

Handwritten notes at the top right of the page, including "dialect", "social class", and "caste".

UNIT 6 LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

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Handwritten notes on the left side of the structure list: "dialects are spread to each variety" and "a lg" (likely a typo for 'a language').

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In unit 1 of this block, we tried to define what language was, its possible origins and functions, and how human language is different from other types of communication systems, especially those of animals. We emphasized that language is a unique property of the human species. However, language is used primarily to communicate with other people, that is, language is used in society.

There is a close relationship between language and society.

In this unit we shall discuss the following dimensions of language in society :

- Language is not a static entity but subject to variation
 - This variation could be due to:
 - Social Factors such as geographical location, socioeconomic status, caste, ethnic group, and so on.
 - Personal factors such as sex and age
- Context of the situation such as topic of conversation, relationship between participants, and mode of communication.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As teachers of English language, one of our important jobs seems to be correcting the students' spoken and written English. In other words, we have in our minds a standard English variety, against which we judge the students' responses.

But when you go back home or even listen to other teachers in the staff room, you will notice that not only do they speak different languages, but they speak the same language in different ways from you.

For one speaker to use the same language in different ways from you.

For instance, if you and your neighbours are Hindi mother tongue speakers, you can talk to one another and understand each other quite easily. Yet, you must be aware that you do not speak exactly like your neighbours. A young neighbour (say a teenager) would probably use a lot more slang than you, a particular lady may have a very 'correct' pronunciation. Another neighbour is a 'puri' and insists on speaking a Sanskritized variety of Hindi. These unique characteristics of a speaker are referred to as the speaker's **idiolect**. In fact, we are often able to recognize different individuals by their distinct speech and language patterns (i.e. idiolect), and indeed this is a fundamental feature of self-identity. However, beyond these individual differences, the language of a group of people may show **regular** variations from that used by other groups of speakers of the same language. For example, the Hindi spoken by people living in Benaras is systematically different from the Hindi spoken in Delhi and Allahabad. These groups of people are, therefore, said to speak different **dialects of the same language**.

The systematic or dialectal differences may be due to social factors, regional separation (as above), class, caste, and ethnic group and so on. The linguistic differences could also be due to personal-social factors such as sex and age. The context of the situation could also lead to a different variety of the language being used.

In this unit, we shall make you aware of these broad social factors which lead to linguistic diversity. We shall also dwell on the question of a standard variety. These factors will enable you to understand that language is a social phenomenon, dynamic and changing, and not a static goal which we all have to achieve.

6.2 REGIONAL VARIATION

If we travel from one place to another in a particular direction, we notice linguistic differences, say, from one village to another. When the areas are close to each other, the differences will be relatively small. However, the further we get from our starting point, the larger the differences will become from that point.

For instance, take the case of Hindi spoken in different parts of India. We can find differences at the level of sounds, as well as vocabulary and grammar.

We give you some examples of Khari Boli (Hindi of Delhi) and Bhojpur (Hindi of Eastern U.P.)

Differences at the level of sounds

English	Khari Boli	Bhojpur
'boy'	ladka	larika/larika
'fish'	machali	machari
'fire'	aag	aagi
'to take'	lena	leb

Differences at the level of words

English	Khari Boli	Bhojpur
'tree'	per	gaach
'meat'	maas	segoh
'gram'	chama	bhut
'foot'	per	god
'light'	pralash	anpor

If we look at the situation in Andhra Pradesh, the dialect spoken in Telangana contains a lot of Hindi-Urdu words which are absent in other areas.

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Lets broaden our canvas a little, and consider the native varieties of English. We will notice that there are several differences between British, American and Australian English, not only at the phonological and lexical level, but also at the syntactic level, which is most resistant to change.

Morphosyntactic forms

	British English	American English
Present	Past and Past Participle	Past and Past Participle
burn	burnt	burned
dwell	dwelt	dwelled
spill	spilt	spilled
learn	learnt	learned
smell	smelt	smelled

Different Words Same Meaning

Australian English	British English
paddock	field
picture theatre	cinema
singlet	vest
to barrack for	to support
bludger	a loafer, sponger

American English	British English
faucet	tap
sophomore	second year student
generator	dynamo
couch	sofa
monkey wrench	spanner
can	tin
queue	line
gas	petrol
sidewalk	path
molasses	treacle