Lecture #6

REGIONAL AND SOCIAL DIALECTS

1. Diversities in languages

No language is as monolithic as some descriptive grammars suggest.

Whenever we have sufficient data from a language, we find diversity in all areas of the grammar.

These diversities can be studied along three dimensions:

- (i) $Geographical \rightarrow Regional varieties$
- (ii) Social \rightarrow Social dialects (or sociolects):
 - a. socio-economic status
 - b. gender
 - c. ethnic group
 - d. age
 - e. occupation
 - f. education
 - g. others

Study the Example #1 on p. 131 Review the anecdote in Trudgill (1974), Lecture #1

- (iii) Functional \rightarrow Registers:
 - a. formal
 - b. casual
 - c. technical
 - d. intimate
 - e. others

2. Regional variation

2.1. International varieties

- pronunciation differences;
- vocabulary differences;
- grammatical differences.

Study the Examples #2, #3 on pp. 132-133, and the Exercise #1 on p. 133.

2.2 Intra-national or intra-continental variation

Isoglosses:

Lines on dialect maps showing the boundaries between two regions which differ with respect to some linguistic feature (such as a lexical item, pronunciation, etc.)

Study the dialect map (Figure 6.1) on p. 136.

The importance of the *time* factor: Regional dialects need a long time to develop.

For example, British English and US English have more regional variations than New Zealand and Australian English.

Study the Exercise #3 on p. 135.

2.3 *Cross-continental variation: dialect chains*

Dialects on the outer edges of the geographical area may not be mutually intelligible, *but they will be linked by a chain of mutual intelligibility*.

At no point is there a complete break (with regard to mutual intelligibility); but the cumulative effect will be such that the greater the geographical separation, the greater the difficulty in comprehending.

e.g., Italian - French Paris -----> Italian border more and more 'Italian like'

Rome -----> French border more and more 'French like'

Study the Example #5 on p. 137.

Other examples:

Scandinavian chain: it links dialects of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish; German, Dutch, Flemish: dialect chain from Switzerland though Austria, Germany to the Netherlands and Belgium. etc. Challenge: Where should be the boundary drawn between one dialect and another – linguistic features overlap, the criterion of "mutual intelligibility" is not sufficient either (for example, Norwegians can understand Swedish).

Important: The attitudes and feelings of the speakers; they *choose* the language or dialect they wish to be affiliated with.

3. Social variation

RP: Received Pronunciation \rightarrow a social accent; the regional origin of the speaker is concealed!

Study the relationship between linguistic variation and socio-economic levels: Figure 6.2 on p. 139.

Negative reactions to RP resulted in the development of a new variety: *Estuary English* (labeled also as the 'new RP". The rapid spread of this new variety illustrates the *leveling process*.

Reduction of variation!

Demonstrating Estuary English: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2X9L5llhTQ

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4. Social dialects

4.1 Standard English

RP: social accent Standard English: social dialect

There are more variations in a social dialect than in social accents.

Study the relationship between social and regional variations in relation to socioeconomic levels: Figure 6.3 on p. 141.

Patterned variation: the role of significant social factors in speech.

4.2 Caste dialects

Similar socio-economic factors for a group of speakers will determine the employing of a social dialect.

Examples: Brahmin vs. non-Brahmin castes in India (p. 142)

Javanese: six distinct stylistic levels in relation to social groups.

Study Table 1 on p. 143.

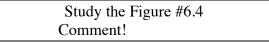
4.3 Social class dialects

The term "social class" refers to prestige, wealth and education.

There is a consistent relationship between social class and speech.

4.3.1 Pronunciation:

• [h] dropping



• [in] pronunciation

Study the Table 6.2 Comment!

• Post-vocalic [r]

Labov's study (1966) p.147

The results show clear social stratification of /r/ pronunciation.

Post-vocalic /r/ is a *variable* which illustrates the arbitrariness of the particular forms which are considered prestigious: **SOCIAL JUDGEMENT.**

In New York City: LOWER social status \rightarrow fewer postvocalic /r/ is used;

In Reading (England): **HIGHER** social status \rightarrow fewer postvocalic /r/ is used.

	% of /r/:		
New York City	Reading	SOCIAL CLASS	
32	0	UMC	
20	28	LMC	
12	44	UWC	
0	49	LWC	

(S. Romaine: Language in Society. 1994.)

Study the Figure 6.5 on p. 148.

• [1] deletion in Montreal French

Difference in [1] deletion between *social classes* and the *grammatical status* of the word!

Study the Table 6.3 (p. 151)

4.3.2 Grammatical patterns

Sharp stratification: a sharp distinction between social classes with regard to the use of standard vs. vernacular grammatical structures.

Study the Example #17 on p.151. Study the patterns illustrated on p. 151.

Multiple negation use: more frequent in lower-class speech (see the sentence in the speech of a Detroit adolescent, p. 152.).

5. Methodology

Sociolinguistic interviews -- difficulties: time consuming and expensive! Rapid and anonymous surveys -- limitations: uncertainty regarding social backgrounds!

If interested in methodology further, you may read this article: Starks, D. & Z. McRobbie. 2001. Collecting sociolinguistic data: some typical and some not so typical approaches. *New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 16, 79-92. (you may find this paper on the instructor's web site).