1. Introduction

Language is a tool that humans use to communicate or share thoughts, ideas, and emotions. It is the set of rules, shared by the individuals who are communicating, that allows them to exchange those thoughts, ideas, or emotions. Language may also be expressed through writing, signing, or even by gestures.

In this session today we will talk about speech, language and dialect.

2. Speech

Speech is talking, one way that a language can be expressed. We take speech as granted because its most basic use in everyday conversation seems ephemeral and transitory and yet it is central to social process. As human beings in society we talk our way through our lives—from home to school, from school to work, from childhood to maturity, through friendships, jobs and marriage. Speech is crucial in number of activities including socialization.

In order to have a clear picture of speech in its social context, an understanding of few of the fundamental concepts is required. First let us talk about ethnography of speaking.

3. Ethnography of Speaking

It is the approach to sociolinguistics of language in which the use of language in general is related to social and cultural values.

To understand what ethnography of speaking or ethnography communication is all about, it is necessary to discuss the following concepts. First let us talk about units of interaction within a speech community.

   1. Units of Interaction

Hymes suggested that there are three hierarchy units called speech situation, speech event and speech acts.

   (i) Speech Situation:

Speech situation is described by Hymes as the situations associated with or marked by the absence of speech. Examples are ceremonies, fight, hunts etc. Speech situations are not only communicative, it can be combined with other events.

   (ii) Speech Event:

Speech events are both communicative and governed by the rules for the use of speech. A speech event takes place within a speech situation and is composed of one or more speech acts.

   (iii) Speech Acts:

According to Hymes, a speech act is to be distinguished from the sentence and is not to be identified with any unit at any level of grammar. For him speech act gets its status from social context as well as grammatical form and intonation.

   2. Components of Speech

Hymes suggest that there are certain components of speech and he puts them in eight groups, each labeled with one of the letters of the word ‘speaking’.

   (i) S -The situation (S) is composed of the setting and the scene. The setting is about the physical circumstances of a communicative event including the time and place. The scene is the psychological setting as in what kind of speech event is taking place according to cultural definitions.
P- The participants (P) include not only the speaker and the addressee but also the addressor and the audience.

E- The ends of a speech event (E) can be divided into outcomes (i.e. the purpose of the event from the cultural point of view) and goals (i.e. the purposes of the individual participants).

A- Message form (or how something is said) and content (or what is said) together are called ‘act sequence’ (A). Both message form and message content involve communicative skills that vary from culture to culture.

K- ‘Key’ (K) refers to the manner or spirit in which a speech act is carried out. For example whether it is mock or serious, or perfunctory or painstaking.

I – ‘Instrumentalities’ (I) include both channels and forms of speech. Channel is the way a message travels from one person to another. The most commonly used channels are oral or written transmissions of a message. Forms of speech are the languages and their subdivisions, dialects, codes, registers, varieties etc.

N- Communication involves ‘norms’ (N), both of interaction and interpretation.

G – ‘Genres’ (G) refer to categories like poems, myths, proverbs, lectures and commercial messages. Different genres have defining formal characteristics.

4. Language

Language is the expression of human communication through which knowledge, belief, and behavior can be experienced, explained, and shared. This sharing is based on systematic, conventionally used signs, sounds, gestures, or marks that convey understood meaning within a group or community.

5. Language Standardization

Language standardization is the process by which a vernacular in a community becomes the standard language form.

The only variety which would count as a ‘proper language’ is a standard language. Standardization is the process by which a language is codified in some way. The process involves the development of grammars, spelling books, dictionaries and possibly a literature.

6. Dialect

Dialect is the form of the language that is spoken in one area that maybe different from other form of the same language. It shows the features of grammar and vocabulary, as well as aspects of pronunciation.

The Dictionary of Linguistics defines dialect as a variety of a language used by people from a particular geographic area. Many historical linguists view every speech form as a dialect of the older medium from which it was developed; for example, modern Romance languages such as French and Italian developed from dialects of Latin.

7. Language and Dialect

Many people wonder, "What is the difference between a language and a dialect?" There are no universally accepted criteria for distinguishing them, and the difference is often a matter of degree rather than of kind.

It is, of course, difficult to provide clear-cut definitions for language and dialect. Languages are social phenomenon and do not necessarily have clear edges that would make them easy to identify and define. We can make generalizations about language but these refer to social, political, and cultural factors, rather than any intrinsic concrete and rational evaluation of the linguistic features of the “language” itself.
In ordinary usage, the distinction between language and dialect is a political distinction rather than a linguistic one and linguist prefer to use the term variety wherever the distinction between the two is not significant enough for the analysis being done.

8. Factors for Language Variation
Factors for language differences can be grouped into two broad categories- social and linguistic.

1. Social Factors:
   One side of explanation for dialects is found in the social and historical conditions that surround language change. Within the socio-historical factors there are many divisions that set the stage for dialect differences.
   
   i) Settlement:
   One of the most obvious explanations for why there are dialects is rooted in the settlement patterns of group of speakers. Settlement generally takes place in several distinct phases. In the initial phase a group of people moves to an area where there are attractive environmental qualities. The immigrants bring with them the culture of their origin. In the next phase, available land is occupied and a new cultural identity emerges, as a cohesive society develops in the region. The creation of this new culture is accompanied by the elimination of established cultures and way of speaking. In the third phase of settlement, regional populations define roles for themselves with respect to wider social groupings.
   
   ii) Geographical Factors:
   Geography often plays a role in the development of dialects. When we talk about the significance of geographical boundaries, we are really talking about the lines of communication. The most effective communication is face-to-face interaction, and when speakers do not interact on personal level, the likelihood of dialect divergence heightened.
   
   iii) Language Contact:
   Contact with speakers of other languages often takes place during the course of establishment of new settlements and subsequent migration from these initial settlements and this contact can influence dialect development.
   
   iv) Economic Ecology:
   Different economic bases not only bring about the development of specialized vocabulary items associated with different occupations; that may also affect the direction and rate of language change in grammar and pronunciation. The traditional distinction between agriculturally based rural lifestyles and industrialized urban is reflected in dialect differences on all levels of language organization.
   
   v) Social Stratification:
   Social status differences play a role not only in language variation across space but also in language change over time. Though it is difficult to determine the social class and other social group divisions that are responsible for bringing language change, social class differences do play a major role in the patterning of language variation and change.
   
   vi) Social Interaction and Social Practices:
   Who people talk to on regular basis is an important factor in the development of dialect differences. At the individual pattern of interaction or social networks, density and multiplexity of speakers’ social interaction are the core issues.

Another term associated with the study of dialectical variation in its social context is speech community. One of the pioneers of modern sociolinguistic study, William Labov has defined the speech community as a group of people with shared norms, or common evaluations of linguistic variables (1966, 1972).

2. Linguistic:

The other side of explaining language differences relates to the structure of language. Under constant linguistic pressure to change, some groups of speakers adopt certain changes while others hold out against them. If a new language feature continues to be used by a certain group and not by others, then a dialect difference is born.

Linguistic and social factors do not work in isolation in the formation of dialects. Dialects are rather affected by
a complex array of factors in various combinations.

9. Types of Dialects

1. Regional Dialects

A regional dialect is not a distinct language but a variety of a language spoken in a particular area of a country. It is associated with geographic area and the study of how a language varies from one area to another and this is called Regional Dialectology.

2. Social Dialects

In traditional historical linguistics, the notion of dialect is almost exclusively reserved for geographically defined local and regional varieties. Dialect differences are also correlated with social differences.

Dialectologists speak of social dialects or sociolects to refer to non-regional differences. They are associated with a social or ethnic group and are not spoken by all the members of the group.

3. Occupational Dialects

In addition to social or regional dialects, most languages have at least some discontinuous, supra-regional dialects defined only in terms of social factors, which extend across the boundaries of continuous dialects. Such dialects of this type are commonly referred to as *jargons* or registers or occupational dialects. These consist mainly of the specialized vocabularies used in different industries and occupations such as the aeroplane industry, the theatre, mining and so on.

The session has introduced several types of topics ranging from speech to language and its varieties which include dialects and its types. One of the major concept i.e. ethnography of speaking or ethnography of communication as an approach to the study of language in social context is in practice a branch of anthropology. On the border between sociolinguistics and language, the ethnography of speaking nicely illustrates anthropological methods and approaches to sociolinguistic themes.

Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to introduce those aspects of sociolinguistics which are of more central concern to linguists, dealing as it does with the influence of social factors on language. Topics such as speech, dialect etc. has to be studied in consideration with how language works in society and such understanding depends not only on the study of language as an autonomous system, but also on the study of language in relation to society.

Quiz:

1. Who coined the term Ethnography of Speaking?
   (i) William Labov (ii) Noam Chomsky (iii) Dell Hymes
   Ans: (iii)

2. Situation (S) stands for
   (i) Speech Situation (ii) Speech Event (iii) Scene and Setting
   Ans: (iii)

3. The articulatory and acoustic features of language is
(i) Dialect (ii) Accent (iii) Register
Ans: (ii)

4. The study of how a language varies from one area to another is called
   (i) Regional Dialectology (ii) Social Dialectology (iii) Occupational Dialectology
   Ans: (i)

5. Occupational variety of language is called
   (i) Local dialect (ii) Register (iii) Creole
   Ans: (ii)

References:

References:
Fasold Ralph W. 1999: Sociolinguistics of language. Blackwell publishers


Tutorial/Assignments
a. What are factors for language variation?
2. Explain the linguistic factors responsible for language variation
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

1. What is Ethnography of speaking?
   Ans: The approach to sociolinguistics of language in which the use of language in general is related to social and cultural values is called as the ethnography of speaking. Introduced by Dell Hymes, ethnography of speaking is concerned with the situations and uses, the patterns and functions, of speaking as an activity in its own right.

2. What are the components of speech?
   Ans: Hymes suggest that there are certain components of speech and he puts them in eight groups, each labeled with one of the letters of the word ‘speaking’.

   (i) S - The situation (S) is composed of the setting and the scene. The setting is about the physical circumstances of a communicative event including the time and place. The scene is the psychological setting as in what kind of speech event is taking place according to cultural definitions.

   (ii) P - The participants (P) include not only the speaker and the addressee but also the addressee and the audience.

   (iii) E - The ends of a speech event (E) can be divided into outcomes (the purpose of the event from the cultural point of view) and goals (the purposes of the individual participants).

   (iv) A - Message form (how something is said) and content (what is said) together are called ‘act sequence’ (A). Both message form and message content involve communicative skills that vary from culture to culture.

   (v) K - ‘Key’ (K) refers to the manner or spirit in which a speech act is carried out. For example whether it is mock or serious, perfunctory or painstaking.

   (vi) I - ‘Instrumentalities’ (I) include both channels and forms of speech. Channel is the way a message travels from one person to another. Forms of speech are the languages and their subdivisions, dialects, codes, registers, varieties.

   (vii) N - Communication involves ‘norms’ (N), both of interaction and interpretation. Following norms of interpretation is required in order to be competent in communicating in certain culture. It involves trying to understand what is being conveyed beyond what is in the actual word used.

   (viii) G - ‘Genres’ (G) refer to categories like poems, myths, proverbs, lectures and commercial messages. Different genres have defining formal characteristics.

3. What is a dialect and how does it differ from a language?
   Ans: The term dialect in sociolinguistics is used to describe the speech characteristic of a region (regional dialect) or of a group of people defined by social or occupational characteristics (social dialect) rather by region alone. Dialect is the form of the language that is spoken in one area that maybe different from other form of the same language. It shows the features of grammar and vocabulary, as well as aspects of pronunciation.

   There are no universally accepted criteria for distinguishing them, and the difference is often a matter of degree rather than of kind. It is difficult to provide clear-cut definitions for language and dialect. Languages are social phenomenon and do not necessarily have clear edges that would make them easy to identify and define. We can
make generalizations about language (e.g. language is a dialect with an army, language is always superior to the dialects it encapsulates), but these refer to social, political, and cultural factors, rather than any intrinsic concrete and rational evaluation of the linguistic features of the “language” itself.

4. What are the different types of dialects?

Ans: The different types of dialects are

(i) Regional Dialect
A regional dialect is not a distinct language but a variety of a language spoken in a particular area of a country. It is associated with geographical area.

(ii) Social Dialect
There are other factors such as social class, sex, age etc. There is variation in speech between people of different classes as much as there is between people of different areas. Dialectologists speak of social dialects refer to non-regional differences. They are associated with a social/ethnic group and are not spoken by all the members of the group.

(iii) Occupational Dialect
In addition to social or regional dialects, most languages have at least some discontinuous, super regional dialects defined only in terms of social factors, which extend across the boundaries of continuous dialects. Social dialects of this type are commonly referred to as Jargons or register or occupational dialects. These consist mainly of the specialized vocabularies used in different industries and occupations such as the aeroplane industry, theatre, mining and so on.
Glossary

1. **Ethnography of Speaking**: The approach to sociolinguistics of language in which the use of language in general is related to social and cultural values.

2. **Language standardization**: A process by which a vernacular in a community becomes the standard language form.

3. **Dialect**: A variety of a language used by people from a particular geographic area.

4. **Speech Community**: A group of people with shared norms, or common evaluations of linguistic variables.

5. **Regional Dialect**: A variety of a language spoken in a particular area of a country.
Summary

Humans express thoughts, feelings, and ideas orally to one another through a series of complex movements that alter and mold the basic tone created by voice into specific, decodable sounds. Speech is precisely produced by coordinated muscle actions in the head, neck, chest, and abdomen. Speech development is a gradual process that requires years of practice. During this process, a child learns how to regulate these muscles to produce understandable speech.

Language is a tool that humans use to communicate or share thoughts, ideas, and emotions. It is the set of rules, shared by the individuals who are communicating, that allows them to exchange those thoughts, ideas, or emotions. Language may also be expressed through writing, signing, or even gestures in the case of people who have neurological disorders and may depend upon eye blinks or mouth movements to communicate.

While there are many languages in the world, each includes its own set of rules for phonology (phonemes or speech sounds or, in the case of sign language, handshapes), morphology (word formation), syntax (sentence formation), semantics (word and sentence meaning), prosody (intonation and rhythm of speech), and pragmatics (effective use of language).