socio-linguistics is not simply 'an amalgam of linguistics and sociology (or indeed of linguistics and any other of the social sciences)'. It incorporates, in principle at least, every aspect of the structure and use of language that relates to its social and cultural functions. Hence there seems no real conflict between the socio-linguistics and the psycho-linguistic approach to language. Both these views should be reconciled ultimately. Linguisticians like John Lyons and cognitive psychologists like Campbell and Wales advocate the necessity of widening the notion of competence to take account of a great deal of what might be called the 'social context' of speech.

20.2. LANGUAGE VARIATION

Language with its different varieties is the subject matter of socio-linguistics. Socio-linguistics studies the varied linguistic realizations of socio-cultural meanings which in a sense are both familiar and unfamiliar and the occurrence of everyday social interactions which are nevertheless relative to particular cultures, societies, social groups, speech communities, languages, dialects, varieties, styles. That is why language variation generally forms a part of socio-linguistic study.

Language can vary, not only from one individual to the next, but also from one sub-section of speech-community (family, village, town, region) to another. People of different age, sex, social classes, occupations, or cultural groups in the same community will show variations in their speech. Thus language varies in geographical and social space. Variability in a social dimension is called sociolectical. According to socio-linguists, a language is code. There exist varieties within the code. And the factors that cause language variation can be summarized in the following manner :

—**nature of participants, their relationship** (socio-economic, sexual, occupational, etc.)

—**number of participants** (two face-to-face, one addressing a large audience, etc.)

—**roles of participants** (teacher/student priest/parishoner/father/son/husband/wife, etc.)

—**function of speech event** (persuasion, request for information ritual, verbal, etc.)

—**nature of medium** (speech, writing, scripted speech, speech reinforced by gesture, etc.)

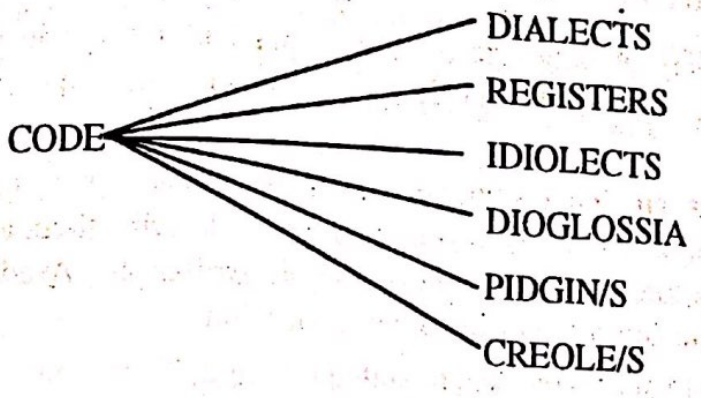
—**genere of discourse** (scientific, experiment, sport, art, religion, etc.)

—**physical setting** (noisy/quiet,/public/private/family/formal

gathering, familiar/unfamiliar, appropriate for speech (e.g. sitting-room) (inappropriate.)

—**regional or geographical setting,** etc.

The major varieties that exist within the code are the following :



20.2.1. Code

'A code' is 'an arbitrary, pre-arranged set of signals' (Gleason, 1968 : 374). A language is merely one special variety of code. The total organization of various linguistic components in a language is the code of that language. It is an abstract system which happens to be accepted arbitrarily in the community which uses it.

20.2.2. Dialect and Sociolect

A regional, temporal or social variety within a single language is a dialect; it differs in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary from the standard language, which is in itself a socially favoured dialect. So a dialect is a variation of language sufficiently different to be considered a separate entity within a language but not different enough to be classed as a separate language. Sometimes it is difficult to decide whether a variant constitutes a dialectal sub-division or a different language, since it may be blurred by political boundaries, e.g. between Dutch and some Low German dialects. Regional dialects (or local or geographical or territorial dialects) are spoken by the people of a particular geographical area within a speech community, e.g. Cockney in London, but due to the increase in education and mobility they are receding.

> "Dialect is a specific form of a given language, spoken in a certain locality or geographic area, showing sufficient differences from the standard of literary form of **that** language, as to pronunciation, grammatical construction and idiomatic use of words, to be considered a distinct entity, yet not sufficiently distinct from other

dialects of the language to be regarded as a different language."
—*A Dictionary of Linguistics* (1954) by A. Pie and Frank Gaynor.

Sociolects (social dialects or class dialects), on the other hand, are spoken by the members of a particular group or stratum of a speech community.

A variety of language used at a particular stage in its historical development, e.g. Prakrit and Pali in ancient India, may be called **temporal dialects.**

Dialects are dialects not because of linguistic reasons but because of political or cultural reasons. It is customary to describe them as varieties of a language according to users. For example Brijbhasha, Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Khari Boli, etc. are some of the dialects of Hindi.

To the linguist, however, as stated by Sapir, 'there is no real difference between a dialect and a language.' Grierson also observes, 'In the course of the survey, it has sometimes been difficult to decide whether a given form of speech is to be looked upon as an independent language or as a dialect of some other definite form of speech. In practice, it has been found that it is sometimes impossible to decide the question in a manner which will gain universal acceptance. The two words 'language' and 'dialect' are in this respect like 'mountain' and 'hill'. One has no hesitation in saying that Everest is mountain and Hoborn Hill a hill, but between these two the dividing line cannot be accurately drawn.'

20.2.3. Isogloss

An isogloss is 'a line indicating the degree of linguistic change' (Gleason 1963 : 398). 'On linguistic maps, a line separating the areas (called isoglass area) in which the language differs with respect to a given feature or features, i.e. a line making the boundaries within which a given linguistic feature or phenomenon can be observed' (*A Dictionary of Linguistics*).

So an isogloss is a representation of statistical probabilities, a graphic way of portraying a transition in speech characteristics from one area to another, a bundle of isoglosses may be interpreted as marking a zone of relatively great transition in speech. We may, therefore, think of it as indicating **dialect boundary.** It is a term modelled on geographical terms like **isotherm** (a line joining areas of equal temperature) and **isobar** (a line joining areas of equal atmospheric pressure). It is in contrast to another linguistic term **isograph,** *i.e.* 'any line on a linguistic map, indicating a uniformity in the use of sounds, vocabulary, syntax, inflection, etc.'

Though an isogloss is a convenient way of description, but may be misleading if the apparent sharpness of distinction between the areas is not

carefully discounted. "The drawing of isoglosses is one of many places where it is easy to be over-precise. The reading of them is even more dangerous, since the reader has not seen the intricate mass of data upon which they are based." (Gleason, p. 400)

20.2.4. Registers

Whereas dialects are the varieties of language according to users, registers are the varieties of language according to use. Registers are 'stylistic-functional varieties of a dialect or language'. These may be narrowly defined by reference to subject matter (field of discourse, e.g. jargon of fishing, gambling, sports, etc.) to medium (mode of discourse e.g. printed material, written letter, message on tape, etc.), or to level of formality, that is style (manner of discourse). Registers are, therefore, situationally conditioned field-of-discourse oriented varieties of a language.Some well-known definitions of register are cited below :

1. "By register we mean a variety correlated with a performer's social role on a given occasion. Every normal adult plays a series of different social roles—one man, for example, may function at different times as head of a family, motorist, cricketer, member of a religious group, professor of bio-chemistry and so on, and within his idiolect he has varieties shared by other persons and other idiolects appropriate to these roles. When the professor's wife tells him to 'stop talking like a professor,' she is protesting at a misuse of register."

   —J. C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, OUP, 1965, p. 89.

2. Registers are those "varieties of language which correspond to different situations, different speakers and listeners, or readers and writers, and so on."

   —R.M.W. Dixon, "On Formal & Contexual Meaning," A L H (Budapast), XIV, p. 38.

3 "By register, itself a linguistic, not situational category, is meant a division of idiolect, or what is common to dialects, distinguished by formal (and possibly substantial) features and correlated with types of situations of utterance (these distinguished by such components as those here enumerated)."

   —J. Ellis, "On Contextual Meaning," *In Memory of J. R. Firth*, Longmans, p. 83.

According to the role of the speaker, a young lecturer, for example, will speak in different ways when communicating with his wife, his children, his father, his colleagues, his students, or when shopping, and so on. Each of

example religion, in a temple with the old folk or at a seminar with scholars, or in a restaurant with friends. Depending on who participates (passively or actively) in the discourse or discussion, the tone, the words etc. will vary. In a religious gathering or temple we may be serious and reverential in our speech; in a seminar we may be analytical; in a restaurant casual. The topic is a serious one but our treatment of it may be highly formal or frozen; it may be, at the other extremes, highly informal or casual. The degree of formality may vary according to the style or manner of discourse. In the restaurant we may say that water is 'dirty', but in a laboratory we may have to say it is 'impure' or 'polluted.'

On the basis of stylistic values the following types of stylistic varieties have been listed in *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (1976) :

archaic	formal	pejorative
colloquial	historical	poetic
dated	humorous	proverb
derogatory	ironical	rare
dialect	jocular	slang
emphatic	laudatory	taboo
emotive	literary	vulgar
euphimistic	literal	
facetious	modern	
figurative	old use	

Nevertheless, it is difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between the two axes of **register** and **style**; and register classification, instead of being a pigeon-hole classification, is only a workable solution. Register, says Dr. S.K. Verma, is primarily "field (of discourse)-bond and situationally conditioned. It is a restricted code of social behaviour." Furthermore, 'register is a variety of language with marked phonological, grammatical and lexical features correlating with distinctive situational features. Hence registral varieties, like any other variety, can be analysed and described at the interpreting levels of phonology, grammar and lexis. One of the marked features of a register is predominance of a particular type of technical terms. It is only with the help of certain marked lexical features that we delimit and classify registers, e.g. in the passage quoted above. (S.K. Verma. "Towards a Linguistic Analysis of Registral Features," *Acta Linguistica Academica;* Budapest).

Style in linguistics has to do with those components or features of the form of a literary composition which give to it its individual stamp, marking it out as the work of a particular author and producing a certain effect upon the reader. The analysis of style in this sense is commonly called stylistics (see Chapter 28).

these varieties will be a register. Examples of registral varieties according to the subject matter or field of discourse are scientific, religious, legal, commercial writings and also the language of newspaper, of buying and selling, of agriculture, of airport announcers, of telephone operators, etc. The following passage belongs to the register of embroidery.

> Make a small hem on the edge of the garment, turn it on to the right side, then take it down. Arrange the lace in position over this hem, with the straight edge of the lace to the hem of edge. Pin and tack. Sew the lace to the garment with tiny stitches worked close together as according.

A register is also determined by the medium or mode of discourse. The main distinction is between speech and writing. But within speech one may have such distinctions as conversation, discussion, debate, talk and lecture. And in writing we may have distinctions like a personal letter, a memoir, a biography, an autobiography, a poem to be read, a speech to be read aloud, and a play to be performed on a stage and so on.

The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1976) indexes the following types of register :

accounts	ecclesiastical	naval
aerospace	electricity	pathology
algebra	engineering	philosophy
anatomy	farming	phonetics
architecture	finance	photography
arithmetic	football	physics
art	gambling	physiology
astronomy	geology	politics
ballet	geometry	psychology
biblical	grammar	racing
biology	journalism	radio telegraphy
book-keeping	mathematics	rugby
botany	mechanics	science
business	medical	sports
chemistry	meteorology	tennis
cinema	military	theatre
commerce	music	trignometry
cricket	nautical	zoology

Though this list covers a fairly wide range of language registers, yet it should not be regarded as final and complete.

Register and Style

Registers may be classified on the basis of style. We may talk of, for

20.2.8. Creole

When a pidgin becomes a lingua franca, it is called a creole. Thus a pidgin may extend beyond its limited function and permeate through various other activities. Then it may acquire a standardized grammar, vocabulary and sound-system; and it may then be spoken by an increasing number of people as their first language. It has no such history, nor much prestige either. But on account of its wider application and first-language status, it has to be distinguished from a pidgin. A creole or a creolized language is a mixed natural language composed of elements of different languages in areas of intensive contact. Well-known examples are the creoles of the islands of Mauritius and Haiti.

An example of Creole English from Jamaica is quoted here from Randolph Quirk's *The English Language and Images of Matter* (London, 1972:48) :

> Hin sed den, 'Ma, a we in lid?' Him sie, 'Mi nc nuo, wi pikini, bot duon lukfi him niem hahd, or eni wie in a di wohld an yu kal diniem, him hie unu.' Him sed, 'Wel Ma, min want im hie me an nuo mi.' 'Lahd nuo masa'. Duo no kal di niem, hin we kom kil yu.' 'Him sie, 'Wel Ma, hin wi haf fi kil mi.
>
> The following is the 'translation' of the sample quoted above : He said then, 'And where does he live, mother ?' 'I don't know, my child' she said, 'but don't look hard for his name, or anywhere in all the world that you call the name, he will hear you.' 'Well, mother,' he said, 'I want him to hear me and know me.' 'Heavens, no sir,' 'Don't call the name : he'll come and kill you.' 'Well, mother, ' he said 'he'll have to kill me.'

20.2.5.. Idiolect

Idiolect is a variety of language used by one individual speaker, including pecularities of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, etc. A dialect is made of idiolects of a group of speakers in a social or regional subdivision of a speech community. Linguists often analyse their own idiolect to make general statements about language. So the idiolect is "an identifiable pattern of speech characteristic of an individual." or "Idiolect is the individual's personal variety of the community language system" (*A Dictionary of Linguistics* : 1954).

20.2.6. Diglossia

Where we do find two or more dialects or languages in regular use in a community we have a situation which Fergusson has called 'diglossia.' He has observed that in diglossic communities there is a strong tendency to give one of the dialects or languages a higher status or prestige, and to reserve it for certain functions in society, such as government, education, the law, religion, literature, press, radio and television. The 'prestige dialect' is often called the standard dialect (=the language).

The use of two widely divergent forms of the same language by all members of the community under different conditions is called diglossia. In such a situation, a 'high' or a 'classical' literary language is used for formal occasions and in written texts, and a 'low' or vernacular form is used in colloquial conversation. Thus within the same speech community, one form is used for specialised activities—official work, religion, education, law, press, radio, television, literature, etc. The other form is used for non-specialized daily activities. Perhaps the most familiar example is the standard language and regional dialect as used, say, in Italian or Persian, where many speakers speak their local dialect at home or among family or friends of the same dialect area but use the standard language in communicating with speakers of other dialects or on public occasions. A similar situation exists in the Arab world, where classical Arabic is used for specialised purposes by speakers of all dialects of Arabic. An example from India would be 'high' and 'low' Tamil. These forms vary considerably at all levels of language—sounds, words, grammar and meaning.

20.2.7. Pidgin

A pidgin is a contract language, a mixture of elements from different natural languages. Its use is usually restricted to certain groups, e.g. traders and seamen. Pidgins are used in some parts of South-West Asia. Chinese pidgin, a combination of items from Chinese and English to serve the limited purpose of trade, is another well-known example. An alternative term used for the pidgin is contact vernacular.