INDEX

Acknowledgements 11

List of maps and tables 13

Acronyms used in this book 15

Introduction 17

CHAPTER 1 23
1. Key words 25
2. Introduction: Key concepts in sociolinguistics 26
3. Sociolinguistics vs. sociology of language 27
4. The origins of sociolinguistics 28
5. Lenguage variation 30
6. Some instances of variation 31
7. Diachronic variation 32
8. Speech community 37
9. Standard English and World Englishes 40
10. Carrying out sociolinguistic research 45
11. Exercises 49
12. Resources on the web 54
13. Further reading and questions 54
    13.1. Text 1 54
    13.2. Text 2 56
14. Research activity 66
15. References 67

CHAPTER 2 69
1. Key words 71
2. Some variables in sociolinguistics 71

2.1. Style ... 71
2.2. Register ... 74
2.3. Gender ... 77
3. Speech accommodation ... 82
4. Exercises ... 83
5. Resources on the web ... 84
6. Further reading and questions ... 84
6.1. Text 3 ... 84
6.2. Text 4 ... 87
7. Research activity ... 89
8. References ... 91

CHAPTER 3 ... 93
1. Key words ... 95
2. Bilingualism: Introduction ... 96
3. Bilingualism: Definitions and dimensions ... 99
4. Code Choice ... 104
4.1. Code-switching ... 106
4.2. Code-mixing ... 107
5. Code-switching in bilingual children ... 108
6. Diglossia ... 109
7. Diglossia and bilingualism ... 112
8. Multilingualism ... 114
9. Language contact ... 117
10. Pidginisation and creolisation ... 118
11. Some instances of pidgins ... 120
12. Some instances of creoles ... 122
12.1. Hawaiian Creole English ... 123
12.2. Jamaican Patwa (or Patois) ... 125
12.3. Tok Pisin ... 129
13. Decreolisation ... 133
14. The use of pidgins and creoles in education ... 134
15. Exercises ... 138
16 Resources on the web ... 142
17. Further reading and questions ... 142

17.1. Text 5 142
17.2. Text 6 144
17.3. Text 7 148
18. Research activities 150
18.1. Activity 1 150
18.2. Activity 2 150
19. References 152

CHAPTER 4 155
1. Key words 157
2. Bilingual education 158
3. Language policy 162
4. Language planning 163
4.1. Some factors affecting language planning 166
4.2. Actions in language planning 166
4.3. Aims of language planning 167
4.4. Individual language planning 171
5. Minority languages 172
6. Language shift in minority languages 174
7. Some particular sociolinguistic situations 175
7.1. India 175
7.2. New Zealand 178
7.3. Cameroon 179
7.4. The Canadian experience 182
8. European Union language planning and policy 186
9. The role of English 189
10. The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights 190
11. Exercises 192
12. Resources on the web 195
13. Further reading and questions 195
13.1. Text 8 195
13.2. Text 9 196
14. Research activity 198
15. References 200

CHAPTER 5 ... 203
1. Key words ... 205
2. Sociolinguistics and language teaching/learning ... 206
    2.1. Communicative competence in language teaching/learning ... 207
    2.2. Sociolinguistic perspectives on language use in immersion classrooms... 210
    2.3. Analysis of the EFL classroom language ... 212
    2.4. Implications for language teaching... 215
3. Language in the law ... 216
4. Sociolinguistic and corpus linguistics ... 220
5. Exercises ... 225
6. Resources on the web ... 227
7. Further reading and questions ... 227
    7.1. Text 10 ... 227
    7.2. Text 11 ... 230
8. Research activity ... 232
9. References ... 233

Glossary ... 237

CHAPTER 1

This first chapter introduces some fundamental concepts in the field of sociolinguistics and provides the background information to contextualise this discipline. The key issues presented in this chapter are:

- Key concepts in sociolinguistics
- Sociolinguistics vs. sociology of language
- The origins of sociolinguistics
- Language variation
- Speech community
- Standard English and Word Englishes
- Doing sociolinguistic research

1. KEY WORDS

The following list contains some important terms that are presented in this chapter. A definition for each term can be found at the end of this book, in the glossary.

- Analytic language
- Black English Vernacular
- Borrowing
- Communicative competence
- Dialect
- Dialectology
- Discourse analysis
- Domain
- Ethnography of communication
- Informant
- Language attrition
- *Lingua franca*
- LWC
- Macro-sociolinguistics
- Micro-sociolinguistics
- Native speaker
- New Englishes
- Observer's paradox
- Pragmatics
- (Proto)-Indo-European
- Sociolinguistic interview
- Sociology of language
- Synchronic variation
- Synthetic language
- Variety

2. INTRODUCTION: KEY CONCEPTS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Language is commonly used to convey meaning but that is not all we use language for. Language is used for a number of things other than transmitting a message verbally, among them, to initiate, maintain and preserve social relationships with other members of the society. Therefore, language should be understood as a social phenomenon which also reflects the speaker's social environment and relationship to other speakers. As a result of the complexity of human relationships, we do not speak in the same way to a classmate as to a professor. Parents do not speak in the same way to their offspring as they do to their parents, or their boss. But, our way of transmitting messages depends, of course, not only on linguistic matters but also on non-linguistic ones such as body language, contextual and situational factors, among others.

Sociolinguistics can be defined as a field of research and study that deals with the relation between language and society. It describes the links that can be found between one or more languages and their users who are part of a specific speech community. Sociolinguistics examines the societal and linguistic patterns that govern our behaviour as members of human society and how they affect interaction.

Sociolinguistics is a relatively new field. In the 50's and 60's, sociolinguists began to oppose Chomsky's abstraction of language. Chomsky aimed at finding basic grammatical structures that could account for the existence of structured patterns across languages relying on "ideal" native speaker intuitions to describe and interpret language. Sociolinguists, however, tried to find the reasons for linguistic variations in social and environmental conditions. Chomsky was concerned with the ideal speaker/listener communication in a completely homogeneous speech community made up of native speakers (rather a fuzzy concept, in fact), that is to say, perfectly. This monolithic view of the native speaker has nothing to do with the conception of the native speaker in sociolinguistics where social and non-linguistic factors are considered of key importance for communication. What is more, Chomsky's description of a native speaker in a homogeneous speech community is far from being considered commonplace or even real. Speech communities are not easy to delimit and geographical proximity is not always a valid criterion in order to find a reliable definition. Does an English speaker from Edinburgh speak the same way as someone from downtown London or Liverpool? Undoubtedly they speak the same language, English, but their use is quite

different. And, do all three speakers belong to the same speech community? They have spoken English since childhood and they live in the same country with the same cultural background. The three aforementioned speakers can consider themselves native speakers of the same language, English, in spite of clear societal or dialectal variation.

From the very beginning a break could be perceived between the approaches and methods used by generativists and sociolinguists in their quest for language nature and development. Dell Hymes (1971) coined the term communicative competence as opposed to Chomsky's linguistic competence. *Communicative competence* refers not only to the human ability to use language in different situations and under different circumstances but it also refers to other non- linguistic aspects which are also part of the communication process, such as: silence, turn-taking, volume, length of utterance, word choice, gestures, etc. all of these being part of the communication process and completing purely linguistic aspects such as phonology, morphology and syntax. Hymes' contribution to the field of sociolinguistics has been paramount and the concept of communicative competence is nowadays widespread in other disciplines and areas of research. In chapter 5 we will see the importance of communicative competence and later developments of the construct in second language teaching and learning.

3. SOCIOLINGUISTICS VS. SOCIOLOGY OF LANGUAGE

When in the late 60's sociolinguistics first developed as an academic field of study, two names were given to this still incipient discipline: sociolinguistics and sociology of language, and both terms were used interchangeably. Nowadays, the aim of sociolinguistics is to investigate and describe the relationship between language and society, and stress is placed on language and its role within communication. Sociology of language, however, centers on the study of society and how we can understand it through the study of language, that is, how we can understand social behaviour by means of the study of linguistic practices.

Depending on the scope of analysis, sociolinguistics may try to analyze specific differences of a group of speakers in a speech community at a micro level. In this case the analysis would refer to speech differences in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary within a single speech community in

order to determine some features such as educational background, economic status or social class. In India, for example, there are many castes (traditional social classes in the Hindu society) and there are distinct linguistic practices that distinguish one from another.

Another possibility would comprise a much broader scope of analysis. Sociolinguistics can also refer to a macro level and in that case what interests the researchers is language variation as a human phenomenon that affects large parts of the population. An example of this would be language maintenance when large populations migrate to a different place and the language is preserved because of social factors. Keeping their language can be seen as a sign of identity that distinguishes them from outsiders, or as a source of power as they can communicate without being understood and this can serve trade purposes, for instance. It can also happen that the language just disappears (language attrition) because it becomes a low-prestige language. Another possible scenario may be that the community wishes to blend into the dominant culture or that the number of speakers decreases as they grow old and die. All in all, macro-sociolinguistics applies to wide-ranging human phenomena and is often referred to, as stated before, as sociology of language.

Some authors prefer to talk about micro-sociolinguistics and macro- sociolinguistics and make a distinction between these two parts of sociolinguistics. Sometimes the first is associated with discrete point cases and studies whereas the second is connected with wide ranging situations. Both tendencies, however, are concerned with the same phenomenon —language and society— although at a different scale. Micro-sociolinguistics involves the use of a language as a whole together with another cultural phenomenon that determines the use of language, whereas macro- sociolinguistics deals with language planning, language policy, etc. In Hudson's (1980: 4-5) words sociolinguistics is "the study of language in relation to society, and the sociology of language is the study of society in relation to language".

4. THE ORIGINS OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Most researchers in the field point to Labov's study of vowel change in Martha's Vineyard (1963, 1972) as the beginning of the modern study of language variation. In his investigation of the pronunciation of /ai/ and /au/ among a sample made up of 69 people, Labov found a higher incidence of

centralization among younger participants. In addition, Labov found that inhabitants who had a traditional lifestyle and little contact with the outside world would more likely centralize the aforementioned diphthongs. Martha's Vineyard study is important because it shows that we can learn more about language variation by studying speech across different generations, bearing in mind that younger speakers would readily incorporate new forms of language into their speech. Labov's study also revealed that the speakers' use of Vineyard forms often went hand in glove with their tendency to advocate a traditional way of life. This seminal study was followed by a number of large-scale studies in many different contexts which adopted some of the procedures and methods developed in this study (Bayley, 2013).

Sociolinguistics has spread in the last thirty years together with other branches of linguistics such as psycholinguistics, pragmatics and applied linguistics, which, far from having a descriptive or historical approach to language such as pure or traditional linguistics (syntax, phonetics, etc.), maintain an interest in the interdisciplinarity of the field and the contribution of other branches of the humanities, such as psycholinguistics, pragmatics, history, gender studies, computational linguistics, etc. Sociolinguistics, as a new branch of linguistics emerged together with other developments in applied linguistics and was often considered a "step child", until it finally became a consolidated and fully acknowledged field of research. It comprises various areas of study and research like historical and comparative linguistics, dialectology, and anthropology.

In Europe, sociolinguistics started with the study of historical linguistics and linguistic geography, a sound theoretical background with three main fields of interest: dialectology, regional languages and the linguistic situation of colonized countries (Calvet, 2003). In the USA, however, the study of sociolinguistics emerged from the contact of linguistics with other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. The ethnographic approach of anthropologists, methodology used in social sciences and the analysis of linguistic realization.

Nowadays, sociolinguistics is not only a truly consolidated discipline but it can also be divided into subfields, such as pragmatics, language gender studies, pidgin and creole studies, language planning and policy studies, and education of linguistic minority studies, etc. (Bratt Paulson & Tucker, 2003). According to Shuy (2003: 15), the more recent developments of discourse analysis and

pragmatics are considered as part of sociolinguistics by some scholars whereas others consider them areas of study in themselves. In the same way, there is no full agreement on whether language change is part of sociolinguistics or the other way round. This situation accounts for the variety of approaches and perspectives towards a discipline that is becoming more and more important these days and which now goes from the theoretical perspective to the applied trend in the form of applied sociolinguistics.

5. LANGUAGE VARIATION

Sociolinguistics is all about variation. From a sociolinguistic point of view the most important source of information is the way social and situational factors affect language and make it vary. For example, when two people meet and one starts talking about, let's say, the weather, the other starts getting information about their conversational partner as they sort out the information contained in their speech. One of the first features that can sometimes be identified is the origin, i.e., where does that person come from (geographic variation). If by any chance we happen to distinguish clear features of his/her speech, we will be able to determine his/her place of origin very precisely, if that is not the case, we may just ascertain some characteristics and that will give us a rough idea. The same can happen when specific differences are associated, within a specific speech community, with social, economical, political, religious, cultural or any other situational background. Obviously, linguistic variation does not only affect people from different speech communities but also affects the way people speak or react towards someone else's speech, for example, in terms of gender. In most societies we can identify clear differences in the way males and females speak although in Western societies these differences are not so evident. In terms of power relations the way people use language is affected by the social connection between them, for example between a teacher and a student, and between a boss and an employee, etc.

Another aspect of variation is that it has certain bounds. A speaker can vary his/her speech to some degree, especially to adhere to certain social, economic, religious, etc. class, but s/he cannot vary it beyond certain limits otherwise s/he would be ungrammatical and/or incomprehensible. Speakers

have knowledge of these limits, often unconsciously, although another would be to determine how this knowledge is attained and how it can be described. It is much more subtle than other social norms such as those of turn-taking in conversation or social behaviour. At this point, it would be necessary to point out that linguistic norms are quite often more understated than other social conventions, such as table manners and, therefore, harder to describe, or even perceive. It goes without saying that they are also harder to learn and/or acquire in the case of a Second Language as the learner does not only need to learn the code, i.e., the language but also how to use it properly in diverse situations. Social conventions are usually learned or acquired during childhood and adolescence but these rules can vary from culture to culture and as languages often reflect the way their users understand and perceive their lives, it is often the case that Second Language learners, in their tedious task of learning a non-native language, also need to learn social and linguistic conventions. At times, and depending on the affinity between the languages in contact, it can be easy to deduce linguistic forms and uses from the first language, but it is often not so obvious. As a simple example English speakers understand verbal politeness differently than Spanish speakers, and in terms of frequency British English speakers tend to thank more frequently, in everyday situations, than Peninsular Spanish speakers.

All in all, the aim of sociolinguists is to describe the variations within a language and match these variations with the different groups of people that use them, as well as the corresponding situations. So, sociolinguistics deals especially with variation, among groups, among situations and among places, and the task of the sociolinguist is to find regular patterns of variation in use.

6. SOME INSTANCES OF VARIATION

Labov (2003) states that style shifting is usually correlated to the amount of attention that the speaker pays to his speech. In American English, for instance, the spelling <th> in words like *thing* and *that* can be pronounced as smooth fricative [θ] or [ð], as a lightly or strongly articulated alveolar plosives [t] and [d], as a blend of these two variants, or not pronounced at all

in utterances such as *Gimme 'at book* (*Give me that book*). These forms are used at different levels for different social groups and different regions.

In Black English Vernacular, for instance, we can see some morphological and syntactic markers which are characteristic of this ethnic linguistic variety like the "double negative" in English often used by nonstandard speakers to express negatives emphatically in sentences such as: *Nobody don't know about that* (*Nobody knows anything about that*). Plurals are not marked when preceded by numerals as in *He was here for three year now*, and the genitive is not necessarily marked with /s/ but by position in the sentence, as in *I slept my brother house*. Other peculiarities of Black English Vernacular in the United States is the absence of final third person singular <—s> (e.g. She want, he walk) and the dropping of the verb to be in present tense when used as a copula, (e.g. They real fine). With regards to phonology, we can identify frequent deletion of final /l/, before labials as in *help* [hep], or at the end of words with auxiliaries *he'll be home* [hi bi ho:m]. Also frequent reduction of word-final clusters is common in words like test [tes], *desk* [des], *looked* [luk], and strong initial stress is often found with words of two syllables like *police* ['po:lis], *define* ['di:fain].

Word choice also determines style shifting as the linguistic 'domain' (home, neighborhood, job, church, store, school, etc.) settles the degree of formality in the words used as well as the amount of colloquialisms in a speaker's speech.

Please go to the exercises sections and do exercises 3 and 4.

7. DIACHRONIC VARIATION

Languages change over time and in the same way that some centuries ago languages like Old Germanic developed into new languages such as English, German and Norwegian, in a few centuries we will probably speak a language that will not be English, Spanish or French, but a mixture of them all, especially given the current phenomenon of globalization. Languages are in a constant flux because people use them endlessly and the continuous use makes them change. Spanish, for example, was once a variety of Latin but after centuries of use it developed into a new language as it became widespread and standardised. In the same way, English has not always been the same. If we try to read an Old English (OE) text we can appreciate how the language has changed over past centuries.

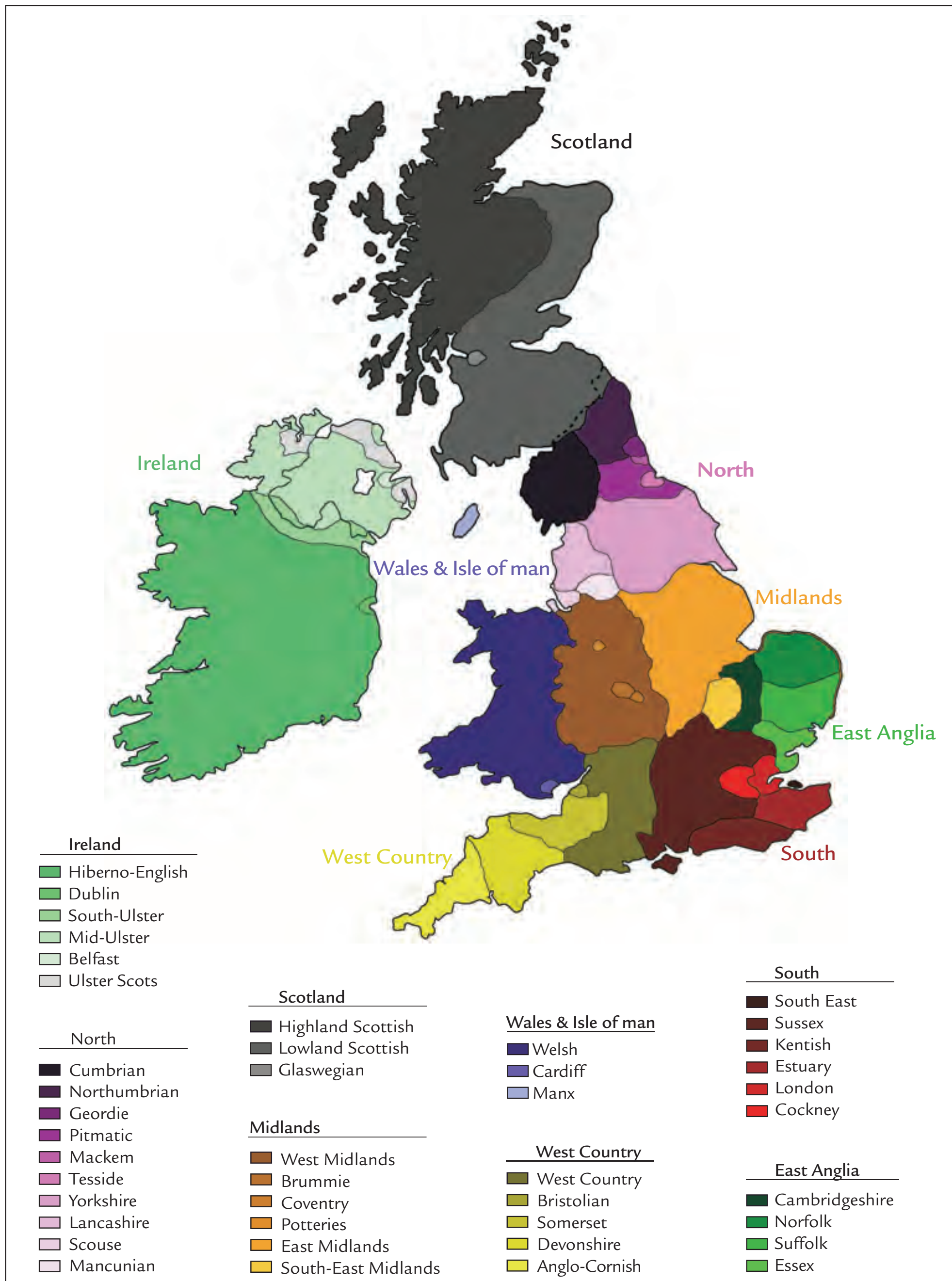

Figure 1. Map of dialects in Great Britain.

Pronunciation also changes in all languages, but it does not vary randomly because the sounds of related languages (a sound change may take many decades or even many centuries to complete) correspond to others in apparently systematic ways. This phenomenon is referred to as ‘sound shift’.

The Danish scholar Rasmus Rask and his follower the German linguist Jacob Grimm in the first quarter of the 19th century succeeded in showing the relationship between Germanic (as Gothic or Old English) and the classical Indo-European languages (Greek, Latin and Sanskrit). They concluded that Germanic was part of the Indo-European language family. They accounted for the differences between Germanic and the classical languages through a set of sound changes. They noticed, for instance, that Proto-Indo-European voiceless stops become voiceless fricatives in Germanic languages. E.g.:

Greek	**Latin**	**Gothic**	**Old English**	**Present-day English**
patér	*pater*	*f*adar	*f*œder	‘father’
treis	*trēs*	*þreis*	*þrī*	'three'

They also discovered that Proto-Indo-European voiced stops become voiceless stops. E.g.:

Greek	**Latin**	**Gothic**	**Old English**	**Present-day English**
*d*éka	*decem*	*taihun*	*tēon*	'ten'

And Proto-Indo-European voiced aspirates /b/ become voiceless stops /p/ or fricatives (depending on the context). E.g.:

Greek	**Latin**	**Gothic**	**Old English**	**Present-day English**
phérō	*ferō*	*baira*	*beoru*	'I carry'

Another area of linguistic change is syntax. Syntactic change affects the patterning of sentences. One instance of syntactic change is the altering of word order from Proto-Indo-European to most contemporary Indo-European languages. Proto-Indo-European was an Object-Verb (OV) language. One example to illustrate this pattern is the the runic inscription on the famous Gallehus horn (Jutland) which dates to the 5th c.:

Ek HlewagastiR Holtijaz horna tawido
I HlewegastiR.NOM Holt.GEN horn.ACC
carve.3rd.Sing.PAST 'I, HlewegastiR son of Holt, carved this horn'.

The syntactic order of the inscription is SOV (*horna* is the object and *tawido* the verb).

Present-day English has changed from Proto-Indo-European in its underlying syntactic structure. In Old English, for example, the pattern SVO affected only the main clause and it was different in the subordinate clause (SOV), as it occurs in present-day German, but over time it has regularized and now the same pattern is used both in the main and in the subordinate clause. There has been a gradual shift from OV to VO in the clause.

Example:

English	That is the bookshop where I bought your book S V O
German	Das ist das Buchgeschäft, in dem ich dein Buch gekauft habe S O V

Syntactic relations in Old English were more similar to present-day German than to present-day English (the same has happened as far as grammar is concerned). English has become an analytic language. A good number of changes between, for example, Old English and Modern English are due to loss of morphological inflections. E.g.:

Old English (OE)	Mit heardum bendum
German (G)	Mit harten Bändern
Present-day English (pde)	With hard bonds

In this example, both Old English and German show the dative plural ending on the adjective as well as the noun (<-*um*>), whereas Modern English only presents the plural marker <-*s*>.

Semantic change offers the most obvious instances as it is one of the most sensitive areas in this respect, as even in short periods of time (a lifetime

or less) word meaning can change totally or partially because it is closely connected with everyday usage and contemporary culture. There are changes in meaning and use. Changes in word meaning are caused by the meeting of new demand of the lexical resources of a language. Change of meaning is closely related to social changes.

Semantic change can be divided into various categories. For example, there can be changes in the range of meanings of a word by means of generalization or specification; new meanings can be added or lost, etc. There are some interesting examples of generalization and specification. When Chaucer spoke of ‘disease’ he didn’t necessarily mean an illness caused by inflection but any kind of discomfort —an absence of ‘ease’(as indeed ‘dis-ease’ suggests). For the Elizabethans science meant what we mean by *knowledge*.

The Old English word *mete* was cognate with Old High German/Middle High German *maz* ‘food, meal, mealtime’ and was used to refer to food of any kind (similar then to OE *fōda* > ME *fōde* > PdE *food*). ME *mēte* could be used to speak of specific types of food when modified by another word as in *flesch-mēte* ‘flesh food’ = ‘meat’ (as opposed to fish). It then became associated to ‘flesh of animals used as food’ = ‘meat’. Another example of specialization occurs with the Old English word *tīd*, cognate with German *Zeit* originally meaning ‘time in general’, ‘a period of time’, and also ‘hour’. It could be employed besides the term *time*. In Middle English it began to be associated with other meanings and differentiated from *time*. Eventually its meaning was reduced to MnE *tide*. The Old English word *feþer* (PdE *feather*) is cognate with OHG (Old High German) *federa* and was used in Middle English in sentences such as ‘wrīte with fetheres’. This word was later replaced by *pen* (PdE *penne*), the Latin word (*penna*) for ‘feather’.

There are pairs (sometimes even trios) of words with identical or similar referential meanings but with different stylistic meaning. The use of one or the other depends on the communication situation. E.g.:

ask	*request* (French requête);
answer	*reply* (French répliquer) — respond (Latin).
belly	*abdomen* (< Latin), stomach (< French estomac < Latin stomachus).

The word stock can also be expanded. Words can be borrowed from other languages, new words can be coined or invented, and new terms can be

created by means of derivation and compounding of existing words. Especially these days, due to the constant phenomenon of globalization and widespread media such as television and the Internet, new words are quickly introduced from other languages (*borrowings*). In the same way, words that used to be part of a specific jargon are now commonplace because they have been introduced in new domains or disciplines (this is especially noticeable in the language of computers with words such as: navigator, web, etc.).

Native words can fall out of use and be replaced by words from other languages or dialects as, for example, the Old English term *earm* 'poor', Early Modern English *arm/ærm*, replaced in Middle English by the French word *p¯overe, poure*. There is also semantic differentiation of originally synonyms, native words and loanwords. One example is the Modern English word heaven which comes from OE *heofon,* whereas PdE *sky* comes from Old Norse *sky* 'cloud'.

Please, go to the exercises section and do exercises 5 and 6.

8. SPEECH COMMUNITY

Several attempts have been made to define what a speech community is but, as frequently happens with other linguistic terms (for example, *dialect*), it is not easy to find a comprehensive definition[1].

For general linguistics, a speech community is a group of people that share the same language or dialect in a specific setting which can be close, such as a city or a neighborhood; or broad, such as a whole country. For sociolinguistics, the issue is a bit more complex than that given the fact that societal and extra linguistic factors are taken into account. We can find instances of speech communities that are very different among them, because the degree of complexity depends on the number of variables involved in the social and linguistic interaction, some of which are the verbal repertoire (i.e. the set of languages, dialects, registers, etc.) and the role repertoire (i.e. the relationship among interlocutors, such as parent-child, teacher-student, employer-employee).

[1] There are some commonly used terms in linguistics, and in sociolinguistics, that are really difficult to define unambiguously in spite of the fact that they are core concepts in the field. *Speech community*, together with *language, dialect, variety*, and *native speaker*, is one of them.

The definition of speech community needs to be sufficiently flexible and abstract to include social groupings as small and localised as neighbourhoods and as broad as countries. A basic criterion for a speech community to be considered as such, is at least one language and, therefore, the term refers to a group of people that could communicate in the same language. Members of a speech community are united by a common end which, in turn, will be different to the ends of other people or groups. Each individual can therefore be a member of a speech community on some occasions and a member of another speech community on other occasions depending on his/her end. The underlying rational is that, because of specific transitory interests, people may sometimes identify themselves as part of one group or speech community and at other times as part of others. All this depends on the situational context. So, each individual has his/her own verbal repertoire (verbal varieties) and each speech community has its own shared speech repertoire.

It is important to take into account that speech communities are not necessarily confined to political boundaries (Swedish is spoken in Sweden but it is also spoken in some parts of Finland), religions (Turkish is spoken in Turkey but also in some parts of Greece, Bulgaria and Romania) or cultures (Bengali is spoken by two groups, in Bangladesh and in India (West Bengal).

Languages are often used by groups of people that share a physical context but also a number of social norms. The relationship among members of a speech community allows the categorisation of differences among users and variation according to certain social variables such as age, gender, job, educational background, etc. These groups of people share at least one language or variety and also some rules and norms for the correct use in communication.

As was suggested above, speech communities do not need to be monolingual, as a matter of fact, bilingual or trilingual speech communities are as common as monolingual ones. Kachru (2001) distinguished four major types of speech communities: *multilingual, bilingual, monolingual and diglossic speech communities.*

a) A **multilingual speech community** recognizes more than two official languages as in Switzerland where French, German and Italian are official languages and are regularly spoken in some parts of the country while not in others (for example, in Zurich most people use German whereas in Geneva most people speak French). In multilingual countries

a contact language is commonly adopted as an ‘official’ language for practical purposes such as, for instance, English in India and Russian in the former USSR.

b) A **bilingual speech community** acknowledges two languages with official status as in Canada or in Belgium. In Canada, bilingualism can be seen in some parts of the country but there are also communities that are essentially monolingual, in either English or French. In Brussels, for example, there are clear divisions in terms of areas where one language or the other is used but bilingualism/multilingualism is also common. For instance, a Brussels citizen may wake up in his/her home neighbourhood, have breakfast with his Flemish speaking family, then go to work to a different part of the city where French is spoken, use this language on public transport and then get to his workplace where s/he is required to speak English.

Spanish is the official language in Spain but in some parts of the country such as the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia there are two official languages and monolingual speakers of Spanish or Basque/Catalan/Galician can be found as well as bilingual speakers.

c) A **monolingual speech community** has only one official language, as Portugal does for example, but this conception is sometimes misleading since monolingual speakers can also have a repertoire of styles, registers or dialects that may be utterly different from the standard.

d) A **diglossic community** would be one where two languages or varieties are functionally complementary. Diglossia often distinguishes between two varieties; one which is used in formal contexts (high variety) and another one that is used in colloquial speech (low variety). Arabic-speaking communities, for example, regularly distinguish between Classical and colloquial Arabic.

Diglossia is often intertwined with bilingualism/multilingualism. In German-speaking Switzerland, for instance, children learn the low variety (Schwyzertüütsch, including some regional dialects of Swiss) and later they acquire the high variety. Something similar happens in the USA among Spanish- speaking immigrant families. Very often children learn Spanish from their parents as their mother tongue and later, when they are schooled, they learn English which will probably be the language they will need in everyday life. As a result, adolescents and adults raised under these conditions may use

Spanish with their parents and grandparents but English at work, or even with their siblings.

As can be deduced from the previous description, it is not easy to explain what can be considered a speech community but there are general guidelines that help. According to Spolsky (1998: 25) a speech community is not limited in terms of location or size but it entails a complex interlocking network of communication, its members sharing knowledge of language use patterns as well as attitudes towards others and themselves, and also sharing a set of language varieties (or repertoires) and norms for using them. Members of the same speech community do not even need to have a comprehensive knowledge, nor even handle, each of the varieties or repertoires that are used within it. Perhaps, belonging to a particular speech community is something that, apart from accommodating some general principles, requires the speakers' tacit self-identification with it on account of aspects such as personal identity or group attitude.

Please go to the exercises section and do exercises 7.

9. STANDARD ENGLISH AND WORLD ENGLISHES

Standard English is a term that refers to the variety of English used by the social elite who are part of a socially, economically and politically dominant group in English-speaking countries. This variety is the one usually preferred in the media and generally taught in schools as it is considered to be 'prestigious'. Non-standard English, on the other hand, refers to those varieties that do not conform to the standard spoken by formally educated native speakers in terms of pronunciation, grammatical structure, idiomatic usage, or choice of words. The existence of a standard is characteristic of most languages around the world and it is related to those groups of people that can be said to be literate, school- oriented and looking beyond the primary community networks for social and linguistic models. The standard of any language is usually associated not only with a socially, culturally and economically dominating group but also with geographic variation, i.e., in the regions where institutional and economic power is located or more developed. Defining and delimiting a standard is not always easy or even possible as different varieties can be considered a standard in distant countries or regions. So, it is not to say that the RP (Received Pronunciation) which is generally considered the standard in England is the

same as the English standard in Ireland, Australia or the USA, where there are also a set of features including pronunciation, grammatical structure, idiomatic usage and choice of words that is characteristic of formally educated speakers, the language of formal instruction, the institutions and the media. There has also been a demand for other local standards —Indian, South African, Nigerian, Jamaican, etc.— and whenever these varieties vary from one another and from British and American Standard English in the way British and American vary from each other they can be counted as standard English, what really matters is the way the variety is used socially. It must be added that on some occasions it is not clear whether a variety of English is to be considered as standard or not.

The dispersal, or diaspora, of English speakers over the world can be divided into two phases. The **first diaspora** involved the migration of around 25,000 people from England, Scotland and Ireland to North America, Australia and New Zealand. The varieties of English used nowadays in these places are not identical with those spoken by the early colonisers but they can be said to share some general features[2] and these varieties have developed through history incorporating vocabulary from the indigenous languages they came into contact with. The **second diaspora** occurred at different moments during the 18th and 19th centuries with different results from the first dispersal. The spread of English in Africa took place differently for West Africa as opposed to East Africa. English in West Africa is linked to the slave trade and the development of pidgin and creole languages. Since the 15th century, British traders travelled to and from the west coast of Africa but there was no settlement in the areas today comprising Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon. This situation favoured the use of English as a *lingua franca* among indigenous language speakers and English-speaking traders. Some of the pidgins and creoles that developed from English contact are now widely used, mostly as a second language, as it is the case of Krio (Sierra Leone) and Cameroon Pidgin (Cameroon). In East Africa the spread of English was very different because in 1850 English colonizers settled in places like

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[2] It should be mentioned that the different linguistic backgrounds of the early settlers in many cases gave way to differences and variations in speech. For example, the early settlers of Virginia came mainly from the west part of England and rhotic /r/ and voiced /s/ sounds were characteristic of their speech. However, early settlers in New England mainly came from the east of England and did not share these pronunciation features. In the case of Australia and New Zealand, there were waves of colonisers from different parts to the British Isles. This meant that different dialects came into contact resulting in a situation of dialect mixing, further influenced by the indigenous aboriginal languages.

Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe[3]. The role of English in these countries was very obvious and this language was used in the government, education and the law. In the second half of the 20th c. these countries gained independence and English was kept as an official language in some of them (Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi), and as a second language in others. Swahili is a bantu language with a lot of Arabic loanwords (there are conflicting studies on whether or not it's an arabic-based creole). It is also used as a *lingua franca* in Uganda and Kenya, and the only official language in Tanzania. It is also a *lingua franca* in Easte DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo). During the second half of the 18th c. English was extensively introduced in South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, etc.) due to British trade interests in the area. Simultaneously, British influence extended to South-East Asia and the South Pacific due to the seafaring expeditions of Cook and others expanding to Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and the Philippines and the Pacific islands like Papua New Guinea where another pidgin developed: Tok Pisin. (See chapter 3).

Y. Kachru (1992) developed a model of the spread of English that has been highly influential in the field of sociolingustics. He divides World Englishes into three concentric circles: the **Inner circle**, the **Outer circle** and the **Expanding circle**. These three areas stand for the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the position of the English language in the different cultural contexts as the language has travelled from Britain to the US, Australia and New Zealand in the first diaspora (the Inner Circle), to countries like Zambia, Pakistan, India, etc. in the second diaspora (the Outer Circle), and, more recently, to countries where English is learned and used as a Foreign Language, for instance, Spain, Japan, Germany, etc. (the Expanding Circle) [4].

[3] The situation in Tanzania (Tanganyka and Zanzibar) was a bit different because it was never a British colony, but rather a German protectorate. The British arrived there around 1920 and never really had a colonial presence in the country. This is why Tanzania easily switched to Swahili after independence.

[4] In the model set out by Kachru (1992), the Inner Circle includes: USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Outer Circle contains: Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Zambia. And, the Expanding Circle comprises: China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, USSR, Zimbabwe. This division is not clear cut as South Africa, for instance, is not included. Some authors would agree that it is part of the Inner Circle while others would say that it is part of the Outer Circle, since English in South Africa is not predominantly used by first-language speakers.

With reference to the status of these languages in relation to the standard, the English spoken in the Inner Circle would be considered as 'norm-providing', i.e., it represents a model and is used as a native language; the English spoken in the Outer Circle could be considered 'norm-developing', that is, used in countries where the variety of English is in the process of being accepted (or has been recently adopted), and is spoken as a SL alongside other indigenous languages; and, the Expanding Circle would be 'norm-dependent' because it is learned as a FL and the standard is taken as it is.

English spoken in the Inner Circle shows clear patterns of variation both in terms of geographical and social differences which have long been studied by dialectologists especially in Great Britain and North America[5].

The varieties of English spoken in Outer Circle countries have been called New Englishes. Although this term is controversial and not all specialists agree with it, it is certain that the Englishes of India, Nigeria, Singapore, and Tanzania, together with many other outer-circle countries share some superficial linguistic characteristics that make it convenient to describe them as a group distinct from varieties such as British, American, Australian, New Zealand, etc. These outer-circle varieties are normally spoken as part of a multilingual repertoire that may include a number of other languages spoken in different circumstances (mother tongue, first language, *lingua franca,* etc.). This means that on some occasions English proficiency is not comprehensive: there can be registers, domains or styles not covered by the speaker of English as a SL in the Outer Circle, or even variation in terms of proficiency among the speakers (see the example of India in chapter 5). In terms of phonology, varieties in the Outer Circle tend to have a simplified system, for example, in the case of vowels where the vowel qualities normally approximate to those of the other languages spoken by the speakers. The same happens with some consonants as these other languages often do not have the sounds /θ/ and /ð/, which are replaced with some dental or alveolar stop. In terms of syntax some features are also shared by languages in the Outer Circle but not found in the Inner Circle. This is the case with tag questions which are rather complex in BrE and AmE but largely simplified in other varieties, but many varieties of the outer-circle use a single phrase or a few variants for this function that do not need to pay attention to the type of auxiliary used or if the tag is attached to a

[5] For a more detailed analysis of the varieties of English spoken in Great Britain and North America, you can read Melchers and Shaw (2003).

positive or negative sentence. For instance, in India this tag can be simplified as *no*? or *isn't it*? on all occasions, or not so? in East and West Africa. With reference to lexis, singular words referring to plural concepts tend to be simplified and treated as ordinary singulars with a general sense (e.g., *luggage, furniture, software*, etc.).

In the Expanding Circle, English will not be used for official purposes such as the language of general formal education, religion, courts and the law, national politics or administration, literature, etc. but it can be used in international relations, international organisations, research, education at specialised levels, publicity and business, among other functions. In the Expanding Circle governments often have policies to safeguard the status of the national or local languages, regulating the use of English in education and the media. However, English is also perceived as a useful language, and the advantages of being proficient in it are clear. This often means that parents want their children to learn English and pupils also perceive the potential benefits of being proficient in the language. This fact is especially manifest in eastern European countries that want to join the developed western economies, and countries within the EU where there is a clear need to speak international languages that allow people communicate and operate in this wide job market.

In terms of the linguistic features of English used in the Expanding Circle, it must be added that there is a marked tendency to use a standardised variety like BrE and AmE. However, two stages can be perceived, one in which the clear influence exerted by one variety favours the use of that variety (for example when films and TV programs are not dubbed), and another one where the interchangeable influence of these two varieties gives way to what is often called 'mid-Atlantic' English, that is, when features from British and American usage are mixed because learners are overtly exposed to both varieties (e.g., at the word level the following words can be used indistinctively: *candy - sweets, trunk - boot, lift - elevator, autumn - fall,* etc.). Some other features of the same phenomenon can be found in spelling, for instance, where learners do not follow one of the varieties consistently (e.g., when someone writes *neighbor* and *colour*, or *analyze* and *analyse*, etc.). Another possibility may be that students who receive the influence of BrE through their formal education but the influence of AmE through the music and the media. At the pronunciation level, this possible mixture of American and British pronunciation can be added to features derived from the speaker's mother tongue, so that standardisation is rather difficult and unlikely. Finally, in terms of lexis, under

these circumstances there is a clear risk of allowing interference between English and the mother tongue in the case of *false friends*, i.e., words in both languages that show some sort of formal similarities but which vary greatly in meaning. This phenomenon results either in miscommunication or in the use of words that acquire a new meaning in 'local English' (e.g., more and more frequently in Spanish the word *influenciar* is heard on the news instead of *influir*, or the word *secretario* instead of *ministro* when referring to the North American or British government, i.e., British Foreign Secretary). Another interesting phenomenon is the increasing presence of loan words from English and how they influence other modern languages.

Please go to the exercises section and do exercise 9.

10. CARRING OUT SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH

Any adult speaker of a language has accumulated enough experience to know that their own language is not used in the same way by different speakers in their speech community. It depends on the interlocutor's social or geographic background and other factors such as age, sex or education. This means that every speaker will show some degree of stylistic variation depending on (a) the relations of power or solidarity with the interlocutor; (b) the social context (domain) where the conversation is taking place: at home, in school, in the workplace, neighborhood; and (c) the topic: academic, professional, trifling. These variables determine that a researcher willing to search into the matter and analyze the way people speak and why, will need to devise some way to collect data with a transparent, systematic and unambiguous method in order to get reliably non-biased data.

Sociolinguists at work are looking for commonly accepted rules and patterns that account for variations in speech (these can be in the form of pronunciation, word choice, grammatical complexity, or language choice among others) based on some determining factors such a age, gender, level of education, place of origin, etc. and also depending on the nature of the encounter (place and topic). Bearing this in mind, the sociolinguist at work may need to elicit information or merely observe a communicative situation. Some other factors such as validity come into play because the sociolinguist cannot assume that the informants are not lying or simply impersonating an accent or using words different to the ones they would use in a real

situation. This is not necessarily done on purpose but it is perfectly possible that a speaker, on noticing that his/her speech is being analysed, changes it unconsciously, or just tries to make his/her speech clearer, whereas the perhaps less than clear, natural language is precisely what the sociolinguist wants to record and study. It is necessary to get reliable information about a linguistic phenomenon which has ecological validity, i.e. it represents a true sample of the way communication takes place without any type of interference on the part of the researcher.

Intrusion can result not only from the presence of the researcher or any unexpected device but also from the alteration, no matter how subtle it may be, of the situation or the environment. This brings about a methodological problem pointed out by William Labov which was about how we might observe the way people speak when the researcher is not there and in situations that might be private (e.g. at home, business meeting) and, difficult to analyze. Labov refers to this bone of contention as the observer's paradox. Nevertheless, this type of methodological problem is not exclusive to sociolinguistic research[6] and there are ways to minimize it.

Some decades ago it was a common practice to record telephone or other types of conversation without asking for permission. Taking into account the ethical and legal issues that arise regarding the fairness of using "hidden" devices or sources of information such as secret recordings in natural settings, the sociolinguist needs to find adequate mechanisms to elicit information that is genuine and lawful.

Early sociolinguistic research was based on the use of questionnaires to collect data on attitudes and behaviours where, for instance, the informant had to choose one option out of several, for example to discriminate one word from another or one specific pronunciation from others. This technique is perfectly valid and useful depending on the aim of the study and the type of subjects (age, cultural bounds, place, etc.) and, obviously the data obtained is easily statistically analysable. While very convenient for gathering demographic data on the subjects under study, this research technique presents several shortcomings. On the one hand, it creates a very unnatural situation and informants may just answer in the way they think the researcher wants them

[6] In English Language Teaching, the same issue arises with regard to research withinthe classroom because students knowing they are being observed may change their behaviour and their performance.

to, or the other way round, and, on the other hand, as the questionnaire has been planned in advance there is little room, if any, to gather information that was not taken into account when it was designed. In that respect, the interview has some advantages due to the flexibility of the situation. Questionnaires are very useful for gathering demographic information from the informants.

Another possibility would be face-to-face interviews (sociolinguistic interview) but we know that when we are asking questions and receiving answers our interlocutor's speech is being either carefully planned or at least modified because of the circumstances and s/he has a less casual style than he possibly uses when he/she is among friends or with his/her family. It may also happen that the researcher concentrates his/her attention on something while neglecting another interesting aspect. Sociolinguistic interviews are time- and effort-consuming, and not always suitable because if they are not properly directed they may not be a good way to elicit information. However, there are some techniques that can be used to obtain casual speech in such situations and, which can minimize the presence of the interviewer.

As a case in point, in the last few years new advances in lexicography are trying to incorporate common language use and high frequency language in English Language Teaching materials. So, there is a need not only to analyze large written and spoken corpora from the media but also to compile and examine data coming from everyday speech. To this aim, a very recent research technique consists of providing informants with small high-capacity recording devices that they carry all the time and which are recording every thing they say. It seems that after a period of familiarisation, people tend to get used to them and often forget about the fact that they are being recorded. These informants do not usually know about the aim of research and, therefore, the validity of the method and the reliability of the collected data increases.

In the early 1970s William Labov conducted seminal research in three New York department stores and collected data using non-intrusive techniques. He wanted to find out why the final /r/ is not always pronounced in final position in words such as car or bar. Labov selected three stores located in different areas of the city and which entailed (a) a fashionable shopping area; (b) a middle-class store; and, (c) a store dealing in low-price goods. A researcher systematically asked questions to salespeople at the three stores and showed that variation was systematic due to a matter of social status. He worked

on the assumption that the sales-people's accents reflected those of their customers, and his research technique consisted in a researcher visiting the different stores and asking a salesperson for goods that were located on the fourth floor. Then, pretending he had not heard the answer the interviewer would get a second, more emphatic response. All the pronunciations of the word 'four' were analyzed and contrasted with other relevant information such as gender, approximate age, etc. of each interviewee. 264 interviews were carried out in each department store[7].

As was suggested above, much sociolinguistic research is based on the collection of large amounts of data and the later statistical analysis of this data in order to find general tendencies or regularities. Nonetheless, there is some tension between quantitative and qualitative approaches to sociolinguistic research. Ethnographers follow a different approach and therefore the procedures are very different. They base their research on case studies (Ethnographic approach) and that is why they carefully observe single cases and they contrast the patterns of behaviour that they find with those of other communities or societies. Due to the type of analysis they make, usually based on recordings, statistical analysis is not normally possible. Although some tension can be perceived between these two approaches (quantitative and qualitative), each study has idiosyncratic characteristics and specific aims and may require one or the other but it is often the case that the researcher needs to be eclectic and combine the statistical analysis of data with personal interviews in order to gain reliability, to contrast his/her findings, or simply as a complementary research technique.

All in all, there are different approaches towards sociolinguistic research in terms of both elicitation techniques and data analysis and each type of research requires a different design. It is often the case that more than one elicitation technique is needed

[7] Labov, William (1966). *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*.Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

11. EXERCISES

1. Analyse the following conversations from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. What can you deduce about the interlocutors? How?

—'I can lick you!'

—'I'd like to see you try it.'

—'Well, I can do it.'

—'No you can't, either.'

—'Yes I can.'

—'No you can't.'

—'I can.'

—'You can't.'

—'Can.'

—'Can't.'

—An uncomfortable pause. Then Tom said:

—'What's your name?'

—'Tisn't any of your business, maybe.'

—'Well, I 'low I'll *make* it my business.'

—'Well, why don't you?'

—'If you say much I will.'

—'Much — much — much! There, now.'

—'Oh, you think you're mighty smart, *don't* you? I could lick you with one hand tied behind me, if I wanted to.'

—'Well, why don't you *do* it? You *say* you can do it.'

—'Well, *I will*, if you fool with me.'

—'Oh, yes — I've seen whole families in the same fix.'