Chapter 7

Language and variation

7.1 Introduction

The study of **language variation** is an important part of **sociolinguistics**, to the extent that it requires reference to social factors. Languages vary from one place to another, from one social group to another, and from one situation to another, and these are the main topics of this chapter. They are treated in § 6.2 *Geographical variation*, § 6.3 *Social variation*, and § 6.4 *Contextual variation*, respectively. Language variation is a political issue, which is treated in § 6.5 *Language policy in Asia and Africa*.

7.1.1 Linguistic items and varieties

We talk and write about **languages**, **dialects**, **sociolects, accents**, **jargons**, **registers**, and so on and so forth, but none of these terms can be taken for granted and many of them are difficult to define in a satisfactory way.

For example, if *dialect* is defined as a geographical subdivision of a *language*, we do not come very far without a definition of *language*, and *subdivision* is not a very clear concept, either. As the British linguist Richard Hudson writes, the «discussion will be easier if we have some technical terms to use, as we need to distance ourselves somewhat from the concepts represented by the words *language* and *dialect*, which are a reasonable reflection of our lay culture, called 'common-sense knowledge' […], but not helpful in sociolinguistics.»[1]

Therefore, we need to start our discussion with a terminology that does not take very much for granted. Our most basic terms will be **linguistic item** and **variety**.

7.1.1.1 LINGUISTIC ITEM

Sociolinguists in most cases study social distribution of particular **linguistic items**, for example *words*, *sounds*, or *grammatical constructions*. Let us give some examples of linguistic items.

The English pronouns *yous* '2nd person plural' and *you* '2nd person singular or plural' are linguistic items, and they have different social distributions; the former is found in certain non-standard varieties of English, while the latter occurs *inter alia* in all standard varieties and some other non-standard varieties.

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[1] Page 21 in Richard Hudson 1996: *Sociolinguistics*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

If you take a look at a dialect atlas of England,[2] you will find that roughly, the word *child* is used in southern England and in Midland, while *bairn* is used in northern England. *Child* and *bairn* are different linguistic items.

In England, the sound /ʌ/, as in *sun* /ˈsʌn/, is a typical southern sound, found in southern England and in South Midland, while this sound is not used among speakers of dialects in North Midland and northern England, where, for example, the word *sun* is pronounced /ˈsʊn/, with the sound /ʊ/, which is found in *put* /ˈpʊt/ in most dialects also in the South (some areas have /ʌ/). The English phonemes /ʌ/ and /ʊ/ are different linguistic items.

The suffix –*ing* of written English, as in *coming*, is pronounced /ɪŋ/ and /ɪn/, as in /ˈkʌmɪŋ/ and /ˈkʌmɪn/, and the two pronunciations have different social distributions: the former is a typical standard pronunciation and the latter a typical non-standard pronunciation. The English suffixes /ɪŋ/ and /ɪn/ are different linguistic items.

In the English dialects of England, the most widespread past tense of *catch* /ˈkætʃ/ is *catched* /ˈkætʃt/, while the standard dialect and some other dialects have *caught* /ˈkɔːt/. The English past tense forms *catched* /ˈkætʃt/ and *caught* /ˈkɔːt/ are different linguistic items.

Give it to me! is an example of a Standard English grammatical construction, with a verb (here in the imperative) followed by a pronoun referring to a *patient* and a prepositional phrase containing the preposition *to* plus a pronoun referring to a *recipient*. In traditional dialects of England, this construction is not very common, being found primarily in the South-west and in some areas on the south-eastern coast (including the London area). The construction with the widest geographical distribution in England is *Give me it!* and *Give it me!* These three sentences, *Give it to me!*, *Give me it!*, and *Give it me!*, are instances of three different grammatical constructions, each of which is a linguistic item.

7.1.1.2 VARIETY

There are many ways of speaking, and each way of speaking is a **variety**. In a more precise manner, a variety may be defined as *a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution*.[3]

It should be emphasized that a variety is not necessarily a «full-fledged language», with a large vocabulary and grammar. It may simply be a small set of linguistic items, as is the case with a *slang*, which may typically be defined as a quite restricted set of new words and new meanings of older words, mixed with linguistic items with a much larger social distribution; cf. § 6.3.2. and (1g) on the next page.

In (1), we have given some examples of sentences in different varieties of language. On the basis of these examples, we can ask some of the central questions of this chapter, like: *Do these varieties represent the same or different languages? Do these varieties represent the same or different dialects of the same language?* – and so on. More concretely, one could for example ask how many different languages are represented in (1), and there is no unique answer.

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[2] A very good one is Clive Upton and J. D. A. Widdowson 1996: *An Atlas of English dialects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Most of the examples in § 6.1.1.1 are taken from this book.
[3] Cf. Richard Hudson (ibid.).

(1) *Varieties of language*

(a)	*Standard English*. No one has gone to the post office yet.
(b)	*Jamaican Creole* .Nobadi no gaan a puos yet. 'No one has gone to the post office yet.'
(c)	*Southern US white Non-Standard dialect from Atlanta*. Nobody don't like a boss hardly. 'Hardly anybody likes a boss.'
(d)	*New Guinea Pidgin (Tok Pisin)*. Papa, min bin mekim sin long God na long yu. 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you.'
(e)	*Older Standard English of the 'King James version' Bible*.Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.
(f)	*Scots, from Leith*. When ah wis a boy ma mither an faither died. 'When I was a boy my mother and father died.'
(g)	*Standard English & English slang (*ball-ache*)* Walking 5 miles to work is a real *ball-ache*. 'Walking 5 miles to work is really inconvenient.'
(h)	*Chadian Spoken Arabic of Ulâd Eli.*' Amm Muusa daxalat zeribt al-bagar. 'Mûsa's mother entered the enclosure of the cows.'
(i)	*Moroccan Spoken Arabic*.B□iːt nəkri sayyara lmuddət usbuːʕ. 'I would like to hire a car for a week.'
(j)	*Standard Maltese*.Mart is-sultan marida afna. 'The sultan's wife is very ill.'
(k)	*Standard Written Arabic*.Ra'aytu nāsan □ayra sukkāni Makkata. 'I saw people who were not the inhabitants of Mecca.'

The varieties in (1a) – (1g) may all be called *English* is some sense, but it is not at evident that these varieties represent the same language. Likewise, the varieties in (1h) – (1k) may be characterized as Arabic, but this does not necessarily mean that only one language is involved, and what we have referred to here as one variety, *Standard Written Arabic* in (1p), may be divided into at least two different varieties, *Classical Arabic* (the language of the *Qur'ān* and writers like Ibn Khaldūn) and *Modern Literary Arabic* (the language of modern newspapers and many modern authors).

7.2 Geographical variation: language and dialect

We often talk about the *Chinese language*, the *Hindi language*, the *Arabic language*, and the *Fula language*, without thinking about how problematic these terms are. Of course, they are not at all meaningless, but their meanings are often rather different from what is generally assumed.

7.2.1 Fula: A dialect continuum

We shall take a look at *Fula* language, which is spoken in 17 countries, most of them in West Africa, especially in Sahel, the savanna belt south of the Sahara desert, from Mauritania and Senegal in the west, through Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and neighboring countries areas; cf. MAP 1.[4] The Fula speaking area is not geographically continuous; there are many Fula speaking areas across Sahel, interrupted by areas where hundreds of other languages are spoken.

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[4] There may be close to 20 million first language speakers of Fula and more than 7 million second language speakers.
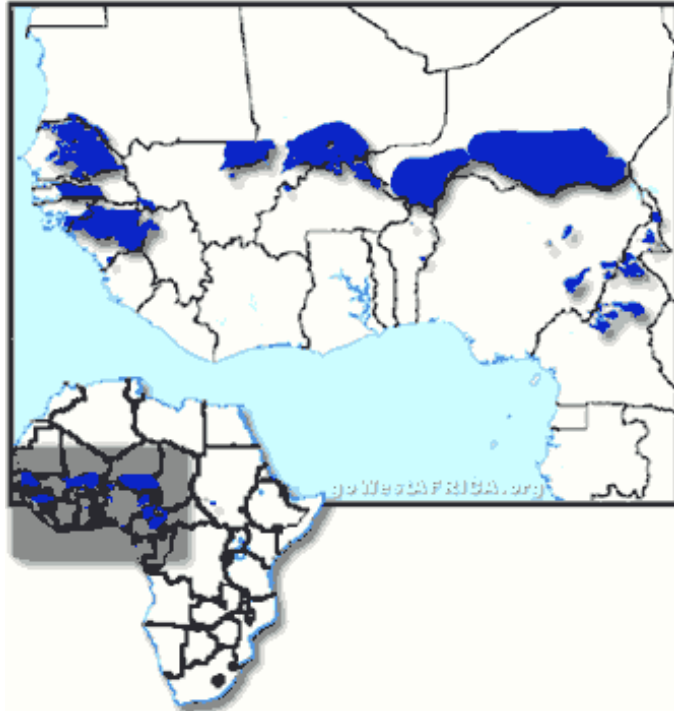
MAP 1. *The main Fulani of West Africa are dark (blue) on the map*.

7.2.2 Dialect

It is generally assumed that Fula is a **language**, that is, *a single language*, with a number of **dialects**. In this sense, a **dialect** is regarded as a geographical variety of a language, spoken in a certain area, and being different in some linguistic items from other geographical varieties of the same language.

This definition of dialect is in common use among linguists, and differs from a usage found in several European language communities among non-linguists, where *dialect* is often used about «provincial» varieties that differ from the **standard dialect**, which is then regarded as the «proper language»; we shall come back to the standard dialect in § 6.2.6. The standard dialect is then regarded as the «non-dialectal» variety of the language.

The dialect definition presented above is problematic in an important way: It presupposes a satisfactory definition of *a language*, but such a definition does not exist. We shall come back to this problem in the following.

7.2.3 Dialect continuum

The different Fula speaking areas in West Africa may be referred to as **dialect areas**, and there are between ten and fifteen major dialect areas. The most important ones are found in (i) northern Senegal and southern Mauritania, (2) Guinea, (3) Mali, (4) Burkina Faso, western Nigeria, and western Niger, (5) central Nigeria, and (6) eastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon. When speakers from neighboring dialect areas meet, they can communicate with each other without problems, each one her or his native variety. However, if a Fula speaker from one end of West Africa meets a Fula speaker from the other end, there may be problems, although communication is still possible, perhaps with some exceptions (speakers from eastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon

would have difficulties in understanding a speaker from Guinea), and depending to a certain extent upon individual speakers—everybody is not equally good at understanding dialects differing from their own.[5] Undoubtedly, the Fula speaking areas of West Africa can be described as a **dialect continuum**, which may be defined as follows:[6]

> A **dialect continuum** is a chain of dialects, let us say dialects 1–10, with the following property: Speakers of dialect 1 understand dialect 2 extremely well. Speakers of dialect 1 and dialect 3 understand each other rather less well, and speakers of dialect 1 and dialect 4 less well again. There comes to a point, however, say at dialect 5, where dialect 1 is no longer intelligible to the local people and vice versa.

There are many dialect continua around the world. For example, the rural dialects of Portugal, Spain, France, and Italy constitute a dialect continuum. There is always mutual intelligibility between the dialects of neighboring villages, throughout the area, although the intelligibility decreases as the distance increases. Another European dialect continuum is found in Scandinavia, where there is always intelligibility among neighboring dialects of the North Germanic language area of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The Arabic dialects from Morocco to Iraq also constitute a dialect continuum, and so does also a large part of the Indo-Aryan language area of northern India.

Let us go back to the definition of **dialect** for a minute. One might try to formulate a new definition on the basis of the dialect continuum phenomenon, instead of on the basis of *a language*, proposing that a dialect is one of several mutually intelligible geographical varieties. Now, there are many «languages» that are mutually intelligible, for example Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian, or several of the Turkic languages, including Turkish and its closest neighbors, and our new definition of *dialect* forces us to claim that these «languages» are in a «dialect relationship» to each other. This may be quite meaningful, because, as we shall come back to, «languages» may emerge on several places along a dialect continuum, and the number may even vary at different times.

7.2.4 Isoglosses

What makes dialects—as well as languages—different is their differing sets of *linguistic items*. Take a look at TABLE 1 (next page) with some words from three different Fula dialects, *Fuuta Tooro* (Senegal / Mauritania), *Maasina* (Mali), and *Aadamaawa* (Nigeria / Cameroon).

The two first words in TABLE 1, those meaning 'land' and 'book', shows a case where the geographically central dialect of Maasina has different forms from the geographically peripheral dialects of Fuuta Tooro and Aadamaawa. This indicates that an innovation has taken place in the Maasina dialect, which has changed the fricatives /f/ and /s/ (the only fricatives in most dialects of Fula) into /w/ and /j/ (written *y*) in coda position (cf. § 2.4.5 *Syllables*). It is possible to show on a map the geographical distribution of those varieties of Fula that has fricatives in coda position and those

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[5] The author of this chapter has personal experiences in this respect. First, he learnt the Fula dialect of eastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon. Some years later he went to Mali and experienced that he could communicate quite well with Fula speakers there. The main problems were at the lexical level.

[6] Adopted from William Downes 1998: *Language and Society*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

varieties that do not, and the border between the former varieties and the latter varieties is referred to as an **isogloss**.

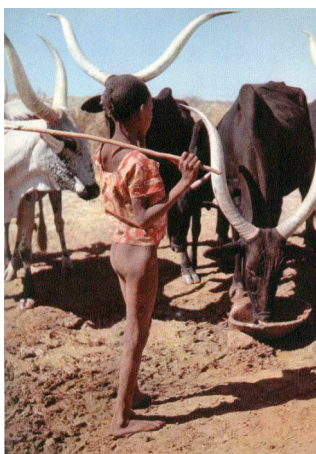| MEANING	FUUTA TOORO	MAASINA	AADAMAAWA
'land'	lesdi	leydi	lesdi
'book'	deftere	dewtere	deftere
'to write'	winndude	winndude	winndugo
'writes'	winndat	winndan	winndan

TABLE 1. *Words from three Fula dialects*

PHOTO 1. *A Fulani shepherd*

Another dialectal difference in Fula is the one between those dialects where the infinitive suffix is –*de* and those where it is –*go*. Here we can observe that Aadamaawa differs from Maasina and Fuuta Tooro. Consequently, there is an isogloss between Aadamaawa and the two others. Historically, Aadamaawa is the innovating dialect.

Finally, Fuuta Tooro differs from Maasina and Aadamaawa by having the active habitual suffix –*at*, while the two others have –*an*. There is an isogloss separating Fuuta Tooro from the two other dialects. Historically, Maasina and Aadamaawa have innovated: they do not allow word final suffixes ending in /t/ any more.

In FIG. 1, we have drawn a schematic map showing the mentioned isoglosses and how they separate the three dialects.
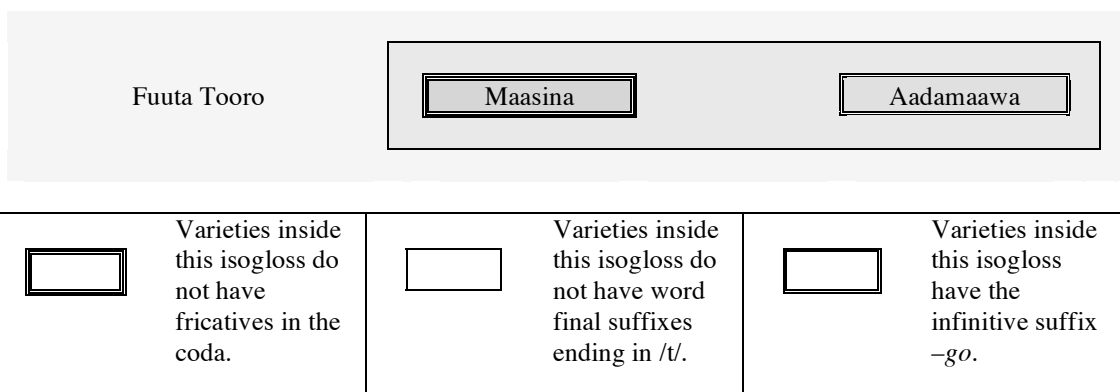

FIG. 1. *Fula isoglosses*

7.2.5 *Abstand* languages and *Ausbau* languages

The German sociolinguistic Heinz Kloss has introduced the fruitful distinction between **Abstand languages** or *languages by distance* and **Ausbau languages** or *languages by extension*, which has been further elaborated by the British sociolinguist Peter Trudgill.[7] Let us explain the difference between them with some examples.

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[7] Cf. for example Peter Trudgill 1997: Norwegian as a normal language. P. 151–158 in Unn Røyneland (ed.): *Language contact and language conflict*. Volda: Volda College.

7.2.5.1 KOREAN: AN ABSTAND LANGUAGE

Everybody regards **Korean** as *a language*. It is relatively homogeneous, with good mutual intelligibility among speakers from different areas.[8] Furthermore, the Korean dialects could never reasonably be regarded as dialects of any other language; it is not even genetically related to any of its immediate neighbors. Many scholars regard Korean and Japanese as being genetically related, but the their relationship is very distant. They are much more distant than for example English and French.

Korean can be regarded as a independent language because it is a 'language by distance'. It is a relatively homogeneous dialect cluster that is only distantly related to other languages. There is also only one Korean written standard language. There are some minor orthographic divergences between North and South Korea that have arisen since the division in 1945, but the spellings are not diverse enough to justify talking about two different languages. Cf. § 6.5.2.

MAP 2. *Korea*

7.2.5.2 TURKIC AUSBAU LANGUAGES

MAP 3. *Central Asia*.

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[8] Cf. Ho-Min Sohn 1999: *The Korean Language*. (Cambridge Language Surveys.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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As mentioned in Ch. 4, *Language families*, the Turkic language family has two main branches, **r-Turkic** and **z-Turkic** (or *Common Turkic*). Among the z-Turkic languages are **Turkmen**, **Uzbek**, **Kazakh**, **Kirgiz**, and **Uighur**, which are spoken across a huge continuous area in Central Asia; cf. Map 3. In the introduction of *Central Asia Phrasebook*,[9] we are told:

> As one travels throughout the Turkic heart and periphery of Central Asia it becomes abundantly clear that the Turkic languages are really dialects of one another and not distinct languages at all. This means that in learning one, all the rest are understandable to a large degree. Herein lies the fun and the challenge.

To illustrated how close these languages are, we have included Table 2, which shows the numbers from 1 to 10 in Turkish and the five languages mentioned above.[10] As a speaker of for example Norwegian will notice, the numerals do not differ more between these languages than numerals in different Norwegian dialects.

	Turkish	Turkmen	Uzbek	Kazakh	Kirgiz	Uighur
1	bir	bir	bir	bir	bir	bir
2	iki	iki	iki	iki	eki	ikki
3	üç	üç	üç	üş	üç	üç
4	dört	dört	tört	tort	tört	töt
5	beş	bäş	beş	bes	beş	bäş
6	altı	altı	altı	altë	altë	altä
7	yedi	yedi	yetti	jeti	jeti	yättä
8	sekiz	sekiz	säkkiz	segiz	segiz	säkkiz
9	dokuz	dokuz	toqquz	toğëz	toğuz	toqquz
10	on	on	on	on	on	on

Table 2. *The numerals from 1 to 10 in some Turkic languages.*

These Turkic languages constitute a continuum of closely related dialects. If the political situation had been different, the number of languages could also have been different. As Peter Trudgill (1997 : 152) writes, most languages, «have arisen out of dialect continuum situations and are considered separate languages for reasons that are by no means entirely linguistic». These are the typical *Ausbau languages*.

Counting 'languages' in the Turkic dialect continuum implies more or less counting **standard languages**, which are treated in the next paragraph.

7.2.6 Standard languages

The adjective **standard** means 'recognized as correct or acceptable', and a **standard language** is a variety that in different ways is recognized as more correct and acceptable than other varieties. In many ways, **standard variety** is an equally appropriate designation. It has the following prototypical properties:

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[9] Justin Jon Rudelson 1998: *Central Asia Phrasebook. Languages of the Silk Road*. Hawthorn: Lonely Planet.

[10] The orthographies of the individual languages have been adjusted to that of Turkish, to make the similarities between them even clearer.

- It is the variety of used by educated users, e.g. those in the professions, the media, and so on.
- It is the variety defined in dictionaries, grammars, and usage guides.
- It is regarded as more correct and socially acceptable than other varieties.
- It enjoys greater prestige than dialects and non-standard varieties: non-standard varieties are felt to be the province of the less educated.
- It is used as a written language.
- It is used in important functions in the society – in the government, the parliament, courts, bureaucracy, education, literature, trade, and industry.

The **written language** plays an important role in this connection. In general, only standard languages have a stable written form, which is what is general taught in schools.

It is very important to be aware of the fact that not all languages have a standard variety, and that standard varieties rise and fall. The reverse of standardization is *dialectization*. In a European context, Scots, Low German, and Occitan / Provençal have been standard languages earlier, but they are no longer, and tend to be regarded as subordinate to English, High German, and French, respectively.

7.3 Social variation: sociolect and slang/jargon

It should have come as no surprise that language varies geographically. We are not surprised to hear that people who live far from each other speak more differently than people who live close to each other, because those who live close to each other have more contact with each other than those who live far away from each other.

The terms **closeness** and **distance** originally come from the spatial domain (cf. § 2.2.1 *Domains*), but *metaphorically* they have been transferred to the social domain. For example, we talk about the varying *social distance* between individuals in a society, and differences in social distance correlate strongly with language variation.

7.3.1 Social organization

The organization of society can be approached from to opposing angles, the angles of **social network** and **social stratification**. *Social stratification* concerns the hierarchical structure of a society, arising from inequalities of wealth and power. On the other hand, *social network* concerns the dimensions of solidarity between individuals in their everyday contacts.

7.3.1.1 SOCIAL NETWORK

An individual is a part of a social network and has stronger and looser ties with other individuals. Networks vary in strength, which primarily is based upon **density** and **multiplexity**, which are defined by Milroy and Milroy (1997 : 60) in the following way:[11]

> A maximally dense network is one in which everyone knows everyone else, and a multiplex relationship is one in which A interacts with B in more than one capacity (for example, as workmate and friend).

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[11] Milroy and Milroy (1997): cf. the preceding footnote.

When networks are strong, language tends to change more slowly, and stigmatized and low-status language items persist. We shall come back to this issue in § 6.3.2.

7.3.1.2 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

There are hierarchical social structures in most or all societies, but not everywhere of the same type. In large parts of Europe, for example, society started to change about 200 years ago from a hierarchy of **rank** or station to a hierarchy of **class**. In the rank society, people are born with a certain rank, and there is low social mobility. In the class society, people are also born into a certain class, but there is a high social mobility.

These differences influence the language situation in a society. In the rank society language differences do not play an important role. People learn to speak the variety they hear in their social network, and continue to speak that way for the rest of their lives. Their rank is primarily determined by their family background, and people cannot change their social status by changing their language. Highest in the hierarchy you often find an aristocracy

In the class society things are quite different. Many people climb «upwards» in the class hierarchy, and as a part of their effort to change their social status, they change their language in the direction of people higher up in the hierarchy.

7.3.2 Sociolect

In the traditional European rank society people generally spoke the dialect of their home area, and there was only minor variation between the ranks. On the basis of a person's language variety you could easily locate her or him geographically, but not at all to the same degree socially.

In the end of the 18th century and in the beginning of the 19th, this society started to change, as a consequence of industrialization, which created new social strata—particularly a working class and a bourgeoisie or middle class—and opportunities for people to improve their economical and social status.

In the book *'Talking Proper'. The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol*, Lynda Mugglestone tells the story about what happened in England.[12] For centuries England had had a standard written language, but no standard spoken language. In the end of the 18th century, however, this situation started to change drastically. The middle class consciously changed their speaking habits in the direction of the most prestigious variety of spoken English, which was the variety used at the royal court in London. At first, this created a situation where the upper class (the aristocracy)—who evidently could not improve their social status by any means—and the lower class (the working class) spoke the local dialect, while the middle class adopted the new spoken standard, which varied much less from place to place.

The middle class changed their language habits more than the upper class and the lower class not only due to their desire to rise socially, but also because of network differences. As Milroy and Milroy (ibid. : 61) writes,

> close-knit solidarity ties are characteristic of lower and higher social groups, and […] in the middle sectors of society, social network density and multiplexity tend to be weak. […] [D]ifferent kinds of social network structure do not occur accidentally, but "fall out" naturally from different life-

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[12] Lynda Mugglestone 1995: *'Talking Proper'. The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol*. Oxford : Clarendon Press.

modes, such as those of the self-employed, of wage-earners (both poor and relatively affluent), and of professionals.

Language varieties that are used by particular societal strata are referred to as **sociolects**. It should be emphasized, however, that most language varieties have a particular geographical *as well as* social distribution, although the geographical variation is generally larger among the lower classes than among the middle and upper classes.

7.3.2.1 A case study: English *-ing*

In § 6.1.1.1 *Linguistic items*, we stated that the suffix *–ing* of written English, as in *coming*, is pronounced /ɪŋ/ and /ɪn/, as in /ˈkʌmɪŋ/ and /ˈkʌmɪn/, and the two pronunciations have different social distributions: the former is a typical standard pronunciation and the latter a typical non-standard pronunciation. The English suffixes /ɪŋ/ and /ɪn/ are different linguistic items. We shall tell the story about how this social variation came into existence.

      Until around the year 1300 AD, English orthography distinguished the verbal noun *writinge* (corresponding for example to Norwegian *skriving*) and the present participle *writinde* (corresponding to Norwegian *skrivande / skrivende*), and the two suffixes were also pronounced differently, approximately as /-ɪŋgə/ and /-ɪndə/, respectively. At this time, however, the pronunciation different disappeared, and both suffixes changed into something resembling /-ɪn/. Gradually, this sound change leaded to an orthographic merger, and for some reason, the orthographic form *–ing* was chosen for the suffix. For many hundred years, this was the situation: the orthographic representation was *–ing* and the pronunciation was [-ɪn], in all parts of the English society. In one of his poems, the English poet George Crabbe (1754–1832) rhymed *delight in* with *fighting*, indicating that his pronunciation was /dɪˈlaɪt ɪn/ and /ˈfaɪtɪn/.

      In the end of the 18th century, things started to change. Influenced by the orthography, members the new middle class starting using the pronunciation /-ɪŋ/ instead of the traditional /-ɪn/. As a result, a socially conditioned variation was created, where the upper class and the lower class used the conservative pronunciation /-ɪn/, while the middle class used the innovating pronunciation /-ɪŋ/. Members of the upper class people continued to use the pronunciation /-ɪn/ into the 20th century, and /-ɪn/ could be heard in parts of the aristocracy into the 1920s. The expression *huntin' and fishin'*, which describes typical aristocratic activities in the English society, survived almost to our days. Today, the pronunciation /-ɪŋ/ has been adopted also by the upper class, meaning that /-ɪn/ only survives in working class speech. Typically, the traditional /-ɪn/ pronunciation is nowadays regarded as «careless» and as belonging to lower class sociolects.

7.3.3 Slang and jargon

In § 6.1.1.2, we defined a *variety* as *a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution*. For dialects and sociolects, this set of linguistic items includes features of vocabulary, grammar, as well as phonology. For certain other kinds of varieties, especially those referred to as **slangs** and **jargons**, the set includes only a relatively small set of vocabulary items.

7.3.3.1 SLANG

Slang may be characterized as a very informal language variety that includes new and sometimes not polite words and meanings. It is often used among particular groups of people, for example groups of teen-agers or professional groups, and is usually not used in serious speech or writing.

You can get an idea of slang from a British perspective by consulting the on-line *Dictionary of Slang* at http://www.peevish.co.uk/slang/. Here is small selection of what this dictionary presents under the letter *K:*

> **kerb crawler** *Noun.* A person who drives slowly to view street prostitutes, with the intention of procuring their services. {Informal}.
> **khyber (pass)** *Noun.* Buttocks, anus. Cockney rhyming slang on 'arse'.
> **kiddie fiddler** *Noun.* A paedophile. Derog.
> **kipper** *Noun.* The face. E.g."Did you see the miserable kipper on that idiot stood at the back?" [Liverpool/North-west use.]
> **kisser** *Noun.* Mouth. Origins in boxing.
> **knocking shop** *Noun.* A brothel.
> **kooky** *Adj.* Crazy, eccentric.

We can observe that some of the expressions contain ordinary words in the language, only with a special meaning attached to it, like *kisser* and *knocking*. These words have acquiered new meanings in their polysemy networks. The new meanings are usually based upon fanciful and creative metaphors and metonymies.

In other cases the expressions contain special words that do not have any «non-slang» meanings, like *kooky*.

7.3.3.2 JARGON

Jargon is a set of vocabulary items used by members of particular professions, that is, their **technical terms**. For example, linguists have a large vocabulary that is not well understood by non-linguists. This book is full of examples, and it should not be necessary to repeat any of them here.

Dictionary definitions of *jargon* usually give examples like *computer jargon* and *the jargon of the advertising business*, but all professions have their own jargons. We can therefore talk about *farmer's jargon* or *the jargon of Fulani shepherds*. As we mentioned in § 3.2.1, Fulani shepherds have a huge vocabulary for cattle.

7.4 Contextual variation

While social variation to a large extent—although not exclusively—is variation between individuals belonging to different societal groups, **contextual variation** is variation *within the individual*: we all vary our language between contexts. There are very many phenomena that could be treated here, but due to space limitations we shall just take a look at a few typical cases. First, we shall look at a language, *Korean*, where **degrees of formality** are integrated into the grammatical system.

7.4.1 Honorifics and politeness in Korean

In Korean, personal and reflexive pronouns not only express differences of person and number, but also the relative social hierarchy between the speaker and the addressee or third-person referent. This phenomenon is wellknown from languages all over the world, cf. for example the French *tu / vous* distinction and similar distinctions in other European languages (Norwegian *du / De*, German *du / Sie*, Castilian *tu / usted*, Russian *ty / Vy*, and so on), but in Korean the system is much more elaborate.

As Sohn (1999 : 407) points out, «[l]anguage has essentially two functions – transmission of information and knowledge on the one hand and establishment and maintenance of human relationships on the other.» It is the latter function that is relevant to linguistic politeness. For example, Korean has two words meaning 'I': *na* and *ce*, and they are characterized as **plain** and **humble**, respectively. The *plain* form is used when talking to a child or a younger adult, while the *humble* form is used when talking to a senior or an adult equal.

While Standard English has the one pronoun *you* to refer to the addressee(s), Sohn (1999 : 207) presents no less than 14 different forms; cf. TABLE 3.

POLITENESS LEVELS	SINGULAR	PLURAL
Plain	nŏ	nŏ-hŭi(-dŭl)
Familiar	chane	chane-dŭl
Intimate	chagi	chagi-dŭl
Blunt	tangsin	tangsin-dŭl
	kŭ-dae (obsolete)	kudae-dŭl (obsolete)
	taek	taek-tŭl
Deferential	ŏrŭsin (rare)	ŏrŭsin-dŭl (rare)

TABLE 3. *Korean 2nd person pronouns.*

In fact Korean has not less than *six politeness levels*, that are realized *inter alia* in the pronoun system amd in verbal inflections. Sohn (1999) defines the politeness levels as follows (some details are left out):

- The **plain** level, which is the lowest level, is used, in general, by any speaker to any child, to one's own younger sibling, child, or grandchild regardless of age, and to one's daughter-in-law, and also between intimate adult friends whose friendship began in childhood.
- The **intimate** level is between close friends whose friendship began in childhood or adolescence.
- The **familiar** level is slightly more formal than the intimate level, typically used by a male adult to an adolescent such as a high school or college student or to one's son-in-law, or between two close adult friends whose friendship began in adolescence.
- The **blunt** level, which is gradually disappearing from daily usage probably due to its authoritative connotations, is sometimes used by a boss to his subordinates or by an old generation husband to wife.
- The **polite** level is the most popular level towards an adult, and is used by both males and females in daily conversations. It is less formal than the derential level.
- The **deferential** level is used in formal situations such as news reports and public lectures.

7.5 Language policy in Asia and Africa

The language situations of the different states in Asia and Africa vary immensely, as does language policy. If we tried to base this paragraph upon generalizations across all or most states, we would not have much to say. Instead, we shall delve into the situations of a few countries, the African country of Cameroon and the Asian countries of North Korea and South Korea. Cameroon and the two Koreas are two extremes. Cameroon has 280 languages (plus two non-indigenous official languages) and the Koreas have one.

7.5.1 The linguistic situation in Cameroon

Imagine the following situation. You live in a small town called Speechville. Your mother tongue is Norwegian, and this language is spoken by your family and your closest neighbors. If you walk five minutes down the street, the language you hear around you is Finnish, and after another five minutes everybody speaks Russian. When you want to communicate with any of these Finns and Russians, you address them in the local lingua franca,[13] which is English.

Imagine that neither Norwegian, Finnish, nor Russian are used as written languages. All street signs in your town are written in Japanese, which is the official language of your country. When you were in school, the only language you were taught was Japanese. You had a teacher who had recently moved to your town from the southern part of the country. He could only speak two languages: German, which was his mother tongue, and Japanese, the official language. When you started in school, you could only speak your mother tongue, Norwegian, and the local lingua franca, English, which you used when talking to you Finnish-speaking playmates down the street. But the teacher addressed you and the other sixty-two children in the classroom in Japanese from the very first day.

MAP 4. *Cameroon.*

7.5.1.1 A REAL SITUATION

We have described a hypothetical situation, but if you substitute for example Nizaa for Norwegian, Hausa for Finnish, Chamba for Russian, Fula for English, and French for Japanese, the situation is not hypothetical any more. It is a description of a real situation found in many villages in the northern part of the African country of Cameroon, for example in Galim, the village we shall take a closer look at here, and which is situated halfway between the town of Ngaoundéré and the Nigerian border on MAP 4. In fact, there are thousands of African villages with

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[13] A **lingua franca** is a language used between peoples whose main languages are different. For example, English is the most widespread lingua franca in the world today.

an equally or even more complex language situation. In one single village you often find first language speakers of between five and ten different languages. Let us refer to them as **local languages**. One of these local languages, or still another language, is the **local lingua franca**. Some examples are given in TABLE 4.

In the elementary school, very often one language only is taught from the first day. This is neither one of the local languages nor the local lingua franca, but the **official language** of the country, which in most African countries is English or French.

LANGUAGE	AREA USED	LANGUAGE	AREA USED
Fula	Northern Cameroon, etc.	Wolof	Senegal, Gambia
Cameroon Pidgin	Southern Cameroon	Sango	Central African Republic
Hausa	Northern Nigeria, etc.	Lingala	Congo-Kinshasa
Bambara	Mali	Swahili	East Africa

TABLE 4. *Some African local lingua francas*

7.5.1.2 CAMEROON

The Republic of Cameroon is a West African nation on the Gulf of Guinea, with an area of 465,495 square kilometers and a population of approximately 15.4 million (in the year 2000). The interior consists of a high savanna plateau, with the land descending to a lower, densely wooded plateau and then to swamps and plains along the coast. The area corresponding to the Republic of Cameroon was colonized by Germany in 1884. After World War I, the League of Nations gave the French a mandate over 80% of the area, and the British 20% adjacent to Nigeria. After World War II, the country came under a UN trusteeship, still ruled by the same colonial powers. The part ruled by France became an independent republic in 1960, and was joined by the southern half of the British part in 1961 (the Northern half joined Nigeria). Because of this history, Cameroon has two official languages – French in the former French part and English in the former British part. Cameroon is the only country in Africa where both English and French are official languages.

7.5.1.3 AFRICAN LANGUAGE FAMILIES

In relation to its number of languages, Cameroon is more fragmented linguistically than any other country in the world except Papua New Guinea. Cameroon, a country the size of Sweden, has approximately 280 languages. These language belong to the three major African language families, Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afro-Asiatic. The only African language families not represented in Cameroon are the Khoisan families, which are only spoken in southern Africa.

7.5.1.4 GALIM

The linguistic fragmentation can be observed from the national level via the village level and down to the individual. As mentioned earlier, we shall take a closer look at the village of Galim in the Adamaoua Highlands in northern Cameroon. Galim has approximately 3000 inhabitants. The dominating languages are Nizaa, Fula, Hausa, Kanuri, Chamba, Mbum, and Vute, whose genetic affiliation is shown in TABLE 5.

Language families in Africa	Number of branches	Branches found in Cameroon	Languages in Cameroon. Languages marked with an asterisk (*) are spoken in Galim.
AFRO-ASIATIC	≥5	Chadic	*Hausa, Musgum, etc.
		Semitic	Arabic
NILO-SAHARAN	≥4	Saharan	*Kanuri
NIGER-CONGO	≥7	Atlantic	*Fula
		North Volta-Congo	*Mbum, Gbaya, *Chamba, Pere, etc.
		South Volta-Congo	*Nizaa, *Vute, Bantu languages

TABLE 5. *African languages in Cameroon and Galim*

7.5.1.5 THE HISTORY OF GALIM

Galim was founded in the end of the 19th century by the indigenous Nizaa. All of the other groups are immigrants. The sedentary Fulani, the Hausa, and the Kanuri have generally come as merchants. The Chamba have come as shepherds tending the herds of the Fulani merchants. The nomadic Fulani have come as cattle nomads – which they still are to a large extent. There are separate Nizaa, Fulani, Hausa, and Chamba quarters in Galim, while the Kanuri live in the Fulani quarters.

7.5.1.6 A SOCIAL AND FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

From a social and functional perspective, the languages of Galim can be divided into three groups:

- Language Group 1:   Fula.
- Language Group 2:   Hausa
- Language Group 3:   Nizaa, Vute, Kanuri, Mbum, and Chamba

Fula is the main lingua franca, probably spoken by everybody. Hausa also has a certain status as a lingua franca, and to the extent that Fulani speak another language, this is Hausa. The Hausa population speaks Hausa and Fula. People belonging to other ethnic groups always know Fula in addition to their first language; often, they also speak one or more other languages. This linguistic situation reflects the social structure, which is closely tied to ethnicity. The population can be divided into three main social groups: SG (Social Group) 1 constitutes the upper social stratum. Most of the members of this social group are merchants with a higher standard of living than the other groups. Members of SG 1 intermarry to a large degree. This has effects on the linguistic situation.

PHOTO 1. *Nomadic Fulani women at a market in northern Cameroon*

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SG 3, the nomadic Fulani who are cattle-herders, also speak Fula, but a slightly different dialect. Their social status is low. They generally live in compounds in the bush, out-side the village.

Members SG 1 only learn languages spoken as the first language of people in their own social group. People belonging to Social Group 2 learn languages spoken as the first language of people in their own social group and in Social Group 1. The nomadic Fulani are not easy to place in this social hierarchy; generally, they seem to speak only Fulani, and they do not generally intermarry with other ethnic groups.

The language situations among the different ethnic groups of Galim are summed up in TABLE 6.

| ETHNIC GROUPS | LANGUAGES | | | |
	FULA	HAUSA	KANURI	OTHER
SEDENTARY FULANI	First lg	Second lg		
HAUSA	Second lg	First lg		
KANURI	\<First lg\>	Second lg	\<First lg\>	
NIZAA, VUTE, MBUM, CHAMBA	Second lg	Third lg		First lg
NOMADIC FULANI	First lg			

Explanations: lg = language. For the Kanuri, the Kanuri language is disappearing as a first language, and is substituted by Fula.

TABLE 6. *The language situation in Galim*

FRENCH

The linguistic situation has become even more complicated by the introduction of French. French has been the official language of this part of Cameroon since World War I, when the German colonizers were forced out, and most of Cameroon became a French mandate.

Still, the use of French has been rather limited until recently. It is the only language used in schools and it is the preferred language in public offices—the offices of the prefecture administration and the gendarmerie. But outside these areas, French has not been much used. For the time being, French is not mastered by the population to such a degree that it functions as a lingua franca. Only 13% of the Cameroonian population have studied French for six or more years at school (Ball 1997[14]).

Whether French in the future—as a result of an improved standard of education—will replace Fula as the main lingua franca of northern Cameroon is difficult to say. However, judging from general trends in African countries, this is not very likely. Even though most African countries have a European language as their official language, African languages or pidginized varities of European languages are preferred as lingua francas.

7.5.1.7 LINGUA FRANCAS

In the long run, the linguistic situation may change drastically. In the 1920s, Mbum was the main lingua franca of the Cameroonian Adamaoua. Since then, Fula has replaced Mbum almost completely as the lingua franca of this area. The latest years, however, there has been some weak tendencies for Mbum to start regaining some of its earlier status.

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[14] Rodney Ball 1997: *The French speaking world. A practical introduction to sociolinguistic issues.* London and New York: Routledge.

7.5.1.8 NATION AND LANGUAGE IN CAMEROON

As already mentioned, there are approximately 280 different languages in Cameroon. None of these languages has a dominant position, none of them has any official status, and none of them is used in schools. The official languages of Cameroon are—also as already mentioned—English and French, which are the only languages used in administration, in education, and in newspapers.

The population of Cameroon regards itself as a nation. In Europe, we are accustomed to regarding *a nation as a group of people with the same race and language*, but this definition is meaningless in an African context—and also quite a bit more meaningless in Europe than we are generally aware of. There are no monolingual states in Africa. If we want to maintain our traditional definition of a nation, we simply have to say that there are very few nation-states in Africa. Alternatively, if we are willing to admit that the peoples of African states are nations, language plays no role in the definition of nations like the Cameroonian one. Exactly the opposite is the case. Cameroonian nationalism is explicitly non-linguistic. Language is regarded as a regional or «separatist» affair. To create a feeling of national unity, linguistic differences have been ignored, and no African language is more privileged in the Cameroonian legislation than any other.

And there is nothing special about Cameroon. The number of languages is exceptionally high, but the status of language in relation to national identity is the same in most African countries.

In some African countries the local lingua francas have a higher formal status than the purely local languages, creating a linguistic hierarchy with the **official language**—usually English or French, but in some cases also Portugues and Spanish—on the top. In an intermediate position we find between five and ten **national languages**—usually the local lingua francas. In several countries the national languages are used the first years in school, and in some countries newspapers are published in some of them. At the bottom we find tens or hundreds of **local languages**, usually without any privileges.

7.5.2 The linguistic situation of North and South Korea

7.5.2.1 NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA

Korean is the language of the Korean Peninsula in northeast Asia. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) there are 20 million speakers and in the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea) there are 42 million speakers. Korean is also spoken by almost 2 million people in China, mainly in provinces bordering North Korea.

7.5.2.2 NO LANGUAGE MINORITIES

There are no language minorities in either North or South Korea. The Korean Peninsula is, and traditionally has been, an essentially monolingual region. This makes the linguistic situations of the two Koreas extremely different from that of Cameroon. These countries are among the very few monolingual states in the world.

7.5.2.3 TWO STANDARD VARIETIES

Officially, there are two standard varieties of Korean in Korea: the *Sŏul* (Seoul) dialect in South Korea and the *P'yŏngyang* dialect in North Korea. The dialects are

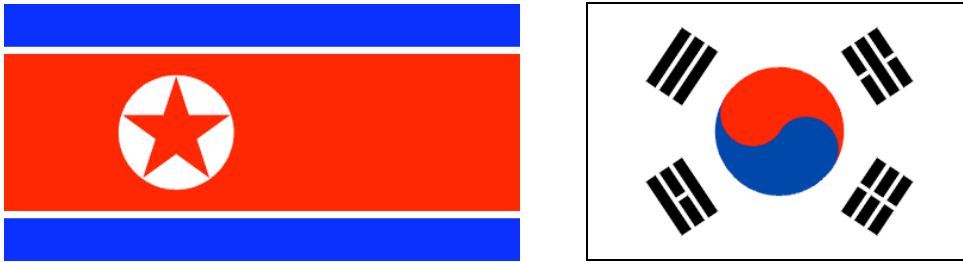distinguished and regulated by each country's *national language policy*.

TABLE 7. *The flags of North Korea and South Korea*

7.5.2.4 DIALECTS

Regional dialects roughly correspond to province boundaries. Thus, South Korean regional dialects are *Kyŏngsang, Ch'ungch'ŏng, Chŏlla,* and *Cheju* Island. The North Korean regional dialects are *Hamkyŏng, P'yŏngan,* and *Hwanghae.* Some of the dialects are not easily mutually intelligible.

7.5.2.5 THE KOREAN WRITING SYSTEM

Korean uses a writing system called **Han'gŭl** that has twenty-four basic symbols representing the sounds of Korean. Words of Chinese origin have traditionally been written with Chinese characters, called *Hanja*, instead of being spelled out in *Han'gŭl*. This practice is discouraged in North Korea, but is quite common in South Korean writing.

The symbols of *Han'gŭl* are units reflecting Korean syllable structure. *Han'gŭl* is generally written horizontally from left to right, although it has been written in earlier times like Chinese, vertically, from right to left.

In the fifteenth century, King **Sejong** of the Yi Dynasty commissioned the development of a phonetically based script for Korean. Until that time, Korean had been written with *Hanja*, and literacy was restricted to a small, educated elite. Scholars and the elite opposed the new script, however, and *Han'gŭl* did not manage to displace the Chinese script among the educated elite until the nationalistic democratization movement at the end of the nineteenth century. This movement led to the printing of the first Han'gŭl newspaper in 1894. Soon after, books and government documents were also published in Han'gŭl.

PICTURE I.
King Sejong

The modern effort to establish Han'gŭl as the writing system of the Korean language was ended in 1910 by Japan, which formally annexed the peninsula as a colony of its empire. During the colonial occupation, Japanese was the official language of Korea; Korean was suppressed by laws forbidding its use. Japanese became the language of instruction in the schools and by 1938 the Korean language had been completely eradicated from the curriculum. In 1940, Koreans were forced to change their family names and use Japanese surnames instead.

In 1945, the Japanese occupation ended and, in spite of national division and civil war, this enabled the re establishment of Korean as the dominant language of the Korean Peninsula and Hankul as its dominant written medium.

7.5.2.6 LANGUAGE PLANNING

After the division of the country in 1945, each nation developed its own language policy. In North Korea, Han'gŭl was adopted as the sole system for writing Korean; Chinese characters are never used and are replaced with their phonetic equivalent in Han'gŭl. In South Korea, the abolition of Chinese characters from written Korean has been attempted with government support more than once but never maintained beyond a few years. Since 1972, the Ministry of Education of South Korea has required public schools to teach students 1,800 «basic characters», and then incre-mentally add characters in middle and high schools for a total of 3,600.

Both countries have introduced campaigns to discontinue use of any words of foreign origin in everyday speech, especially words of Chinese origin. They encourage the use of words of Korean origin, even if it means translating them with new words composed of native roots. The North Korean government uses newspapers and magazines to propagate the use of the new lexical terms. In South Korea, puri-fication is most intense among scholars who advocate a revised vocabulary through the media and academic journals. The South Korean government, however, has never officially supported this policy.

Literacy rates are high in both countries (over 90 % in the late 1980s).