* /kits/, where it is more likely to be deleted to yield the surface form [kit].

Consonant cluster reduction is not unique to AAE. It exists optionally for many speakers of other dialects including SAE. For example, in SAE the medial [d] in *didn't* is often deleted, producing [dĩnt]. Furthermore, nasals are commonly deleted before final voiceless stops, to result in [hĩt] versus [hĩnt].

Neutralization of [ɪ] and [ɛ] before Nasal Consonants

AAE shares with many regional dialects a lack of distinction between /ɪ/ and /ɛ/ before nasal consonants, producing identical pronunciations of *pin* and *pen*, *bin* and *Ben*, *tin* and *ten*, and so on. The vowel sound in these words is roughly between the [ɪ] of *pit* and the [ɛ] of *pet*.

Diphthong Reduction

AAE has a rule that reduces the diphthong /ɔɪ/ (particularly before /l/) to the simple vowel [ɔ] without the glide, so that *boil* and *boy* are pronounced [bɔ].

/ɔɪ/ → /ɔ/

This rule is common throughout the regional dialects of the South irrespective of race and social class.

Loss of Interdental Fricatives

A regular feature is the change of a /θ/ to /f/ and /ð/ to /v/ so that *Ruth* is pronounced [ruf] and *brother* is pronounced [brʌvər]. This [θ]-[f] correspondence also holds in some dialects of British English, where /θ/ is not even a phoneme in the language. *Think* is regularly [fĩnk] in Cockney English.

Initial /ð/ in such words as *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those* are pronounced as [d]. This is again not unique to AAE, but a common characteristic of certain regional, nonethnic dialects of English, many found in the state of New Jersey as well as in New York City and Boston.

Another regular feature found in many varieties of AAE (and non-AAE) is the substitution of a glottal stop for an alveolar stop at the end of non-word-final syllables; thus the name *Rodman* is pronounced [raʔmə̃n], but the word *rod*

is pronounced [rad]. In fact, we observed in chapter 4 on phonetics that the glottal stop [ʔ] is a common allophone of /t/ in many dialects of English.

All of these differences are rule-governed and similar to the kinds of phonological variations that are found in languages all over the world, including Standard English.

Syntactic Differences between AAE and SAE

> And of his port as meeke as is a mayde
> He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
>
> **GEOFFREY CHAUCER,** Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales,* 14th century

Syntactic differences also exist between dialects. They have often been used to illustrate the illogic of AAE, and yet these differences are evidence that AAE is as syntactically complex and as logical as SAE.

Multiple Negatives

Constructions with multiple negatives akin to AAE *He don't know nothing* are commonly found in languages of the world, including French, Italian, and the English of Chaucer, as illustrated in the epigraph from *The Canterbury Tales*. The multiple negatives of AAE are governed by rules of syntax and are not illogical.

Deletion of the Verb "Be"

In most cases, if in Standard English the verb can be contracted, in African American English sentences it is deleted; where it can't be contracted in SAE, it can't be deleted in AAE, as shown in the following sentences:

SAE	AAE
He is nice/He's nice.	He nice.
They are mine/They're mine.	They mine.
I am going to do it/I'm gonna do it.	I gonna do it.
He is/he's as nice as he says he is.	He as nice as he say he is.
*He's as nice as he says he's	*He as nice as he say he
How beautiful you are.	How beautiful you are.
*How beautiful you're	*How beautiful you
Here I am.	Here I am.
*Here I'm	*Here I

These examples show that syntactic reduction rules operate in both dialects although they show small systematic differences.

Habitual "Be"

In SAE, the sentence *John is happy* can be interpreted to mean *John is happy now* or *John is generally happy*. One can make the distinction clear in SAE only by lexical means, that is, the addition of words. One would have to say *John is generally happy* or *John is a happy person* to disambiguate the meaning from *John is presently happy*.

In AAE, this distinction is made syntactically; an uninflected form of *be* is used if the speaker is referring to *habitual* state.

John be happy.	"John is always happy."
John happy.	"John is happy now."
*John be happy at the moment.	
He be late.	"He is habitually late."
He late.	"He is late this time."
*He be late this time.	
Do you be tired?	"Are you generally tired?"
You tired?	"Are you tired now?"
*Do you be tired today?	

The ungrammatical sentences are caused by a conflict of the habitual meaning with the momentary meaning conveyed by *at the moment*, *this time*, and *today*. The syntactic distinction between habitual and nonhabitual aspect also occurs in SAE, but with verbs other than *be*. In SAE eventive verbs such as *eat* and *dance*, when marked with the present-tense *-s* morpheme, have only a habitual meaning and cannot refer to an ongoing situation, in contrast to stative verbs such as *think* or *love*, as exemplified by the following sentences:

John dances every Saturday night.
*John dances now.
John loves Mary now and forever.

"There" Replacement

Some AAE dialects replace SAE *there* with *it's* in positive sentences, and *don't* or *ain't* in negative sentences.

It's a fly messing with me.	"There's a fly messing with me."
Ain't no one going to help you.	
Don't no one going to help you.	"There's no one going to help you."

Combined with multiple negatives, consonant cluster simplification, and complement deletion, speakers produce highly condemned, but clear, logically sound sentences like *Ain't no hard worker never get no good payin' job*: "There isn't a hard worker who never gets a good paying job."

Latino (Hispanic) English

A major group of American English dialects is spoken by native Spanish speakers or their descendants. For more than a century large numbers of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries of South and Central America and the Caribbean islands have been enriching the United States with their language and culture. Among these groups are native speakers of Spanish who have learned or are learning English as a second language. There are also those born in Spanish-speaking homes whose native language is English, some of whom are monolingual, and others who speak Spanish as a second language.

One cannot speak of a homogeneous Latino dialect. In addition to the differences between bilingual and monolingual speakers, the dialects spoken by Puerto Rican, Cuban, Guatemalan, and El Salvadoran immigrants or their children are somewhat different from one another and also from those spoken by many Mexican Americans in the Southwest and California, called Chicano English (ChE).

Although ChE is not homogeneous, we can still recognize it as a distinct dialect of American English with systematic differences from other dialects of English.

Chicano English (ChE)

Chicano English is acquired as a first language by many children, making it the native language of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Americans. It is not English with a Spanish accent but, like African American English, a mutually intelligible dialect that differs systematically from SAE. Many of the differences, however, depend on the social context of the speaker. (This is also true of AAE and most "minority" dialects.) Linguistic differences of this sort that vary with the social situation of the speaker are termed **sociolinguistic variables**. For example, the use of nonstandard forms like double negation is often associated with pride of ethnicity, which is part of the social context. Many Chicano speakers (and speakers of AAE) are **bidialectal**; they can use either ChE (or AAE) or SAE, depending on the social situation.

Phonological Variables of ChE

Phonological differences between ChE and SAE reveal the influence of Spanish on ChE. For example, as discussed in chapters 4 and 5, English has eleven vowel phonemes (not counting the diphthongs): /i, ɪ, e, ɛ, æ, u, ʊ, o, ɔ, a, ʌ/. Spanish, however, has only five: /i, e, u, o, a/. Chicano speakers whose native language is Spanish may substitute the Spanish vowel system for the English. When this is done, several homonyms result that have distinct pronunciations in SAE. Thus *ship* and *sheep* are both pronounced like *sheep*; *rid* is pronounced like *read*, and so on. Chicano speakers whose native language is English may *choose to speak the ChE dialect* despite having knowledge of the full set of American English vowels.

Other differences involve consonants. The affricate /tʃ/ and the fricative /ʃ/ are interchanged, so that *shook* is pronounced as if spelled with a *ch* and *check* as if spelled with an *sh*. Also, some consonants are devoiced; for example, /z/ is pronounced [s] in words like *easy* [isi] and *guys* [gaɪs]. Another difference is the substitution of /t/ for /θ/, and /d/ for /ð/ word initially, so *thin* is pronounced like *tin* or *teen* and *they* is pronounced *day*.

ChE has word-final consonant cluster reduction. *War* and *ward* are both pronounced like *war*; *star* and *start* like *star*. This process may also delete past-tense suffixes (*poked* is pronounced like *poke*) and third-person singular agreement suffixes (*He loves her* becomes *he love her*). Word-final alveolar-cluster reduction (e.g., pronouncing *fast* as if it were spelled *fass*) has become widespread among all dialects of English, including SAE. Although this process is often singled out for speakers of ChE and AAE, it is actually no longer dialect specific.

Prosodic aspects of speech in ChE such as vowel length and intonation patterns may also differ from SAE and give ChE a distinctive flavor. The Spanish sequential constraint, which does not permit a word to begin with an /s/ cluster, is sometimes carried over to ChE in speakers who acquire English after early childhood. Thus *scare* may be pronounced as if it were spelled *escare*, and *school* as if it were spelled *eschool*.

Syntactic Variables in ChE

There are also regular syntactic differences between ChE and SAE. In Spanish, a negative sentence uses a negative morpheme before the verb even if another

negative appears; thus negative concord (the multiple negatives mentioned earlier) is a regular rule of ChE syntax:

SAE	ChE
I don't have any money.	I don have no money.
I don't want anything.	I no want nothin.

Lexical differences also occur, such as the use of *borrow* in ChE for *lend* in SAE (*Borrow me a pencil*), or *barely* in ChE for *just* in SAE (*The new Prius had barely come out when I bought one*), as well as many other often subtle differences.

Genderlects

Dialects are defined in terms of groups of speakers, and speakers are most readily grouped by geography. Thus, regional dialects are the most apparent and generally are what people mean when they use the word *dialect*. Social groups are more amorphous, and social dialects correspondingly less well delineated and, until recently, less well studied. Surprisingly, the most obvious division of

humankind into groups—women and men—has not engendered (if you'll pardon the expression) much dialectal attention until relatively recently.

In 1973, the linguist Robin Lakoff wrote the first article specifically concerned with women and language to be published in a major linguistics journal.[2] Lakoff identified a number of features that occurred more frequently in women's speech than in men's. For example, women "hedge" their speech more often than men do, with expressions like *I suppose*, *I would imagine*, *This is probably wrong, sort of, but . . .* , and so on. Women also use tag questions more frequently to qualify their statements (*He's not a very good actor, is he?*), as well as words of politeness (e.g., *please*, *thank you*) and intensifying adjectives such as *really* and *so* (*It's a really good film*, *It's so nice of you*). Lakoff claimed that the use of these devices was due to uncertainty and a lack of confidence on the part of women.

Since Lakoff's study, an increasing number of scholars have been conducting research on language, gender, and sexism, investigating the differences between male and female speech and their underlying causes. Many sociolinguists studying gender differences in speech now believe that women use hedges and other, similar devices not because they lack confidence but in order to express friendliness and solidarity, a sharing of attitudes and values, with their listeners.

There is a widespread belief that when men and women converse, women talk more and also that they tend to interrupt more than men in conversation. This is a frequent theme in sitcoms and the subject of jokes and sayings in various cultures, such as the English proverb "Women's tongues are like lambs' tails—they are never still," or the Chinese proverb "The tongue is the word of a woman and she never lets it become rusty." However, serious studies of mixed-sex conversations show that in a number of different contexts men dominate the talking, particularly in non-private conversation such as television interviews, business meetings, and conference discussion where talking can increase one's status.

This dominance of males in mixed speech situations seems to develop at an early age. It occurs in classroom situations in which boys dominate talk time with the teachers. One study found that boys were eight times more likely to call out answers than girls. There is also evidence that teachers encourage this dominant behavior, reprimanding girls more often than boys when they call out.

It has also been observed that women are more conservative in their speech style. For example, they are less likely to use vernacular forms such as the reduction of *-ing* to *-in'* or *him* to *'im* as in *I was walkin' down the street when I saw 'im*. Some dialects of British English drop word initial "h" in casual speech as in *'arf an hour* (half an hour), *'enry* (Henry), *'appy* (happy). This *h*-less pronunciation happens more frequently in the speech of men than women. The tendency for women to speak more "properly" than men has been confirmed in many studies and appears to develop at an early age. Children as young as six show this pattern, with girls avoiding the vernacular forms used more commonly by boys from the same background.

Lakoff observed this effect in her early study and proposed that women spoke more "proper" English than men because of an insecurity caused by sexism in

[2]Lakoff, R. 1973. Language and woman's place. *Language in Society* 2:45–80.

society. This explanation is generally supported by other linguists who have elaborated on this general idea. Among the more specific reasons that have been suggested are that women use more standard language to gain access to senior-level jobs that are often less available to them, that society tends to expect "better" behavior in general from women than men, that people who find themselves in subordinate roles (as women do in many societies) must be more polite, and that men prefer to use more vernacular forms because it helps to identify them as tough and strong. The linguist Janet Holmes has also suggested that most sociolinguistic experiments are conducted by middle-class, well-educated academics and it is possible that the women who are interviewed "accommodate" to the interviewer, changing their speech to be more like the interviewer's or simply in response to the more formal nature of the interview situation. Men, on the other hand, may be less responsive to these perceived pressures.

The linguist Deborah Tannen calls the different variants of English used by men and women "genderlects" (a blend of *gender* and *dialect*). Variations in the language of men and women occur in many, if not all, languages. In Japanese, women may choose to speak a distinct female dialect, although they know the standard dialect used by both men and women. The Japanese language has many *honorific* words—words intended to convey politeness, respect, humility, and lesser social status in addition to their regular meaning. As noted earlier, women tend to use polite forms more often than men. Japanese has formal and informal verbal inflections (see exercise 17, chapter 5), and again, women use the formal forms more frequently. There are also different words in Japanese used in males and female speech, for example,

	Women's Word	**Men's Word**
stomach	onaka	hara
delicious	oishii	umai
I/me	watashi	boku

and phrases such as:

eat a meal	gohan-o taberu	meshi-o kuu
be hungry	onaka-ga suita	hara-ga hetta
	stomach become empty	stomach decrease

One effect of the different genderlects of Japanese shows up in the training of guide and helper dogs. The animals learn their commands in English because the sex of the owner is not known in advance, and it is easier for an impaired person to use English commands than it is for trainers to train the dog in both language styles.

The differences discussed thus far have more to do with language use—lexical choices and conversational style—than with grammatical rules. There are, however, cases in which the language spoken by men and women differ in their grammars. In the Muskogean language Koasati, spoken in Louisiana, words that end in an /s/ when spoken by men, end in /l/ or /n/ when used by women; for example, the word meaning "lift it" is *lakawhol* for women and *lakawhos* for men. Similarly, in Bengali women often use an [l] at the beginning of words where men use an [n].

In Yana, women's words are sometimes shorter than men's because of a suffix that men use. For example, the women's form for "deer" is *ba*, the men's *ba-na*, for "person" we find *yaa* versus *yaa-na*, and so on. Early explorers reported that the men and women of the Carib Indians used different dialects. The historical reason for this is that long ago a group of Carib-speaking men invaded an area inhabited by Arawak-speaking people and killed all the men. The women who remained then continued to use Arawak while their new husbands spoke Carib.

In Chiquitano, a Bolivian language, the grammar of male language includes a noun-class gender distinction, with names for males and supernatural beings morphologically marked in one way, and nouns referring to females marked in another. In Thai, utterances may end with "politeness particles," *k*^{h}*rap* for men and *k*^{h}*a* for women (tones omitted). Thai also has different pronouns and fixed expressions like *please* and *thank you* that give each genderlect a distinctive character.

One obvious phonetic characteristic of female speech is its relatively higher pitch, caused mainly by shorter vocal tracts. Nevertheless, studies have shown that the difference in pitch between male and female voices is generally greater than could be accounted for by physiology alone, suggesting that some social factors may be at work, possibly beginning during language acquisition.

Margaret Thatcher, the former prime minister of England, is a well-known example of a woman altering her vocal pitch, in this case for political reasons. Thatcher's regular speaking voice was quite high and a little shrill. She was counseled by her advisors to lower her voice and to speak more slowly and monotonously in order to sound more like an authoritative man. This artificial speaking style became a strong characteristic of her public addresses.

Sociolinguistic Analysis

Speakers from different socioeconomic classes often display systematic speech differences, even when region and ethnicity are not factors. These social-class dialects differ from other dialects in that their sociolinguistic variables are often statistical in nature. With regional and social dialects, a differing factor is either present or absent (for the most part), so regional groups who say *faucet* say it pretty much all the time, as do the regional groups who say *spigot*. Speakers of AAE dialects will say *she pretty* meaning "she is pretty" with great regularity, other factors being equal. But social-class dialects differentiate themselves in a more quantitative way; for example, one class of speakers may apply a certain rule 80 percent of the time to distinguish it from another that applies the same rule 40 percent of the time.

The linguist William Labov carried out a sociolinguistic analysis in New York City that focused on the rule of *r*-dropping that we discussed earlier, and its use by upper-, middle-, and lower-class speakers.[3] In this classic study, a model for subsequent sociolinguistic analyses, Labov first identified three department stores that catered primarily to the three classes: Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy's, and S. Klein—upper, middle, and lower, respectively. To elicit data, he would go to the three stores and ask questions that he knew would evoke the words *fourth* and

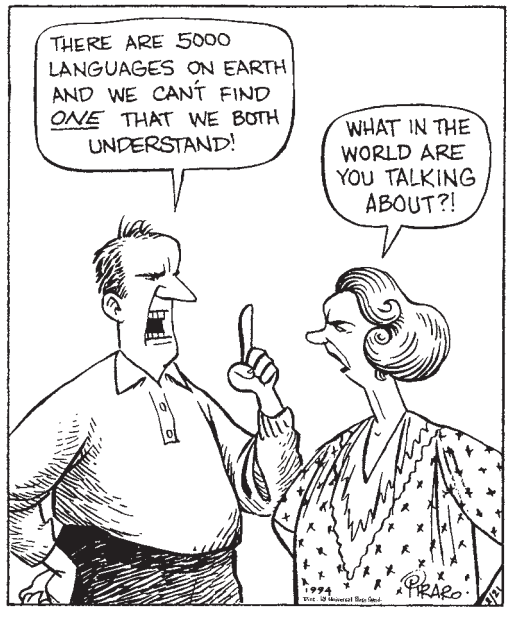
[3]Labov, W. 1966. *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

floor. People who applied the *r*-dropping rule would pronounce these words [fɔθ] and [flɔ], whereas ones who did not apply the rule would say [fɔrθ] and [flɔr].

The methodology behind much of Labov's research is important to note. Labov interacted with all manner of people in their own environment where they were comfortable, although he took care when analyzing the data to take into account ethnic and gender differences. In gathering data he was careful to elicit naturally spoken language through his casual, unassuming manner. Finally, he would evoke the same answer twice by pretending not to hear or understand, and in that way was able to collect both informal, casual utterances, and utterances spoken (the second time) with more care.

In Saks, a high-end department store, 62 percent of respondents pronounced the *r* at least some of the time; in Macy's, a less expensive store, it was 52 percent, and in Klein's, a lower-end retailer, a mere 21 percent. The *r*-dropping rule, then, is socially "stratified," to use Labov's terminology, with the lower socio-class dialects applying the rule most often. What makes Labov's work so distinctive is his methodology and his discovery that the differences among dialects can be usefully defined on a quantitative basis of rule applications rather than the strict presence or absence of a rule. He also showed that social context and the sociolinguistic variables that it governs play an important role in language change (discussed in chapter 10).

Languages in Contact



Even a dog we do know is better company than a man whose language we know not.

ST. AUGUSTINE, *City of God,* 5th century

Human beings are great travelers and traders and colonizers. The mythical tales of nearly all cultures tell of the trials and tribulations of travel and exploration, such as those of Odysseus (Ulysses) in Homer's *Odyssey*. Surely one of the tribulations of ranging outward from your home is that sooner or later you will encounter people who do not speak your language, nor you theirs. In some parts of the world, for example in bilingual communities, you may not have to travel very far at all to find the language disconnect, and in other parts you may have to cross an ocean. Because this situation is so common in human history and society, several solutions for bridging this communication gap have arisen.

Lingua Francas

Language is a steed that carries one into a far country.

ARAB PROVERB

Many areas of the world are populated by people who speak diverse languages. In such areas, where groups desire social or commercial communication, one language is often used by common agreement. Such a language is called a **lingua franca**.

In medieval times, a trade language based largely on the languages that became modern Italian and Provençal came into use in the Mediterranean ports. That language was called Lingua Franca, "Frankish language." The term *lingua franca* was generalized to other languages similarly used. Thus, any language can be a lingua franca.

English has been called "the lingua franca of the whole world" and is standardly used at international business meetings and academic conferences. French, at one time, was "the lingua franca of diplomacy." Russian serves as the lingua franca in the countries of the former Soviet Union, where many different local languages are spoken. Latin was a lingua franca of the Roman Empire and of western Christendom for a millennium, just as Greek served eastern Christendom as its lingua franca. Yiddish has long served as a lingua franca among Jewish people, permitting Jews of different nationalities to communicate with one another.

More frequently, lingua francas serve as trade languages. East Africa is populated by hundreds of villages, each speaking its own language, but most Africans of this area learn at least some Swahili as a second language, and this lingua franca is used and understood in nearly every marketplace. A similar situation exists in Nigeria, where Hausa is the lingua franca.

Hindi and Urdu are the lingua francas of India and Pakistan. The linguistic situation of this area of the world is so complex that there are often regional lingua francas—usually a local language surrounding a commercial center. Thus the Dravidian language Kannada is a lingua franca for the area surrounding the southwestern Indian city of Mysore. A similar situation existed in Imperial China.

In modern China, 94 percent of the people speak Han languages, which can be divided into eight major language groups that for the most part are mutually unintelligible. Within each language group there are hundreds of dialects. In addition to the Han languages, there are more than fifty "national minority" languages, including the five principal ones: Mongolian, Uighur, Tibetan, Zhuang, and Korean.

The situation is complex, and therefore the government inaugurated an extensive language reform policy to establish as a lingua franca the Beijing dialect of Mandarin, with elements of grammar from northern Chinese dialects, and enriched with the vocabulary of modern colloquial Chinese. They called this dialect "Putonghua," meaning "common speech." The native languages and dialects are not considered inferior. Rather, the approach is to spread the "common speech" so that all may communicate with one another in this lingua franca.

Certain lingua francas arise naturally; others are instituted by government policy and intervention. In many parts of the world, however, people still cannot speak with their neighbors only a few miles away.

Contact Languages: Pidgins and Creoles

> I include "pidgin-English" . . . even though I am referred to in that splendid language as "Fella bilong Mrs. Queen."
>
> **PRINCE PHILIP,** husband of Queen Elizabeth II

A lingua franca is typically a language with a broad base of native speakers, likely to be used and learned by persons with different native languages (usually in the same language family). Often in history, however, speakers of mutually unintelligible languages have been brought into contact under specific socioeconomic and political conditions and have developed a language to communicate with one another that is not native to anyone. Such a language is called a **pidgin**.

Many pidgins developed during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, in trade colonies along the coasts of China, Africa, and the New World. These pidgins arose through contact between speakers of colonial European languages such as English, French, Portuguese, and Dutch, and the indigenous, non-European languages. Some pidgins arose among extended groups of slaves and slave owners in the United States and the Caribbean in the nineteenth century. Other cases include Hawaiian Pidgin English, which was established on the pineapple plantations of Hawaii among immigrant workers from Japan, China, Portugal, and the Philippines; Chinook Jargon, which evolved among the Indian tribes of the Pacific Northwest as a lingua franca among the tribes themselves as well as between the tribes and European traders; and various pidgins that arose during the Korean and Vietnam Wars for use between foreign soldiers and local civilians.

In all these cases the contact is too specialized and the cultures too widely separated for the native language of any one group to function effectively as a lingua franca. Instead, the two or more groups use their native languages as a basis for developing a rudimentary lingua franca with reduced grammatical

structures and small lexicons. Also in these situations, it is generally the case that one linguistic group is in a more powerful position, economically or otherwise, such as the relationship of plantation owner to worker or slave owners to slaves. Most of the lexical items of the pidgin come from the language of the dominant group. This language is called **superstrate** or **lexifier language**. For example, English (the language of the plantation owners) is the superstrate language for Hawaiian Pidgin English, Swahili for the various forms of Pidgin Swahili spoken in East and Central Africa, and Bazaar Malay for pidgins spoken in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. The other language or languages also contribute to the lexicon and grammar, but in a less obvious way. These are called **substrate languages**. Japanese, Chinese, Tagalog, and Portuguese were the substrate languages of Hawaiian Pidgin English and all contributed to its grammar. Chinook Jargon had features both from indigenous languages of the area such as Chinook and Nootka, as well as French and English.

Many linguists believe that pidgins form part of a linguistic "life cycle." In the very early stage of development the pidgin has no native speakers and is strictly a contact language. Its use is reserved for specialized functions, such as trading or work-oriented tasks, and its speakers speak their (respective) native languages in all other social contexts. In this early stage the pidgin has little in the way of clear grammatical rules and few (usually specialized) words. Later, however, if the language continues to exist and be necessary, a much more regular and complex form of pidgin evolves, what is sometimes called a "stabilized pidgin," and this allows it to be used more effectively in a variety of situations. Further development leads to the creation of a **creole**, which most linguists believe has all the grammatical complexity of ordinary languages. **Pidginization** (the creation of a pidgin) thus involves a *simplification* of languages and a reduction in the number of domains of use. **Creolization**, in contrast, involves the linguistic *expansion* in the lexicon and grammar of existing pidgins, and an increase in the contexts of use. We discuss creoles and creolization further in the next section.

Although pidgins are in some sense rudimentary, they are not devoid of rules. The phonology is rule-governed, as in any human language. The inventory of phonemes is generally small; for example, whereas Standard English has fourteen distinct vowel sounds, pidgins commonly have only five to seven, and each phoneme may have many allophonic pronunciations. In one English-based pidgin, for example, [s], [ʃ], and [tʃ] are all possible pronunciations of the phoneme /s/; [masin], [maʃin], and [matʃin] all mean "machine." Sounds that occur in both the superstrate and substrate languages will generally be maintained, but if a sound occurs in the superstrate but not in the substrates, it will tend to be eliminated. For example, the English sounds [ð] and [θ] as in "this" and "thing" are quite uncommon across languages. Many speakers of English pidgins convert these "th" sounds to more common ones, pronouncing "this thing" as dis ting.

Typically, pidgins lack grammatical words such as auxiliary verbs, prepositions, and articles, and inflectional morphology including tense and case endings, as in

He bad man.	"He is a bad man."
I no go bazaar.	"I'm not going to the market."

Affixal morphology is largely absence. For example, some English pidgins have the word *sus* from the English "shoes," but *sus* does not include a plural morpheme as it is used to refer to both a single shoe as well as multiple shoes. Note that this has happened in the development of English, too. Originally, the ending *-en* in *chicken* was a plural marker (as in *oxen*) referring to more than one chick, but it has lost that function and the plural of *chicken* is now *chickens*.

Verbs and nouns usually have a single shape and are not altered to mark tense, number, gender, or case. The set of pronouns is often simpler in pidgins. In Kamtok, an English-based pidgin spoken in Cameroon, the pronoun system does not show gender or all the case differences that exist in Standard English (SE).

Kamtok			SE		
a	mi	ma	I	me	my
yu	yu	yu	you	you	your
i	i/am	i	he	him	his
i	i/am	i	she	her	her
wi	wi	wi	we	us	our
wuna	wuna	wuna	you	you	your
dem	dem/am	dem	they	them	their

Pidgins also may have fewer prepositions than the languages on which they are based. In Kamtok, for example, fɔ means "to," "at," "in," "for," and "from," as shown in the following examples:

Gif di buk fɔ mi.	"Give the book to me."
I dei fɔ fam.	"She is at the farm."
Dɛm dei fɔ chɔs.	"They are in the church."
Du dis wan fɔ mi, a bɛg.	"Do this for me, please."
Di mɔni dei fɔ tebul.	"The money is on the table."
You fit muf tɛn frank fɔ ma kwa.	"You can take ten francs from my bag."

Other morphological processes are more productive in pidgins. Reduplication is common, often to indicate emphasis. For example, in Komtok, *big* means "big" and *big-big* means "enormous"; *luk* means "look" and *luk-luk* means "stare at." Compounding is also productive and serves to increase the otherwise small lexicons. The reference to Prince Philip in the epigraph at the beginning of this section is an example (*fella bilong* [meaning "husband"] *Mrs. Queen*), as are the following:

big ai	greedy
drai ai	brave
gras bilong fes	beard
gras antap long ai	eyebrow
gras bilong head	hair
han bilong pisin	wing (of a bird)

Most words in pidgin languages also function as if they belong to several syntactic categories. For example, the Kamtok word *bad* can function as an adjective, noun, or adverb:

Adjective	tu bad pikin	two bad children
Noun	We no laik dis kain bad.	We don't like this kind of badness.
Adverb	A liakam bad.	I liked it very much.

In terms of syntax, early pidgins have a simple clausal structure, lacking embedded sentences and other complex complements. And word order may be variable so that speakers from different linguistic backgrounds can adopt the order of their native language and still be understood. For example, Japanese is an SOV (verb last) language, and a Japanese speaker of an English-based pidgin may put the verb last, as in *The poor people all potato eat*. On the other hand, a Filipino speaker of Tagalog, a VSO language, may put the verb first, as in *Work hard these people*. Word order becomes more rigid in stabilized pidgins and creoles, which are more like other languages with respect to the range of clause types.

Pidgin has come to have negative connotations, perhaps because many pidgins were associated with European colonial empires. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* once described pidgins as "an unruly bastard jargon, filled with nursery imbecilities, vulgarisms and corruptions." It no longer uses such a definition. In recent times there is greater recognition that pidgins reflect human creative linguistic ability and show many of the same design properties as other languages.

Pidgins also serve a useful function. For example, it is possible to learn an English-based pidgin well enough in six months to begin many kinds of semiprofessional training. Learning English for the same purpose might take ten times as long. In areas with many mutually unintelligible languages, a pidgin can play a vital role in unifying people of different cultures and ethnicities.

In general, pidgins are short-lived, perhaps spanning several human generations, though a few have lasted much longer. Pidgins may die out because the speakers all come to share a common language. This was the fate of Chinook Jargon, whose speakers all learned English. Also, because pidgins are often disdained, there is social pressure for speakers to learn a "standard" language, usually the one on which the pidgin is based. For example, through massive education, English replaced a pidgin spoken on New Zealand by the Maoris. Though it failed to succumb to years of government interdiction, Chinese Pidgin English could not resist the onslaught of English that fueled its demise by the close of the nineteenth century. Finally, and ironically, the death of a pidgin language may come about because of its success in uniting diverse communities; the pidgin proves so useful and becomes so widespread that successive generations in the communities in which it is spoken adopt it as their native tongue, elaborating its lexicon and grammar to become a creole.

Creoles and Creolization

Padi dɛm; kɔntri; una ɔl we de na Rom.
Mɛk una ɔl kak una yes. A kam bɛr Siza,
a nɔ kam prez am.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Caesar*, translated to Krio by Thomas Decker

> Creoles are particularly interesting because they represent an extreme of language change, but it is the mechanisms of language change, which are ubiquitous in the history of every language and every language family, that have made creoles what they are.
>
> **IAN ROBERTS,** "Verb Movement and Markedness," in Michel DeGraff, ed., *Language Creation and Language Change*, 1999

A creole is defined as a language that has evolved in a contact situation to become the native language of a generation of speakers. The traditional view is that creoles are the creation of children who, exposed to an impoverished and unstable pidgin, develop a far richer and more complex language that shares the fundamental characteristics of a "regular" human language and allows speakers to use the language in all domains of daily life.

In contrast to pidgins, creoles may have inflectional morphology for tense, plurality, and so on. For example, in creoles spoken in the South Pacific the affix *-im* is added to transitive verbs, but when the verb has no object the *-im* ending does not occur:

Man i pairip**im** masket.
man be fired-him musket
"The man fired the musket."

Masket i pairip.
"The gun was fired."

The same affix *-im* is used derivationally to convert adjectives into verbs like English *-en* in "redden":

bik	big	bikim	to make something big
daun	down	daunim	to lower something down
nogut	no good	nogutim	to spoil, damage

Creoles typically develop more complex pronoun systems. For example, in the creoles of the South Pacific there are two forms of the pronoun "we," inclusive we referring to speaker and listener, and exclusive we referring to the speaker and other people but not the listener. The Portuguese-based Cape Verdean Creole has three classes of pronouns: strong, weak, and clitic (meaning affixed to another word, like the possessive *'s* of English), as illustrated in the following table.

	Emphatic (Strong) Forms	Free (Weak) Forms	Subject Clitics	Object Clitics
1sg	ami	mi	N-	-m
2sg (informal)	abo	bo	bu-	-bu/-u
2sg (formal, masc.)	anho	nho	nhu-	
2sg (formal, fem.)	anha	nha		
3sg	ael	el	e-	-l
1pl	anos	nos	nu-	-nu
2pl	anhos	nhos		
3pl	aes	es	-s	

The compounds of pidgins often reduce in creoles; for example, *wara bilong skin* (water belong skin) meaning "sweat" becomes *skinwara*. The compound *baimbai* (by and by), used to indicate future time, becomes a tense inflection *ba* in the creole. Thus, the sentence *baimbai yu go* ("you will go") becomes *yu bago*. The phrasal structure of creoles is also vastly enriched, including embedded and relative clauses, among many other features of "regular" languages.

How are children able to construct a creole based on the rudimentary input of the pidgin? One answer is that they used their innate linguistic capacities to rapidly transform the pidgin into a full-fledged language. This would account for the many grammatical properties that creoles have in common, for example, SVO word order and tense and aspect distinctions.

It should be noted that defining pidgins and creoles in terms of whether they are native (creoles) versus non-native second languages (pidgins) is not without problems. There are languages such as Tok Pisin, widely spoken in New Guinea, which are first languages to many speakers, but also used as a second contact language by other speakers. Some linguists have also rejected the idea that creoles derive from pidgins, claiming that the geographic areas and social conditions under which they develop are different.

Moreover, the view that children are the creators of creoles is not universally accepted. Various linguists believe that creoles are the result of imperfect second language learning of the lexifier or dominant language by adults and the "transfer" of grammatical properties from their native non-European languages. This hypothesis would account for some of the characteristics that creoles share with L2 "interlanguages" (see chapter 7), for example, invariant verb forms, lack of determiners, and the use of adverbs rather than verbs and auxiliaries to express tense and modality.

Although some linguists believe that creoles are simpler systems than "regular" languages, most researchers who have closely examined the grammatical properties of various creoles argue that they are not structurally different from non-creole languages and that the only exceptional property of creoles is the sociohistorical conditions under which they evolve.

Creoles often arose on slave plantations where Africans of many different tribes spoke mutually incomprehensible African languages. Haitian Creole, based on French, developed in this way, as did the "English" spoken in parts of Jamaica. Gullah is an English-based creole spoken by the descendants of African slaves on islands off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina. Louisiana Creole, related to Haitian Creole, is spoken by large numbers of blacks and whites in Louisiana. Krio, the language spoken by as many as a million Sierra Leoneans, and illustrated in the epigraph to this section, developed at least in part from an English-based pidgin.

One of the theories concerning the origins of African American English is that it derives from an earlier English-based creole that developed when Africans slaves had no common language other than the English spoken by their colonial masters. Proponents of this hypothesis point out that many of the unique features of AAE are traceable to influences of the West African languages spoken by the slaves. Also, several of the features of AAE, such as aspect marking (distinct from that which occurs in Standard English), are typical of creole languages. The alternative view is that AAE formed directly from

English without any pidgin/creole stage. It is apparent that AAE is closer to Southern dialects of American English than to other dialects. It is possible that the African slaves learned the English of white Southerners as a second language. It is also possible that many of the distinguishing features of Southern dialects were acquired from AAE during the many decades in which a large number of Southern white children were raised by black women and played with black children.

Tok Pisin, originally a pidgin, was gradually creolized throughout the twentieth century. It evolved from Melanesian Pidgin English, once a widely spoken lingua franca of Papua New Guinea used by English-speaking traders and the native population. Because New Guinea is so linguistically diverse—more than eight hundred different languages were once spoken throughout the island—the pidgin came to be used as a lingua franca among the indigenous population as well.

Tok Pisin has its own writing system, its own literature, and its own newspapers and radio programs; it has even been used to address a United Nations meeting. Papers in (not *on*!) Tok Pisin have been presented at linguistics conferences in Papua New Guinea, and it is commonly used for debates in the parliament of the country. Today, Tok Pisin is one of the three recognized national languages of The Independent State of Papua New Guinea, alongside English and Kiri Motu, another creole.

Sign languages may also be pidgins. In Nicaragua in the 1980s, adult deaf people came together and constructed a crude system of "home" signs and gestures in order to communicate. It had the characteristics of a pidgin in that different people used it differently and the grammatical rules were few and varied. However, when young deaf children joined the community, an amazing event took place. The crude sign language of the adults was tremendously enhanced by the children learning it, so much so that it emerged as a rich and complex sign language called Idioma de Signos Nicaragüense (ISN), or Nicaraguan Sign Language. ISN provides an impressive demonstration of the development of a grammatically complex language from impoverished input and the power of human linguistic creativity.

The study of pidgins and creoles has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the nature of human language and the processes involved in language creation and language change, and of the sociohistorical conditions under which these instances of language contact occurred.

Bilingualism

He who has two languages has two souls.

ANONYMOUS

The term **bilingualism** refers to the ability to speak two (or more) languages, either by an individual speakers, **individual bilingualism**, or within a society, **societal bilinguálism**. In chapter 7 we discussed how bilingual children may simultaneously acquire their two languages, and how second languages are

acquired by children and adults. There are various degrees of individual bilingualism. Some people have native-like control of two languages, whereas others make regular use of two languages with a high degree of proficiency but lack the linguistic competence of a native or near native speaker in one or the other language. Also, some bilinguals may have oral competence but not read or write one or more of their languages.

The situations under which people become bilingual may vary. Some people grow up in a household in which more than one language is spoken; others move to a new country where they acquire the local language, usually from people outside the home. Still others learn second languages in school. In communities with rich linguistic diversity, contact between speakers of different languages may also lead to bilingualism.

Bilingualism (or multilingualism) also refers to the situation in nations in which two (or more) languages are spoken and recognized as official or national languages. Societal bilingualism exists in many countries, including Canada, where English and French are both official languages, and Switzerland, where French, German, Italian, and Romansch all have official status.

Interestingly, research shows that there are fewer bilingual individuals in bilingual countries than in so-called "unilingual" countries. This makes sense when you consider that in unilingual countries such as the United States, Italy, and France, people who do not speak the dominant language must learn some amount of it to function. Also, the main concern of multilingual states has been the maintenance and use of two or more languages, rather than the promotion of individual bilingualism among its citizens.

The United States is broadly perceived as a monolingual English-speaking society even though there is no reference to a national language in the Constitution. However, there are numerous bilingual communities with long histories throughout the country. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, about 18 percent of those age five and over, or 47 million people, speak a language other than English at home. Sixty percent of these, about 25 million people (8 percent of the U.S. population), profess to being bilingual in English and Spanish with varying degrees of English proficiency. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of Spanish speakers in the United States increased by about 60 percent, and the number of speakers other than Spanish by about 50 percent. It should be noted that not all Latinos are bilingual; as many as 20 percent may be monolingual English speakers. Recent studies also show that the shift to monolingual English is growing rapidly and that knowledge of Spanish is being lost faster in the twenty-first century than was seen with speakers of Dutch, Italian, German, and Polish in the first half of the twentieth century.

Codeswitching

Codeswitching is a speech style unique to bilinguals, in which fluent speakers switch languages between or within sentences, as illustrated by the following sentence:.

Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English and termino en español.
Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English and finish it in Spanish.

Codeswitching is a universal language-contact phenomenon that reflects the grammars of both languages working simultaneously. Bilingual Spanish-English speakers may switch between English and Spanish as in the above example, whereas Quebecois in Canada switch between French and English:

I mean, c'est un idiot, ce mec-là.
I mean he's an idiot, that guy.

The following examples are from German-English, Korean-English, and Mandarin-English bilinguals:

Johan hat mir gesagt that you were going to leave.
Johan told me you were going to leave.

Chigum ton-uls ops-nunde, I can't buy it.
As I don't have money now, I can't buy it.

Women zuotian qu kan de movie was really amazing.
The movie we went to see yesterday was really amazing.

Codeswitching occurs wherever groups of bilinguals speak the same two languages. Furthermore, codeswitching occurs in specific social situations, enriching the repertoire of the speakers.

A common misconception is that codeswitching is indicative of a language disability of some kind, for example, that bilinguals use codeswitching as a coping strategy for incomplete mastery of both languages, or that they are speaking "broken" English. These characterizations are completely inaccurate. Recent studies of the social and linguistic properties of codeswitching indicate that it is a marker of bilingual identity, and has its own internal grammatical structure. For example, bilinguals will commonly codeswitch between a subject and a verb as in:

Mis amigos finished first. My friends finished first.

but would judge ungrammatical a switch between a subject pronoun and a verb as in:

*Ellos finished first. They finished first.

Codeswitchers also follow the word order rules of the languages. For example, in a Spanish noun phrase, the adjective usually follows the noun, as opposed to the English NP in which it precedes, as shown by the following:

English: My mom fixes **green tamales**. Adj N
Spanish: Mi mamá hace **tamales verdes**. N Adj

A speaker might codeswitch as follows:

My mom fixes **tamales verdes**.
or Mi mamá hace **green tamales**.

but would not accept or produce such utterances as

*My mom fixes **verdes tamales**.
or *Mi mamá hace **tamales green**.

because the word order within the NPs violates the rules of the language.

Codeswitching is to be distinguished from (bilingual) **borrowing**, which occurs when a word or short expression from one language occurs embedded among the words of a second language and adapts to the regular phonology, morphology, and syntax of the second language. In codeswitching, in contrast, the two languages that are interwoven preserve their own phonological and other grammatical properties. Borrowing can be easily distinguished from codeswitching by the pronunciation of an element. Sentence (1) involves borrowing, and (2) codeswitching.

(**1**) I love biscottis [bɪskaɹiz] with my coffee.
(**2**) I love biscotti [bɪsko:ti] with my coffee.

In sentence (1) *biscotti* takes on an (American) English pronunciation and plural *-s* morphology, while in (2) it preserves the Italian pronunciation and plural morpheme *-i* (plural for *biscotto* "cookie").

What needs to be emphasized is that people who codeswitch have knowledge not of one but of two (or more) languages, and that codeswitching, like linguistic knowledge in general, is highly structured and rule-governed.

Language and Education

> Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend; inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.
>
> **GROUCHO MARX** (1890–1977)

The study of language has important implications in various educational arenas. An understanding of the structure, acquisition, and use of language is essential to the teaching of foreign and second languages, as well as to reading instruction. It can also promote a fuller understanding of language variation and use in the classroom and inform the often heated debates surrounding issues such as how to teach reading to children, bilingual education, and Ebonics.

Second-Language Teaching Methods

Many approaches to second or foreign language teaching have been developed over the years. Though these methods can differ significantly from one another, many experts believe that there is no single best method for teaching a second language. All methods have something to offer, and virtually any method can succeed with a gifted teacher who is a native or near-native speaker, motivated

students, and appropriate teaching materials. All methods are most effective when they fit a given educational setting and when they are understood and embraced by the teacher.

Second-language teaching methods fall into two broad categories: the *synthetic approach* and the *analytic approach*. As the name implies, the synthetic approach stresses the teaching of the grammatical, lexical, phonological, and functional units of the language step by step. This is a bottom-up method. The task of the learner is to put together—or synthesize—the discrete elements that make up the language. The more traditional language teaching methods, which stress grammar instruction, fall into this category.

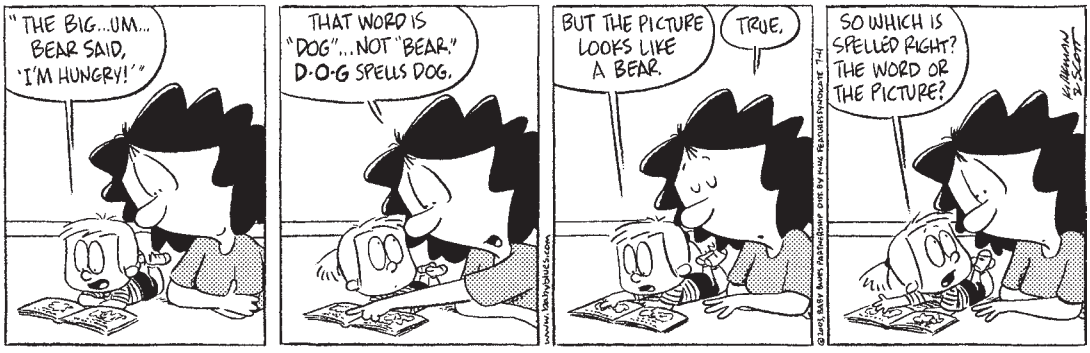
An extreme example of the synthetic approach is the **grammar translation** method favored up until the mid-1960s, in which students learned lists of vocabulary, verb paradigms, and grammatical rules. Learners translated passages from the target language into their native language. The teacher typically conducted class in the students' native language, focusing on the grammatical parsing of texts, and there was little or no contextualization of the language being taught. Reading passages were carefully constructed to contain only vocabulary and structures to which learners had already been exposed, and errors in translation were corrected on the spot. Learners were tested on their mastery of rules, verb paradigms, and vocabulary. The students did not use the target language very much except in reading translated passages aloud.

Analytic approaches are more top-down. The goal is not to explicitly teach the component parts or rules of the target language. Rather, the instructor selects topics, texts, or tasks that are relevant to the needs and interests of the learner, whose job then is to discover the constituent parts of the language. This approach assumes that adults can extract the rules of the language from unstructured input, more or less like a child does when acquiring his first language.

Currently, one of the most widely practiced analytic approaches is *content-based instruction*, in which the focus is on making the language meaningful and on getting the student to communicate in the target language. Learners are encouraged to discuss issues and express opinions on various topics of interest to them in the target language. Topics for discussion might include "Online Romance" or "Taking Responsibility for Our Environment." Grammar rules are taught on an as-needed basis, and fluency takes precedence over grammatical accuracy. Classroom texts (both written and aural) are generally taken from sources that were not created specifically for language learners, on the assumption that these will be more interesting and relevant to the student. Assessment is based on the learner's comprehension of the target language.

Not all second-language teaching methods fall clearly into one or the other category. The synthetic and analytic approaches should be viewed as the opposite ends of a continuum along which various second-language methods may fall. Also, teachers practicing a given method may not strictly follow all the principles of the method. Actual classroom practices tend to be more eclectic, with teachers using techniques that work well for them and to which they are accustomed—even if these techniques are not in complete accordance with the method they are practicing.

Teaching Reading



"Baby Blues" © Baby Blues Partnership. Reprinted with permission of King Features Syndicate.

In chapter 7 we discussed how young children acquire their native language. We noted that language development (whether of a spoken or sign language) is a biologically driven process with a substantial innate component. Parents do not teach their children the grammatical rules of their language. Indeed, they are not even aware of the rules themselves. Rather, the young child is naturally predisposed to uncover these rules from the language he hears around him. The way we learn to read and write, however, is quite different from the way we acquire the spoken/signed language.

First, and most obviously, children learn to talk (or sign) at a very young age, while reading typically begins when the child is school-age (around five or six years old in most cases, although some children are not reading-ready until even later). A second important difference is that across cultures and languages, all children acquire a spoken/signed language while many children never learn to read or write. This may be because they are born into cultures for which there is no written form of their language. It is also unfortunately the case that even some children born into literate societies do not learn to read, either because they suffer from a specific reading disability—**dyslexia**—or because they have not been properly taught. It is important to recognize, however, that even illiterate children and adults have a mental grammar of their language and are able to speak/sign and understand perfectly well.

The most important respect in which spoken/signed language development differs from learning to read is that reading requires specific instruction and conscious effort, whereas language acquisition does not. Which kind of instruction works best for teaching reading has been a topic of considerable debate for many decades. Three main approaches have been tried.

The first—the *whole-word approach*—teaches children to recognize a vocabulary of some fifty to one hundred words by rote learning, often by seeing the words used repeatedly in a story, for example, *Run, Spot, Run* from the Dick and Jane series well-known to people who learned to read in the 1950s. Other words are acquired gradually. This approach does not teach children to "sound out" words according to the individual sounds that make up the words. Rather,

it treats the written language as though it were a logographic system, such as Chinese, in which a single written character corresponds to a whole word or word root. In other words, the whole-word approach fails to take advantage of the fact that English (and the writing systems of most literate societies) is based on an alphabet, in which the symbols correspond to the individual sounds (roughly phonemes) of the language. This is ironic because alphabetic writing systems are the easiest to learn and are maximally efficient for transcribing any human language.

A second approach—*phonics*—emphasizes the correspondence between letters and the sounds associated with them. Phonics instruction begins by teaching children the letters of the alphabet and then encourages them to sound out words based on their knowledge of the sound-letter correspondences. So, if you have learned to read the word *gave* (understanding that the *e* is silent), then it is easy to read *save* and *pave*.

However, English and many other languages do not show a perfect correspondence between sounds and letters. For example, the rule for *gave*, *save*, and *pave* does not extend to *have*. The existence of many such exceptions has encouraged some schools to adopt a third approach to reading, the *whole-language approach* (also called "literature-based" or "guided reading"), which was most popular in the 1990s. The key principle is that phonics should not be taught directly. Rather, the child is supposed to make the connections between sounds and letters herself based on exposure to text. For example, she would be encouraged to figure out an unfamiliar word based on the context of the sentence or by looking for clues in the story line or the pictures rather than by sounding it out, as illustrated in the cartoon.

The philosophy behind the whole-language approach is that learning to read, like learning to speak, is a natural act that children can basically do on their own—an assumption that, as we noted earlier, is questionable at best. With the whole-language approach, the main job of the teacher is to make the reading experience an enjoyable one. To this end, children are presented with engaging books and are encouraged to write stories of their own as a way of instilling a love of reading and words.

Despite the intuitive appeal of the whole-language approach—after all, who would deny the educational value of good literature and creative expression in learning?—research has clearly shown that understanding the relationship between letters and sounds is critically important in reading. One of the assumptions of the whole-language approach is that skilled adult readers do not sound out words when reading, so proponents question the value of focusing on sounding out in reading instruction. However, research shows that the opposite is true: skilled adult readers *do* sound out words mentally, and they do so very rapidly. Another study compared groups of college students who were taught to read unfamiliar symbols such as Arabic letters, one group by a phonics approach and the other with a whole-word approach. Those trained with phonics could read many more new words. Similar results have been obtained through computer modeling of how children learn to read. Classroom studies have also compared phonics with whole-word or whole-language approaches and have shown that phonics instruction produces better results for beginning readers.

The advantage of phonics is not contradicted by studies showing that deaf children who have fully acquired a sign language have difficulty learning to read. This is understandable because the alphabetic principle requires an understanding of sound-symbol regularities, which deaf children do not have. It seems reasonable, then, that hearing children should not be deprived of the advantage they would have if their unconscious knowledge of phonemes is made conscious.

At this point, the consensus among psychologists and linguists who do research on reading—and a view shared by many teachers—is that reading instruction must be grounded in a firm understanding of the connections between letters and sounds, and that whole-language activities that make reading fun and meaningful for children should be used to supplement phonics instruction. Based on such research, the federal government now promotes the inclusion of phonics in reading programs across the United States.

Bilingual Education

As discussed earlier, there are many bilingual communities in the United States and members of these communities typically have varying levels of English proficiency. People who have recently arrived in the United States may have virtually no knowledge of English, other individuals may have only limited knowledge, and others may be fully bilingual. Native language development is untutored and happens before children begin school, but many children find themselves in classroom situations in which their native language is not the language of instruction. There has been a great deal of debate among researchers, teachers, parents, and the general public over the best methods for teaching English to school-age children as well as over the value of maintaining and promoting their native language abilities.

There are several kinds of bilingual programs in American schools for immigrant children. In **Transitional Bilingual Education** (**TBE**) programs, students receive instruction in both English and their native language, and the native language support is gradually phased out over two or three years. In **Bilingual Maintenance** (BM) programs, students remain in bilingual classes for their entire educational experience. Another program, **Dual Language Immersion**, enrolls English-speaking children and students who are native in another language in roughly equal numbers. The goal here is for all the students to become bilingual. This kind of program serves as a BM program for non-English speakers and a foreign language immersion program for the English-speaking children.

Many studies have shown that immigrant children benefit from instruction in their native language. Bilingual classes allow the children to first acquire in their native language school-related vocabulary, speech styles, and other aspects of language that are specific to a school environment while they are learning English. It also allows them to learn content material and keep up with other children during the time it takes them to master English. Recent studies that compared the effectiveness of different types of programs have found that children enrolled in bilingual programs outperformed children in English-only programs, and that children enrolled in BM programs did better than TBE students.

Despite the benefits that a bilingual education affords immigrant students, these programs have been under increasing attack since the 1970s. In the past

few years measures against bilingual education have been passed in several states, including California, Arizona, and Massachusetts. These measures mandate that immigrant students "be taught English by being taught in English" in an English-only approach known as Sheltered English Immersion (SEI). Proponents claim that one year of SEI is sufficient for children, especially young children, to learn English well enough to be transferred to a mainstream classroom. Research does not bear out these claims, however. Studies show that only a small minority of children, around 3 percent to 4 percent of children in SEI programs and 13 percent to 14 percent in bilingual programs, acquire English within a year. A considerable body of research shows that for the vast majority of children it takes from two to five years to develop oral proficiency in English and four to seven years to develop proficiency in academic English.

There are several possible causes for the chasm between research results and public policy regarding bilingual education. Bilingual programs can be poorly implemented and so not achieve the desired results. There may also be a public perception that it is too costly to implement bilingual programs. It is likely that some of the backlash against bilingual education is due to anti-immigrant sentiment, but there are also many well-intentioned people who mistakenly believe that bilingualism is a handicap and that children will be more successful academically and socially if they are quickly and totally immersed in the more prestigious majority language.

"Ebonics"

Children who speak a dialect of English that differs from the language of instruction—usually close to Standard English—may also be disadvantaged in a school setting. Literacy instruction is generally based on SAE. It has been argued that the phonological and grammatical differences between African American English (AAE)—termed "Ebonics" in the popular press—and SAE make it harder for AAE-speaking children to learn to read and write.

One approach to this problem has been to discourage children from speaking AAE and to correct each departure from SAE that the children produce. SAE is presented as the "correct" way to speak and AAE as substandard or incorrect. This approach has been criticized as being psychologically damaging to the child as well as impractical. Attempts to consciously correct children's nonstandard dialect speech are routinely met with failure. Moreover, one's language/dialect expresses group identity and solidarity with friends and family. A child may take a rejection of his language as a rejection of him and his culture.

A more positive approach to teaching literacy to speakers of nonstandard dialects is to encourage **bidialectalism**. This approach teaches children to take pride in their language, encouraging them to use it in informal circumstances, with family and friends, while also teaching them a second dialect—SAE—that is necessary for reading, writing, and classroom discussion. As a point of comparison, in many countries, including Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, children grow up speaking a nonstandard dialect at home but learn the standard language once they enter school. This underscores that bidialectalism that combines a home dialect and a school/national language is entirely feasible. Educational programs that respect the home language may better facilitate the acquisition

of a standard dialect. Ideally, the bidialectal method would also include class discussion of the phonological and grammatical differences between the two dialects, which would require that teachers understand the linguistic properties of AAE, as well as some linguistics in general.

Language in Use

One of the themes of this book is that you have a lot of linguistic knowledge that you may not be aware of, but that can be made explicit through the rules of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. You also have a deep social knowledge of your language. You know the appropriate way to talk to your parents, your friends, your clergy, and your teachers. You know about "politically correct" (PC) language, to say "mail *carrier*," "fire*fighter*," and "police *officer*," and not to say "nigger," "wop," and "bitch." In short, you know how to *use* your language appropriately, even if you sometimes choose not to. This section discusses some of the many ways in which the use of language varies in society.

Styles

Most speakers of a language speak one way with friends, another on a job interview or presenting a report in class, another talking to small children, another with their parents, and so on. These "situation dialects" are called **styles**, or **registers**.

Nearly everybody has at least an informal and a formal style. In an informal style, the rules of contraction are used more often, the syntactic rules of negation and agreement may be altered, and many words are used that do not occur in the formal style.

Informal styles, although permitting certain abbreviations and deletions not permitted in formal speech, are also rule-governed. For example, questions are often shortened with the subject *you* and the auxiliary verb deleted. One can ask *Running the marathon?* or *You running the marathon?* instead of the more formal *Are you running the marathon?* but you cannot shorten the question to **Are running the marathon?* Informal talk is not anarchy. It is rule-governed, but the rules of deletion, contraction, and word choice are different from those of the formal language.

It is common for speakers to have competence in several styles, ranging between the two extremes of formal and informal. The use of styles is often a means of identification with a particular group (e.g., family, gang, church, team), or a means of excluding groups believed to be hostile or undesirable (cops, teachers, parents).

Many cultures have rules of social behavior that govern style. Some Indo-European languages distinguish between "you (familiar)" and "you (polite)." German *du* and French *tu* are to be used only with "intimates"; *Sie* and *vous* are more formal and used with nonintimates. Thai has three words meaning "eat" depending on the social status of who is speaking with whom.

Social situations affect the details of language usage, but the core grammar remains intact, with a few superficial variations that lend a particular flavor to the speech.

Slang

> Slang is a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands, and goes to work.
>
> **CARL SANDBURG,** quoted in "Minstrel of America: Carl Sandburg," *New York Times*, February 13, 1959

One mark of an informal style is the frequent occurrence of **slang**. Slang is something that nearly everyone uses and recognizes, but nobody can define precisely. It is more metaphorical, playful, elliptical, vivid, and shorter-lived than ordinary language.

The use of slang has introduced many new words into the language by recombining old words into new meanings. *Spaced out*, *right on*, *hang-up*, and *rip-off* have all gained a degree of acceptance. Slang also introduces entirely new words such as *barf*, *flub*, and *dis*. Finally, slang often consists of ascribing entirely new meanings to old words. *Rave* has broadened its meaning to "an all-night dance party," where *ecstasy* (slang for a kind of drug) is taken to provoke wakefulness; *crib* refers to one's home and *posse* to one's cohorts. *Grass* and *pot* widened their meaning to "marijuana"; *pig* and *fuzz* are derogatory terms for "police officer"; *rap*, *cool*, *dig*, *stoned*, *bread*, *split*, and *suck* have all extended their semantic domains.

The words we have cited may sound slangy because they have not gained total acceptability. Words such as *dwindle*, *freshman*, *glib*, and *mob* are former slang words that in time overcame their "unsavory" origin. It is not always easy to know where to draw the line between slang words and regular words. The borderland between slang and formal language is ill-defined and is more of a continuum than a strict boundary.

There are scads (another slang word) of sources of slang. It comes from the underworld: *crack*, *payola*, *to hang paper.* It comes from college campuses: *crash*, *wicked*, *peace*. It even comes from the White House: *pencil* (writer), *still* (photographer), *football* (black box of security secrets).

Slang is universal. It is found in all languages and all time periods. It varies from region to region, and from past to present. Slang meets a variety of social needs and rather than a corruption of the language, it is yet further evidence of the creativity of the human language user.

Jargon and Argot

Practically every conceivable science, profession, trade, and occupation uses specific slang terms called **jargon**, or **argot**. Linguistic jargon, some of which is used in this book, consists of terms such as *phoneme*, *morpheme*, *case*, *lexicon*, *phrase structure rule*, and so on. Part of the reason for specialized terminology is for clarity of communication, but part is also for speakers to identify themselves with persons with whom they share interests.

Because the jargon used by different professional and social groups is so extensive (and so obscure in meaning), court reporters in the Los Angeles Criminal Courts Building have a library that includes books on medical terms, guns, trade names, and computer jargon, as well as street slang.

The computer age not only ushered in a technological revolution, it also introduced a slew of jargon, called, slangily, "computerese," used by computer "hackers" and others. So vast is this specialized vocabulary that *Webster's New World Computer Dictionary* has four hundred pages and contains thousands of computer terms as entries. A few such words that are familiar to most people are *modem* (from ***mo****dulator-****dem****odulator*), *bit* (from ***bi****nary digit*), and *byte* (eight *bits*). Acronyms and alphabetic abbreviations abound in computer jargon. *ROM* (read-only memory), *RAM* (random-access memory), *CPU* (central processing unit), and *DVD* (digital video disk) are a small fraction of what's out there.

Some jargon may over time pass into the standard language. Jargon, like all types of slang, spreads from a narrow group that originally embraced it until it is used and understood by a large segment of the population.

Taboo or Not Taboo?

Sex is a four-letter word.

BUMPER STICKER SLOGAN

"There are some words I will not tolerate in this house—and 'awesome' is one of them."

An item in a newspaper once included the following paragraph:

> "This is not a Sunday school, but it is a school of law," the judge said in warning the defendants he would not tolerate the "use of expletives during jury selection." "I'm not going to have my fellow citizens and prospective jurors subjected to filthy language," the judge added.

How can language be filthy? In fact, how can it be clean? The filth or beauty of language must be in the ear of the listener, or in the collective ear of society. The writer Paul Theroux points this out:

> A foreign swear-word is practically inoffensive except to the person who has learned it early in life and knows its social limits.

Nothing about a particular string of sounds makes it intrinsically clean or dirty, ugly or beautiful. If you say that you pricked your finger when sewing, no one would raise an eyebrow, but if you refer to your professor as a prick, the judge quoted previously would undoubtedly censure this "dirty" word.

You know the obscene words of your language, and you know the social situations in which they are desirable, acceptable, forbidden, and downright dangerous to utter. This is true of all speakers of all languages. All societies have their taboo words. (*Taboo* is a Tongan word meaning "forbidden.") People everywhere seem to have a need for undeleted expletives to express their emotions or attitudes.

Forbidden acts or words reflect the particular customs and views of the society. Among the Zuni Indians, it is improper to use the word *takka*, meaning "frogs," during a religious ceremony. In the world of Harry Potter, the evil Voldemort is not to be named, but is referred to as "You-Know-Who." In some religions believers are forbidden to "take the Lord's name in vain," and this prohibition often extends to other religious jargon. Thus the taboo words *hell* and *damn* are changed to *heck* and *darn*, though the results are sometimes not euphonious. Imagine the last two lines of Act II, Scene 1, of *Macbeth* if they were "cleaned up":

> Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
> That summons thee to heaven, or to heck

Words relating to sex, sex organs, and natural bodily functions make up a large part of the set of taboo words of many cultures. Often, two or more words or expressions can have the same linguistic meaning, with one acceptable and the other taboo. In English, words borrowed from Latin sound "scientific" and therefore appear to be technical and "clean," whereas native Anglo-Saxon counterparts are taboo. Such pairs of words are illustrated as follows:

Anglo-Saxon Taboo Words	Latinate Acceptable Words
cunt	vagina
cock	penis
prick	penis
tits	mammaries
shit	feces, defecate

There is no grammatical reason why the word *vagina* [vədʒãɪnə] is "clean" whereas *cunt* [kə̃nt] is "dirty," or why *balls* is taboo but *testicles* acceptable. Although there is no grammatical basis for such preferences, there certainly are sociolinguistic reasons to embrace or eschew such usages, just as there are sociolinguistic reasons for speaking formally, respectfully, disrespectfully, informally, jargon riddled, and so on.

Euphemisms

Banish the use of the four-letter words
Whose meaning is never obscure.
The Anglos, the Saxons, those bawdy old birds
Were vulgar, obscene, and impure.
But cherish the use of the weaseling phrase
That never quite says what it means;
You'd better be known for your hypocrite ways
Than vulgar, impure, and obscene.

FOLK SONG ATTRIBUTED TO WARTIME ROYAL AIR FORCE OF GREAT BRITAIN

The existence of taboo words and ideas motivates the creation of **euphemisms**. A euphemism is a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects. In many societies, because death is feared, there are many euphemisms related to this subject. People are less apt to *die* and more apt to *pass on* or *pass away*. Those who take care of your loved ones who have passed away are more likely to be *funeral directors* than *morticians* or *undertakers*. And then there's *feminine protection* . . .

The use of euphemisms is not new. It is reported that the Greek historian Plutarch in the first century C.E. wrote that "the ancient Athenians . . . used to cover up the ugliness of things with auspicious and kindly terms, giving them polite and endearing names. Thus they called harlots *companions*, taxes *contributions*, and prison a *chamber*."

Just as surely as all languages and societies have taboo words, they have euphemisms. The aforementioned taboo word *takka*, meaning "frogs," is replaced during a Zuni religious ceremony by a complex compound word that literally translates as "several-are-sitting-in-a-shallow-basin-where-they-are-in-liquid." The euphemisms for bodily excretions and sexual activity are legion, and lists of them may be found in online dictionaries of slang. There you will find such gems for urination as *siphon the python* and *point Percy at the porcelain*, and for intercourse *shag*, *hide the ferret* (*salami*, *sausage*), and *toss a little leg*, among a gazillion others.

These euphemisms, as well as the difference between the accepted Latinate "genteel" terms and the "dirty" Anglo-Saxon terms, show that a word or phrase has not only a linguistic **denotative meaning** but also a **connotative meaning** that reflects attitudes, emotions, value judgments, and so on. In learning a language, children learn which words are taboo, and these taboo words differ from one child to another, depending on the value system accepted in the family or group in which the child grows up.

Racial and National Epithets

The use of epithets for people of different religions, nationalities, or races tells us something about the speakers. Words like *kike* (for Jew), *wop* (for Italian), *nigger* or *coon* (for African American), *slant* (for Asian), *towelhead* (for Middle Eastern Arab), and so forth reflect racist and chauvinist views of society.

Even words that sound like epithets are perhaps to be avoided (see exercise 13). An administrator in Washington, D.C. described a fund he administers as "niggardly," meaning stingy. He resigned his position under fire for using a word "so close to a degrading word."

Language, however, is creative, malleable, and ever changing. The epithets used by a majority to demean a minority may be reclaimed as terms of bonding and friendship among members of the minority. Thus, for some—we emphasize *some*—African Americans, the word *nigger* is used to show affection. Similarly, the ordinarily degrading word *queer* is used among *some* gay persons as a term of endearment, as is *cripple* or *crip* among *some* individuals who share a disability.

Language and Sexism

> doctor, n. . . . a man of great learning.
>
> ***THE AMERICAN COLLEGE DICTIONARY,*** 1947

> A businessman is aggressive; a businesswoman is pushy. A businessman is good on details; she's picky. . . . He follows through; she doesn't know when to quit. He stands firm; she's hard. . . . He isn't afraid to say what is on his mind; she's mouthy. He exercises authority diligently; she's power mad. He's closemouthed; she's secretive. He climbed the ladder of success; she slept her way to the top.
>
> **FROM "HOW TO TELL A BUSINESSMAN FROM A BUSINESSWOMAN,"** *The Balloon*, Graduate School of Management, UCLA, 1976

The discussion of obscenities, blasphemies, taboo words, and euphemisms showed that words of a language are not intrinsically good or bad, but reflect individual or societal values. This is also seen where a woman may be referred to as a *castrating female*, *ballsy women's libber*, or *courageous feminist advocate*, depending on who is talking.

Early dictionaries often gave clues to the social attitudes of that time. In some twentieth-century dictionaries, examples used to illustrate the meaning of words include "manly courage" and "masculine charm," as opposed to "womanish tears" and "feminine wiles." Contemporary dictionaries are far more enlightened and try to be scrupulous in avoiding sexist language.

Until recently, most people who heard "My cousin is a professor (or a doctor, or the chancellor of the university, or a steelworker)" would assume that the cousin is a man; if they heard "My cousin is a nurse (or elementary school teacher, or clerk-typist, or house worker)," they would conclude that the cousin is a woman. This is changing because society is changing and people of either sex commonly hold jobs once held primarily by one sex.

Despite flashes of enlightenment, words for women abound with abusive or sexual overtones: *dish*, *piece*, *piece of ass*, *piece of tail*, *bunny*, *chick*, *pussy*,

bitch, *doll*, *slut*, *cow*—to name just a few. Far fewer such sexual terms exist for men, and those that do, such as *boy toy*, *stud muffin*, *hunk*, or *jock*, are not pejorative in the same way.

It's clear that language reflects sexism. It reflects any societal attitude, positive or negative; languages are infinitely flexible and expressive. But is language itself amoral and neutral? Or is there something about language, or a particular language, that abets sexism? Before we attempt to answer that question, let's look more deeply into the subject, using English as the illustrative language.

Marked and Unmarked Forms

> If the English language had been properly organized . . . then there would be a word which meant both "he" and "she," and I could write, "If John or Mary comes, heesh will want to play tennis," which would save a lot of trouble.
>
> **A. A. MILNE,** *The Christopher Robin Birthday Book,* 1930

In chapter 3 we saw that with gradable antonyms such as *high*/*low*, one is marked (*low*) and the other unmarked. Ordinarily, the unmarked member of the pair is the one used in questions (*How high is the building?*), measurements (*The building is twenty stories high*), and so on.

Similar to this is an asymmetry between male and female terms in many languages where there are male/female pairs of words. The male form is generally unmarked and the female term is created by adding a bound morpheme. We have many such examples in English:

Male	Female
heir	heir**ess**
major	major**ette**
hero	hero**ine**
Robert	Robert**a**
equestrian	equestri**enne**
aviator	avia**trix**

When referring in general to the profession of acting, or flying, or riding horseback, the unmarked terms *actor*, *aviator*, and *equestrian* are used. The marked terms are used to emphasize the female gender.

Moreover, the unmarked third person pronoun in English is male (*he*, *him*, *his*). *Everybody had better pay his fee next time* allows for the client to be male or female, but *Everybody had better pay her fee next time* presupposes a female client. While there has been some attempt to neutralize the pronoun by using *they*, as in *Every teenager loves their first car*, most teachers find this objectionable and it is unlikely to become common practice. Other attempts to find a suitable genderless third person pronoun have produced such attempts as *e*, *hesh*, *po*, *tey*, *co*, *jhe*, *ve*, *xe*, *he'er*, *thon*, *na*, none of which speakers have the least inclination to adopt, and it appears likely that *he* and *she* are going to be with us for a while.

Since the advent of the feminist movement, many of the marked female forms have been replaced by the male forms, which are used to refer to either sex. Thus

women, as well as men, are authors, actors, poets, heroes, and heirs. Women, however, remain countesses, duchesses, and princesses, if they are among this small group of female aristocrats.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, discussed in chapter 6, proposes that the way a language encodes—puts into words—different categories like male and female subtly affects the way speakers of the language think about those categories. Thus, it may be argued that because English speakers are often urged to choose *he* as the unmarked pronoun (*Everyone should respect **him**self*), and to choose *she* only when the referent is overtly female, they tend to think of the male sex as predominant. Likewise, the fact that nouns require special affixes to make them feminine forces people to think in terms of male and female, with the female somehow more derivative because of affixing. The different titles, Mr., Mrs., Miss, and Ms., also emphasize the male/female distinction. Finally, the preponderance of words denigrating females in English and many other languages may create a climate that is more tolerant of sexist behavior.

Nevertheless, although people can undoubtedly be sexist and even cultures can be sexist, can language be sexist? That is, can we be molded by our language to be something we may not want to be? Or does language merely facilitate any natural inclinations we may have? Is it simply a reflection of societal values? These questions are disputed today by linguists, anthropologists, psychologists, and philosophers, and no definitive answer has yet emerged.

Secret Languages and Language Games

Throughout the world and throughout history, people have invented secret languages and language games. They have used these special languages as a means of identifying with their group and/or to prevent outsiders from knowing what is being said. One such case is *Nushu*, the women's secret writing of Chinese, which originated in the third century as a means for women to communicate with one another in the sexually repressive societies of imperial China (see exercise 17, chapter 11). American slaves developed an elaborate code that could not be understood by the slave owners. References to "the promised land" or the "flight of the Israelites from Egypt" sung in spirituals were codes for the North and the Underground Railroad.

Language games such as Pig Latin[4] and Ubbi Dubbi (see exercise 7) are used for amusement by children and adults. They exist in all the world's languages and take a wide variety of forms. In some, a suffix is added to each word; in others a syllable is inserted after each vowel. There are rhyming games and games in which phonemes are reversed. A game in Brazil substitutes an /i/ for all the vowels.

The Walbiri, natives of central Australia, play a language game in which the meanings of words are distorted. In this play language, all nouns, verbs, pronouns, and adjectives are replaced by a semantically contrastive word. Thus, the sentence *Those men are small* means *This woman is big*.

[4]Dog is pronounced *og-day*, parrot as *arrot-pay*, and elephant as *elephant-may*, etc., but see exercise 6.

These language games provide evidence for the phonemes, words, morphemes, semantic features, and so on that are posited by linguists for descriptive grammars. They also illustrate the boundless creativity of human language and human speakers.

Summary

Every person has a unique way of speaking, called an **idiolect**. The language used by a group of speakers is a **dialect**. The dialects of a language are the mutually intelligible forms of that language that differ in systematic ways from each other. Dialects develop because languages change, and the changes that occur in one group or area may differ from those that occur in another. **Regional dialects** and **social dialects** develop for this reason. Some differences in U.S. regional dialects may be traced to the dialects spoken by colonial settlers from England. Those from southern England spoke one dialect and those from the north spoke another. In addition, the colonists who maintained close contact with England reflected the changes occurring in British English, while earlier forms were preserved among Americans who spread westward and broke communication with the Atlantic coast. The study of regional dialects has produced **dialect atlases**, with **dialect maps** showing the areas where specific dialect characteristics occur in the speech of the region. A boundary line called an **isogloss** delineates each area.

Social dialects arise when groups are isolated socially, such as Americans of African descent in the United States, many of whom speak dialects collectively called African American (Vernacular) English, which are distinct from the dialects spoken by non-Africans.

Dialect differences include phonological or pronunciation differences (often called **accents**), vocabulary distinctions, and syntactic rule differences. The grammar differences among dialects are not as great as the similarities, thus permitting speakers of different dialects to communicate.

In many countries, one dialect or dialect group is viewed as the **standard**, such as **Standard American English** (**SAE**). Although this particular dialect is not linguistically superior, some language purists consider it the only correct form of the language. Such a view has led to the idea that some nonstandard dialects are deficient, as is erroneously suggested regarding **African American English** (sometimes referred to as **Ebonics**), a collection of dialects used by some African Americans. A study of African American English shows it to be as logical, complete, rule-governed, and expressive as any other dialect. This is also true of the dialects spoken by Latino Americans whose native language or those of their parents is Spanish. There are bilingual and monolingual Latino speakers of English. One Latino dialect spoken in the Southwest, referred to as **Chicano English** (**ChE**), shows systematic phonological and syntactic differences from SAE that stem from the influence of Spanish. Other differences are shared with many nonstandard ethnic and nonethnic dialects. **Codeswitching** is shifting between languages within a single sentence or discourse by a bilingual speaker. It reflects both grammars working simultaneously and does not represent a form of "broken" English or Spanish or whatever language.

Attempts to legislate the use of a particular dialect or language have been made throughout history and exist today, even extending to banning the use of languages other than the preferred one.

In areas where many languages are spoken, one language may become a **lingua franca** to ease communication among people. In other cases, where traders, missionaries, or travelers need to communicate with people who speak a language unknown to them, a **pidgin** may develop. A pidgin is a simplified system with properties of both the **superstrate** (**lexifier**) and **substrate** languages. When a pidgin is widely used, and constitutes the primary linguistic input to children, it is *creolized*. The grammars of **creole** languages are similar to those of other languages, and languages of creole origin now exist in many parts of the world and include sign languages of the deaf.

The study of language has important implications for education especially as regards reading instruction, and the teaching of second language learners, language-minority students, and speakers of nonstandard dialects. Several second-language teaching methods have been proposed for adult second language learners. Some of them focus more on the grammatical aspects of the target language, and others focus more on getting students to communicate in the target language, with less regard for grammatical accuracy.

Writing and reading, unlike speaking and understanding, must be deliberately taught. Three methods of teaching reading have been used in the United States: *whole-word*, *whole-language*, and *phonics*. In the whole-word and whole-language approaches, children are taught to recognize entire words without regard to individual letters and sounds. The phonics approach emphasizes the spelling-sound correspondences of the language, and thus draws on the child's innate phonological knowledge.

Immigrant children must acquire English (or whatever the majority language is in a particular country). Younger students must at the same time acquire literacy skills (reading and writing), and students of all ages must learn content material such as math, science, and so on. This is a formidable task. **Bilingual education** programs are designed to help achieve these multiple aims by teaching children literacy and content material in their native language while they are acquiring English. Research has shown that immigrant children benefit from instruction in their native language, but many people oppose these programs.

Children who speak a nonstandard dialect of English that differs from the language of instruction may also be at a disadvantage in a school setting, especially in learning reading and writing. There have been contentious debates over the use of Ebonics in the classroom as a method for helping speakers of AAE learn Standard English.

Besides regional and social dialects, speakers may use different **styles**, or **registers**, depending on the context. **Slang** is not often used in formal situations or writing but is widely used in speech; **argot** and **jargon** refer to the unique vocabulary used by particular groups of people to facilitate communication, provide a means of bonding, and exclude outsiders.

In all societies, certain acts or behaviors are frowned on, forbidden, or considered **taboo**. The words or expressions referring to these taboo acts are then also avoided or considered "dirty." Language cannot be obscene or clean; attitudes toward specific words or linguistic expressions reflect the views of a culture or

society toward the behaviors and actions of the language users. At times, slang words may be taboo where scientific or standard terms with the same meaning are acceptable in "polite society." Taboo words and acts give rise to **euphemisms**, which are words or phrases that replace the expressions to be avoided. Thus, *powder room* is a euphemism for *toilet*, which started as a euphemism for *lavatory*, which is now more acceptable than its replacement.

Just as the use of some words may indicate society's views toward sex, natural bodily functions, or religious beliefs, some words may also indicate racist, chauvinist, or sexist attitudes. Language is not intrinsically racist or sexist but reflects the views of various sectors of a society. However, the availability of offensive terms, and particular grammatical peculiarities such as the lack of a genderless third-person singular pronoun, may perpetuate and reinforce biased views and be demeaning and insulting to those addressed. Thus culture influences language, and, arguably, language may have an influence on the culture in which it is spoken.

The invention or construction of secret languages and language games like Pig Latin attest to human creativity with language and the unconscious knowledge that speakers have of the phonological, morphological, and semantic rules of their language.

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