

Mustansiriyah University

College of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

3rd Year Linguistics

Textbook: Linguistics (Aichison, 2010)

Lecture Title: Linguistic Variations across Different Social Axes

- The aim of this lecture is to investigate different linguistics varieties across different social axes. The lecture focuses on the relation between language and sex, language and stylistic variation, and linguistics variation in multilingual communities as well as the concepts of pidgin and creole.
- The main question to consider when dealing with language and sex is whether men and women really speak differently.
- For instance, women are often believed to talk more than men, but almost all research on this topic has demonstrated the opposite. Similarly, it is sometimes claimed that women use 'empty' adjectives, such as divine , charming , cute , yet this type of description is possibly more usually used by (presumably male) writers in popular newspapers to describe women.
- The most evident difference between the way men and women within the Western world is that women tend to use more prestigious language than men.
- This might be attributed to the facts that women are expected to behave in a 'lady-like' manner, to speak in a way which would enable their children to progress socially, and/or to have jobs which rely on communication, rather than on strength.
- Women are also believed to use more insecure style that is characterized by overuse of hedges, which seems to be typical of powerless positions. Nonetheless, this insecure style may be conceived of as a way to show solidarity and support with others.
- As a matter of fact, supportive speech is more often associated with women than with men. Friendly females are likely to help the conversation along by using minimal responses, back channels and overlaps. These techniques encourage the speaker, by showing that they are being attended and listened to.
- Conversely, powerful speakers, who are typically male, tend to control the topic of the conversation, issue more direct commands, interrupt others, and demand explicit response.
- In recent years, particularly among employed women, the differences between men and women's speech appear to be diminishing.
- People tend to use different styles across different social situations. The use of *Tu* and *Vos* in several European languages is an evident example of **stylistic shift**.
- A 'power' to 'solidarity' stylistic shift is taking place worldwide; people have become friendlier to one another, and are less impressed by authority.

- **Code-switching** is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that is common in multilingual speech communities. It is the use of more than a single language in communication. Code-switching is not very different from stylistic variation within a single language.
- A **multicultural community** is the speech community in which two or more languages are frequently used. Some multilingual cultures use different languages for different purposes.
- A study of the ways in which these multiple languages are used is particularly important for **language planning**, a situation in which a government or education authority attempts to manipulate the linguistic situation in a particular direction.
- However, multilingual societies in which all the speakers are proficient in all the languages spoken are unusual. Quite often, one language, or simplified language, is adopted as a common means of communication. This can happen either naturally, or as a result of language planning. A common language of this type is sometimes known as a **lingua franca**.
- Adopting a lingua franca is not the only solution to the problem of communication between groups of people speaking different languages.
- A **pidgin** is a restricted language system which arises in order to fulfill essential communication needs among people with no common language. It is no one's first language, and is used at first in a limited set of circumstances. Such a system typically develops on trade routes and in coastal areas.
- Pidgins are characterized by simple phonology, lexicon and syntax in comparison to the languages they are based on.
- Creoles are more linguistically complicated and developed versions of pidgins.
- A creole may become **decreolized** when it is spoken in an area where the base language is also used; then there may be social pressure on the creole speakers to speak the base, which often has more prestige. Therefore, little by little, the words and constructions from the base language replace the creole ones.