**Language Varieties**

The way people talk is influenced by the surrounding social context. The same message can be explained differently when speaking to different people, when having different feelings or being in different places. Besides, aspects of social identity are reflected in the way people speak. In other words, speech provides clues about who we are and where we come from. Variation may occur within the same dialect or may involve various dialects.

1. **Dialect**

A dialect is a linguistic natural system that is perfectly acquired by the members of a particular society. It is the first acquired as a mother tongue, not the standard language; it is naturally acquired without teaching or effortful learning, all native speakers use it correctly despite their differences (literate or not). Although dialects have differences, they have also common features that allow people, who speak the same language and belong to different areas or social classes, understand each other. Scientifically speaking, there is no superior or inferior dialects; all dialects are equal.

It can be *regionally distinctive*; a language may have many associated dialects moving from one region/place to another. Yet, it can be *socially distinctive*; language use varies from one social class to another. A person may be addressed differently by different surrounding people to show social relationship. We are addressed differently by workmates, classmates, friends, family members…

The discipline that deals with the study of dialects is called ‘Dialectology’ or ‘Linguistic geography’. Dialects may differ in:

* Phonology: the pronunciation of the same sound differs. For example, in Algeria, the sound /t/ is pronounced differently as /t/, /Ɵ/ or /tʃ/. In England, Northerners substitute the sound /ʌ/ with /e/ as in instances like husband and much, they say /hezbәnd/ and /metʃ/ respectively instead of /hʌzbәnd/ and /mʌtʃ/.
* Morphology: the way words are formed may differ. For example, the formation of negation differs from one region to the other.
* Lexis/ vocabulary: the choice of words differs from one dialect to the other; the same meaning is expressed differently. For example; Autumn is referred to as ‘fall’ in America.
* Semantics: the same word may entail different meanings in different areas. However, the speakers of one language can understand and identify the meaning of words and sentences said by another person speaking a different dialect. Few exceptions happen when the speaker of one dialect is totally misunderstood by another one. Generally, if two dialects are not comprehensible, then, they belong to two different languages.
* Grammar: Americans use *gotten* while the British use *got.* Americans use *dove* while the British use *dived.* Americans use the form *did you eat?* While the British prefer *have you eaten?* (Holmes,2001 p.125).

1. **Style**

It is a situational dialect which differs within one language to cope with the different situations of social life. Hence, we may have formal and informal style as two extremes between which there are many different degrees of formality and informality.

Example:

1. Inclement climatic conditions compelled the president to return prior to the schedule
2. The president was obliged to come back before his plan because of bad weather

The first sentence is more formal than the second; ‘return’ is more formal than ‘come back’, ‘schedule’ than ‘plan’, and ‘inclement climatic conditions’ than ‘bad weather’. Besides, one feature of formal language is the use of Latin words.

**Task one:**  compare language use in the following situations

***Situation 1***

Ray: Hi Mum

Mum: Hi, you’re late

Ray: Yeah, that bastard sootbucket kept us in again

Mum: Nana’s here

Ray: Oh sorry, where is she?

***Situation 2***

Ray: Good afternoon, sir

Principle: what are you doing here at this time.

Ray: Mr. Sutton kept us in, sir.

***Questions:***

1. Identify the relationship between Ray and his mother, on the one hand, and Ray and the principle, on the other.
2. Identify the words that show these relations.
3. What does this suggest about the social significance of the choice of words.
4. How do you greet the school principle, your mother, your friends? Do you greet them the same way? Why?
5. **Accent**

It refers to the pronunciation features of the dialect, it may extend to other varieties of language or other system. It only refers to the features of pronunciation. Accent is an aspect of the dialect, but they are studied separately.

For example; the sound /t/ is pronounced /Ɵ/ in Annaba, it may extend to be pronounced as such in standard Arabic, French and English.

1. **Standard Language**

It is a prestige variety of language and it helps providing the common written form to multidialectal societies. It is used as the language of the press, education, mass media, research and official communications in general.

Standard means Reference (the norm). it is prestigious because it is associated with the high level of education, socially speaking people who know it are considered better than the others. Standard language is the norm that unites all the regions, it is the same in all the dialectical regions, all people agree upon it. However, some pronunciation differences may appear as a result of dialect influence.

It originates from a dialect unlike what most people believe. The origin of standard Arabic is the dialect that was used in Mecca, the Arabs needed to know about their language -the language of Quran- to teach it to others. In Europe, Latin was the only standard language; the language of the Bible, education and church. After the rebellion against Latin, other dialects such as French, English… started to be described and changed from dialects to standard languages. The Londoners dialect became the standard English because it was the language of the rulers.

The standard language is prestigious since other people think that it is better than the dialects and that it is the one that should be taught. It is called also: academic, official and national language. These names seem to be synonyms, but they do not have the same meaning:

* Standard refers to the system (the rules acceptable by all people).
* Academic refers to where it is used: researches, education…i.e, it is a system used in academic field
* National refers to the system that unites all the people of the nation, it is a kind of inheritage.
* Official refers to the system that is used in official affaire and communications.

e.g: In India, English is the standard and academic language but not the national one.

Aspects of connected speech are part of the standard language.

**References**

Holmes, J. ( 2001). *An introduction to Sociolinguistics (2nd ed.).* Pearson Education Limted.