

Language and society

- 1.1 Methods in sociolinguistics
- 1.2 The development of sociolinguistics
 - 1.2.1 Sociolinguistic data
 - 1.2.2 The linguistic variable
 - 1.2.3 The question of co-variation
 - 1.2.4 Indicators and markers
 - 1.2.5 Register and hypercorrection
- 1.3 Sociolinguistics and language change
 - 1.3.1 Social networks
 - 1.3.2 The Belfast investigations
- 1.4 Types of speech communities
 - 1.4.1 Where do standards come from?
 - 1.4.2 Artificial languages
- 1.5 Language and gender
 - 1.5.1 Growing into a gender role
 - 1.5.2 Gender roles in adulthood
 - 1.5.3 Gender and power
 - 1.5.4 Language used by women
 - 1.5.5 Gender and standard
 - 1.5.6 Gender-neutral language
 - 1.5.7 Desexification of language
 - 1.5.8 Gender and language change
- 1.6 Language and culture
 - 1.6.1 The ethnography of communication
 - 1.6.2 Colour terms
 - 1.6.3 Kinship terms
 - 1.6.4 Counting systems

1 Language and society

Language is both a system of communication between individuals and a social phenomenon. The area of language and society – *sociolinguistics* – is intended to show how our use of language is governed by such factors as class, gender, race, etc. A subsection of this area is *anthropological linguistics* which is concerned with form and use of language in different cultures and to what extent the development of language has been influenced by cultural environment.

The study of language and society – *sociolinguistics* – can be dated to about the middle of the twentieth century. Before that there were authors who commented on how language use was influenced or indeed guided by socially relevant factors, such as class, profession, age or gender. Indeed the father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), saw language as a type of social behaviour and in this he reflected French sociological thinking of his day, above all that of his contemporary Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). But a set of independent, objective principles, in short a methodology for investigating social factors in language use, was not available until some decades after the advent of Saussurean structuralism.

In the early 1960s a number of linguists in America began to investigate English usage in the United States from a social point of view. Since then there has been a flood of publications in this vein, primarily in America but soon afterwards in Europe as well (notably in Britain).

1.1 Methods in sociolinguistics

The roots of sociolinguistics are to be found in traditional dialectology. The common denominator between the two disciplines is their concern with language variation, the one with that on a social level and the other with geographically determined variation. However, many aspects of dialectological research are unacceptable to modern sociolinguists.

The chief deficiency of dialect investigations in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century is that they were unrepresentative, i.e. their informants consisted of a skewed selection of speakers. Older, male, rural, non-mobile speakers were given preference as informants. Because many dialectologists were trained as historical linguists they were frequently concerned with discovering the most archaic forms of language still spoken at their time, often on the assumption that the older forms were somehow more ‘genuine’. The kinds of speakers just alluded to were regarded as those who would speak the most conservative, hence most genuine form of a language at any given time.

This standpoint is quite different from that of present-day sociolinguistics. Language use in society applies to all groups, young and old, male and female, rural and urban. Indeed because the majority of inhabitants of western countries now live in cities and because such concentrations of people tend to induce high amounts of language variation, sociolinguists are more often than not concerned with language use in cities.

In order to realise impartial investigations of language in society it is necessary to employ objective methods. Care must be taken that the choice of informants be random and thus not subject to the possible bias of the field worker / linguist. Furthermore, consciously interviewing informants often has the

disadvantage that the field worker has a standardising effect on informants' use of language (see below). A dialogue situation in which informants are not aware of their status as informants is much more favourable and less likely to distort the results. Various techniques have been developed here, for instance getting informants to talk about emotional matters generally draws their attention away from their use of language and hence furthers a more natural style, what linguists call a 'vernacular' style.

Principles of modern sociolinguistics

- 1) The prior definition of one's area of investigation
- 2) The impartial choice of informants
- 3) The use of preferred methods of investigation (e.g. tape recording rather than questionnaire, allowing for later control)
- 4) Where possible, the anonymous collection of data

New methods had to be evolved in order to get reliable data. It is impossible to investigate a whole community because of size and complexity. However, to get a representative description of what is typical of the speech of a city or region, all members of a community must have an equal chance of being selected for a survey. Consequently, individuals are selected at random from the total population.

Because dialectology was associated with the study of conservative forms of language, sociolinguists do not always use the term *dialect*. The more neutral term *variety* is often chosen because of the advantage that it does not imply contrast with a standard.

1.2 The development of sociolinguistics

The development of sociolinguistics is bound up with the activity of American and British linguists since the early 1960s. First and foremost of these is William Labov who, in a pioneering investigation of the English of New York city published in 1966, arrived at many new conclusions concerning language variation and language change.

Labov stressed that 1) structural systems of the present and changes in languages of the past can be investigated in relation to each other, 2) language change can be observed in progress in present-day language varieties and 3) the fact that so-called 'free variation' was not in fact free at all but determined by deliberate, if not conscious, choices by speakers.

Labov further stressed the need to collect data reliably. The linguist must be aware that informants will show the following features in their speech: 1) style shifting (during an interview), 2) varying degree of attention, i.e. some speakers pay great attention to their own speech (so-called 'audiomonitoring');

in casual speech the attention paid is less, 3) degree of formality, determined by the nature of the interview, this can vary depending on the way informants react to the interviewer and the situations they are placed in.

The difficulty referred to above, namely that people's linguistic behaviour changes while being recorded, has been dubbed the *observer's paradox* by Labov. His answer to this problem was to develop the *Rapid and Anonymous Interview* in which informants were not aware they were being interviewed by a linguist. The essence of this technique can be seen by considering how Labov collected data on English in New York city. To begin with one should say that he was interested in the following linguistic variables: 1) the presence or absence of syllable-final /r/, 2) the pronunciation of the fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ and 3) the quality of various vowels. He chose two words in which these sound occurred, namely *fourth floor*, and then went around to a number of department stores in New York. Each of these was typical of a certain social class, and going on the assumption that employees use the pronunciation which holds for their typical customers, he could then examine the kind of English used in each store. To get samples without people knowing that they were acting as informants for a linguist, Labov checked in advance what items were for sale on the fourth floor and then asked a store employee where he could find these items. After the individual responded 'on the fourth floor' he asked again, pretending that he did not hear the first time. This supplied him with a more careful pronunciation of the two words. Labov saw in this technique a means of gaining genuine pronunciations which were not spoiled by speakers' awareness of providing data for an investigating linguist. Of course, there are disadvantages to this method, above all the small quantity of data which can be gleaned at any one time and the inability to do a sound recording which one could listen to afterwards.

1.2.1 Sociolinguistic data

Whereas traditional dialectology focussed on the relationship between language and geography, urban dialectology is more concerned with the relationship between language and social factors. Furthermore, the methods of traditional dialectology differ from those of urban dialectology in terms of the selection of informants. The data of traditional dialectology was often obtained by asking informants to fill in questionnaires, consisting of questions for words used in a rural setting. Very often the outcome of this method consisted of one-word answers. Since sociolinguistics is more interested in phonology and grammar rather than in vocabulary, the methods of eliciting data have to ensure stretches of free spoken speech which are suitable for evaluation.

Depending on the size of the survey and on its objectives, the number of informants and thus the amount of data might vary. Where large amounts of data are involved informants must be classified along various lines. With urban groupings, traditional divisions of class may not always be suitable. At the very

least the basis for these divisions must be made explicit. For that reason, linguists often categorise speakers by factors such as occupation, income, education and housing, quite apart from age and gender.

1.2.2 *The linguistic variable*

When examining sociolinguistic behaviour linguists have found that some features of a variety tend to vary more than others. Not only that, there are features for which the variation has special social significance. In order to capture such features and describe them, the term *linguistic variable* is used. This refers to a specific feature which can be used as a tag for classifying a speaker's speech. For example, as William Labov has pointed out in his investigation of English in New York, the realisation of /r/ is just such a variable. The realisation of /r/ varies significantly across the groups within the city. The traditional lower class in New York do not pronounce /r/ after a vowel and not before another, so a word like *car* or *card* are realised as [ka:] and [ka:d] respectively. Speakers from groups further up the social ladder in New York do tend to pronounce the /r/ in this position, i.e. they would have [ka:] and [ka:ɹd] for the word just mentioned. In order to refer to sounds which are regarded as linguistic variables, round brackets are used, e.g. (r).

Linguistic variables differ from city to city or from region to region. In northern England, for instance, the vowel in the word *cut* is an example. Some speakers use a high back vowel here while others have a lower vowel and maintain a distinction between the vowels in words like *but* [bʌt] and *bush* [bʊʃ]. In London, users of colloquial speech have a glottal stop for intervocalic /t/ in a word like *butter* [bʌʔə] whereas others maintain the [t] pronunciation in all positions.

A linguistic variable need not only be phonological. Examples of grammatical variables are double negation, the use of *ain't* and the lack of marking with verbs in the 3rd person singular present tense among African Americans.

There exists a common non-linguistic label for a linguistic variable, *shibboleth*. This term stems from the Book of Judges (12: 5-6) in the Old Testament which recounts how Jephthah and the Gileadites defeated the Ephraimites at the banks of the Jordan. The Gileadites managed to cross the river before the Ephraimites. To check whether those behind them were actually from their group they asked each to pronounce the word *shibboleth* (which meant either 'stream in flood' or 'ear of corn'). Those who pronounced it as *sibboleth*, i.e. with [s] and not [ʃ], were not Gileadites and regarded as enemies.

1.2.3 *The question of co-variation*

The realisation of linguistic variables is not a matter of either/or. For many

speakers, one can notice a preference to use one form over another, but not to the exclusion of one of these. The linguistic term for this situation is *co-variation*. To take one of the examples given above, some people in northern England use [bʌt] sometimes and [bʊʃ] sometimes, both as realisations of *but*. When investigating a variety which shows such co-variation the first thing is to establish relative frequencies for the one realisation over the other. The next task is to determine, if possible, the conditions under which one form is used rather than another. For the example just given, various motives can be recognised: northern speakers seeking acceptance by more standard-speaking southerners are likely to favour [bʌt] over [bʊʃ]. On the other hand, northerners who gladly identify with the north can be seen to favour [bʊʃ] over [bʌt]. There are various shades between these two poles. Furthermore, factors such as age and gender are important considerations, quite apart from those of class, occupation, place or residence, etc.

Co-variation is also a characteristic of transitions over time. If a language or variety has changed from form A to B, then one usually finds that that the pathway has been $A \rightarrow [A + B] \rightarrow B$, where the stage in brackets shows an increasing incidence of B over A. Such transitions can last a considerable length of time and be influenced by many factors. For instance, the shift from *whom* to *who* as the oblique form of the relative pronoun has lasted a couple of centuries and is not complete yet. A similar change in progress, this time from phonology, is the loss of initial /h/ in urban varieties of English, e.g. /aʊ/ for /haʊ/ *how*. This, like the example of *who(m)*, is retarded by the restraining influence of standard English.

1.2.4 *Indicators and markers*

The extent to which linguistic variables correlate with social features has been investigated in detail by several linguists. One of the investigated items is the variable (ng), alternating between [ŋ] and [n] in many varieties of English. In Norwich, some distance north of London, this variation is found and words like *walking* can be pronounced either as [ˈwɔːkɪŋ] or [ˈwɔːkɪn] (the stroke under the [n] in the transcription indicates that it is syllable-bearing). This is commonly known as ‘dropping one’s g’s’.

An investigation of speech differentiation in Norwich was carried out by the English linguist Peter Trudgill in the late 1960s. The informants of the survey were classified into five social groups from middle middle class (MMC) through lower middle class (LMC), upper working class (UWC), middle working class (MWC) to lower working class (LWC) The parameters used for this classification included income, housing, education and occupation. Trudgill found that the highest incidence of (ng) = [n] occurred in the bottom social group and the lowest incidence, that is the greatest occurrence of (ng) = [ŋ], was typical of the highest social group. He also found that the scores for (ng) = [n]

tend to decrease as the formality of the speech situation increased, no matter which particular social group was involved. One explanation for this is that whenever there is class differentiation with a linguistic variable, speakers of all social groups gravitate towards the higher status variants in more formal the situation.

However, not all variables which are subject to class differentiation show stylistic variation as well. There are variables which correlate with social class variation but which do not vary when the speech situation changes. Variables which are subject to stylistic variation as well as variation across class, gender or age are referred to as *markers*. Variables which are not involved in style variation are called *indicators*, an example would be the fricative *t* [t̪] of southern Irish English, in a word like *put* [pʊt̪], which is found in all styles of this variety of English. Indicators do not contribute to the description of class differences as markers do, since speakers appear to be less aware of the social implications of an indicator than of a marker.

According to the observer's paradox, in tape-recorded interviews informants pay more attention to the way they speak and for that reason produce a formal style (FS) rather than a casual style (CS). In many cases linguists choose to study the increase of stylistic level in formal situations to see what linguistic correlates such a shift has. By asking informants to read a passage of connected prose aloud one can induce a style shift, since reading causes people to be more conscious of their speech and hence to move away from their vernacular mode. The style elicited in this manner can be labelled 'reading passage style' (RPS). An even more formal style is the so called 'word list style' (WLS) found when informants read one word at a time from of a list.

Index scores for (ng) variable across different styles and social groups

shift from [ŋ] to [n] (percentages represent occurrences of [n])

	WLS	RPS	FS	CS
MMC	0	0	3	28
LMC	0	10	15	42
UWC	5	15	74	87
MWC	23	44	88	95
LWC	29	66	98	100

Using the methodology of index scores the quantitative distribution of (ng)-alternatives can be displayed. It is striking that scores increase regularly across the rows and down the columns. Despite the different values in each row and column, there is a general increase of [n] values when moving both from top to bottom and from left to right.

These and similar results reveal clear quantitative correlations between pronunciation and social class. Relationships of this sort were observed, albeit

unscientifically, long before urban dialectology arose as a discipline. The advantage of quantitative research of this kind is that it gives more detailed insight into the nature of these relationships. Above all, it shows that the realisations of linguistic variables are a question of more-or-less rather than either-or.

1.2.5 Register and hypercorrection

The stylistic differences referred to in the previous paragraphs are related to the notion of *register*. By this is meant a specific style which speakers use in specific situations. For example, when talking to the postman most people would use a different kind of language than when one is holding a public address. Such registers may have different grammatical rules and different lexical items. For instance, in colloquial registers of Irish English one is likely to find *fellah* [fɛlə] (from *fellow*) for *boyfriend*, *the lads* for *one's friends*. Speakers frequently use such items or grammatical forms to shift downwards, to move (often just briefly) into a vernacular mode. For instance, a special form for the second person plural pronoun does not exist in standard English but many colloquial varieties do so that saying something like *Where are youse goin' tonight* would be a colloquial way of saying *Where are you going tonight* (again in Irish English).

Speakers whose vernacular mode is a local variety of a language may not feel at home when using the standard of this language. They may nonetheless shift to this standard in certain situations, e.g. when talking to people from outside their community. A frequent phenomenon in this kind of situation is what is called *hypercorrection*. This term refers to what happens when speakers overgeneralises a feature which they does not have in their native variety. For example, in standard English short /ʊ/ as in *put* has been lowered to /ʌ/ in other words such as *cut*, but not in all words which contained the earlier /ʊ/. In northern English dialects /ʊ/ has remained /ʊ/ in all cases. When dialect speakers attempt to use standard English they may use /ʌ/ in too many instances, i.e. they are hypercorrect: in their efforts to speak 'correct' English, they overdo it. Thus they may say /bʌtʃə/ for /bʊtʃə/ *butcher* probably on analogy with words like /bʌt/ *but* although in their native dialect they have no /ʌ/ sound at all.

1.3 Sociolinguistics and language change

When a system is dynamic and shows movement, there is change. This truism applies to language as much as it does to any other area. During the heyday of historical linguistics, in the nineteenth century, change which had taken place over the centuries was described in great detail. However, the mechanisms of language change, were only partially considered. Only internal change in sound

systems and grammar were investigated. But the large area of externally motivated change, determined by currents in society, was never given its due recognition. With the advent of sociolinguistics, the process of language change became the subject of close scrutiny. Sociolinguists maintained that the minute shifts in language use which can be observed in contemporary societies are, in accumulation, no different from the large-scale changes observed over centuries.

In particular William Labov concerned himself with the process and stages of language change. Here he recognised three phases which can be summarised as follows.

Labov's three stages of language change

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1) <i>origin</i> | A period in which alternative variants for established variants begin to appear. |
| 2) <i>propagation</i> | The stage at which the new variants establish themselves to the detriment of the older ones which are sidelined. |
| 3) <i>conclusion</i> | The stages at which the remaining variants are (i) replaced completely by new variants or (ii) remain as a residue after the change has terminated. |

Various external factors can accelerate the process of language change, above all social pressure from above or below. Additional factors are the degree of literacy in a community, the restraining influence of a standard of a language, the relative 'prestige' of speakers favouring new forms, etc.

The course of language change shows a typical rate which involves a slow beginning, a relatively rapid middle section and a deceleration towards the end. Schematically, these three phases correspond to the beginning, middle and end of an S-curve which is frequently used as a visualisation of language change.

A good example to illustrate the course of a change is the development of the vowel in *but* in early modern English. In the south of England (and in Scotland, but not in the north of England) this was lowered to an unrounded, fairly central vowel, something like present-day *but* [bʌt]. The change probably started in the early 17th century and after a slow start, gained speed, involving more and more words, and slowed down again. It did not encompass all instances of the input /u/ vowel, specifically before /ʃ/ and /l/, which is why one still has *push* [pʊʃ] and *pull* [pʊl] in southern British English. This group represents the gap between the top of the S and the limit of 100% in the above graph.

Sociolinguistics has provided insights not just into the course of language change, but also into its motivation. One powerful motive is the desire of individuals to make their speech more like that of a group they aspire to. Typically, this could involve a higher social class, an urban dialect vis a vis a

rural one, the language of a powerful neighbour vis a vis that of a smaller country. Changing one's language to make it more like that of another group is called *accommodation*: speakers attempt, in face to face interaction, to approximate their speech to that of their partners in conversation most probably to increase their acceptance by the group whose language features are being adopted. Such accommodation can be short-term or long-term. If the latter, and if it is community-wide, then it can lead to language change. The reverse side of the coin is *dissociation* where speakers attempt to make their speech more different from that of a group they wish to distance themselves from. A clear example of this can be seen in present-day Dublin English where a new pronunciation has arisen with a raising of back vowels which is diametrically opposed to the low realisations of popular Dublin English, e.g. a word like *Cork* would now be pronounced [ko:ɹk] and not [kɔ:ɹk] as it still is colloquially.

In both accommodation and dissociation, speakers are normally not aware of the alterations to their language which they make, i.e. one is dealing here with unconscious linguistic behaviour.

1.3.1 *Social networks*

James and Lesley Milroy began investigating language use in Belfast in the 1970s and continued for over a decade. At the centre of the Milroys' work is the notion of social network, adapted from work on sociology. All speakers have a place in the network of their social environment. This network consists of ties of varying strength depending on the social bonds speakers entertain within their neighbourhood. There is a general assumption that for those on the lower end of the socio-economic scale the ties are stronger than for those further up this scale. Networks can be defined by how dense and multiplex they are. For instance, if a speaker A not only knows other speakers B, C, D, E, etc. but the latter also know each other then the network is dense. If the individuals in a network are more isolated and not mutual acquaintances then it shows low-density. A network is multiplex if its members interact in more than one way, e.g. if members have a number of work colleagues in their network with whom they also spend their spare time, through communal neighbourhood activities or sports for example, then the network is multiplex because there is more than one factor uniting members.

A focussed and bound network can impose rigid linguistic norms on its members which in turn acquire a defining character, albeit an unconscious one, for the network itself. Such networks tend to be impervious to influence from outside, specifically from the prestigious norm of the society of which they are part. Speakers who engage in loose-knit networks, such as the suburban middle-classes, are relatively more accessible to language norms. Because loose networks do not show clear defining features, these speakers adopt the norms of the socially prestigious standard. Conversely, working-class sections

of society – those with strong networks – do not see middle-class speech as a model because they have their own linguistic norms from within their network.

Certain generalisations about networks can be made. The relative strength of a network depends on the weight accorded by speakers to two conflicting forces in society: *status* and *solidarity*. If speakers opt for status then they are likely to have weak ties, to try to move upwards on a social scale, striving to achieve professional status and economic success. Should speakers opt for solidarity then they generally remain in their surroundings, maintaining ties with neighbours and participating in the life of the community. Solidarity is an aspect of social behaviour which has a linguistic component: speakers who demonstrate solidarity exhibit allegiance to the vernacular norms of their neighbourhood, frequently in contradistinction to those of the socially prestigious form of language. The linguistic norms of a community are local whereas status features are diffuse and hold for a much wider area, typically for an entire country. The number of defining features of low-status, high-solidarity varieties is usually quite high. The linguistic norms of such communities can be difficult, if not impossible, for non-natives to acquire. The identity function of high-solidarity varieties implies that one can exclude those who are not native to the community. Dense multiplex network ties seem furthermore to hold especially for young males. Women and middle-aged speakers in general tend to opt more for status and to tone down the linguistic signs of strong network ties.

A network is much smaller than a class which is a general characterisation of social status whereas a network is an areal reality, typically a part of a city. There is of course a correlation to class inasmuch as people in a network usually belong to a single socioeconomic group and those in the strongest networks tend to be lowest on this scale. Given their relatively small scale, networks form a consensus-based microlevel within society. The bonding within a class is achieved through similarity in socio-political outlook and not by identification with a certain locale.

1.3.2 *The Belfast investigations*

The insights into sociolinguistic behaviour just sketched were gained by a close study of the following three areas of Belfast.

- 1) *Ballymacarett* (Protestant East Belfast)
- 2) *The Hammer* (Lower Shankhill Road, Protestant West-Central Belfast)
- 3) *Clonard* (Lower Falls Road, Catholic West-Central Belfast)

The three areas are different in the social importance they attach to certain features. For instance, the palatalisation of /k, g/, as in *cap* /kjap/ and *gap* /gjap/, is generally regarded as a rural feature of Ulster English and in Belfast is found most with older males (40-55) chiefly in Catholic west Belfast. In the eastern section of the city – which has had a largely Ulster Scots input from north Co. Down where the palatalisation is not an indigenous feature – this trait is avoided

as can be seen from its percentual representation in the data collected by the Milroys.

Clonard	62% palatalisation	
Hammer	14%	
Ballymacarrett	0%	(J. Milroy 1981: 94)

This pattern would also seem to apply to the dental realisation of /t/ before /r/ in unstressed syllables, i.e. the pronunciation [bʌt̪ɹ̩] rather than [bʌtɹ̩] for *butter*, which occurred with older males more than with younger men and women in west Belfast (Clonard and Hammer).

The raising of /a/ before velars, as in *bag* /bæg/, is quite common and is more frequent in west Belfast than in east Belfast, young males in east Belfast seem to have lost this raised vowel entirely, perhaps as the result of peer-group pressure. With the variable (ʌ) the Milroys found that young males display vernacular loyalty and preserve this dialect feature in words such as *pull* /pʌl/.

Correlates of community structure Lesley Milroy has analysed the relation between realisations of three phonological variables, (th), (ʌ) and (a) within the framework of the network model of language ties. With regard to (th) Milroy notes that the deletion of [ð] intervocally – as in *brother* [brʌɹ̩] – has been a stable marker of lower-class speech for some time and shows little change. (ʌ) on the other hand would appear for young men – particularly in Catholic west Belfast – to have overcome its inherent stigma in the community and be used more frequently. With regard to (a) the situation is more complex as there is a phonetically conditioned front raising before velars and back raising before labials, as in *hand* [hɔnd]. It too is subject to socially determined variation within the phonotactic constraints just mentioned.

The insight here is that not just the use of one realisation as opposed to another is sociolinguistically significant but the numbers of tokens for a given realisation are relevant, i.e. both the qualitative and the quantitative aspects of a variable are important as linguistic markers within a social network.

Wider implications The Milroys' work on vernacular speech in Belfast has had wider implications for linguistic studies, for instance for the development of phonological norms in English. James Milroy has devoted his attention to the relationship between standard and vernacular norms, stressing the uniform nature of the standard and the essentially variant structure of vernaculars where rules governing the variation are understood by those within the vernacular community but not those outside.

What is prestige? All too often vague references to 'prestige' are made in linguistic treatments of language change. James Milroy has criticised that the

notion of prestige has often been appealed to too lightly in explanations of language variation and change and that such appeals frequently lead to contradiction and confusion. Instead he suggests that explanations based on the identity-function of language appear to be more successful.

The nature of the vernacular The work of the Milroys has heightened the linguists' awareness of the vernacular. Its norms oppose standardisation and prescription for reasons of identity maintenance. Such norms are not codified but passed on orally. The Milroys distinguish between grammaticality, typical of standards, and norms of usage, characteristic of vernaculars. In-group variation can be quite complicated and not necessarily accessible to outside groups. Supra-local varieties, which tend towards koinés, are simpler in structure as variation no longer shows any in-group function. Lower-status varieties of language are dynamic and the locus of change. Little or no change results from standard varieties.

Gender and network The interaction of gender and network affiliation has been a concern of Lesley Milroy. She defines clearly how a network score is arrived at for an individual by considering membership in a high-density, territorially-based group, ties of kinship, similar place of work to other group members and voluntary association with others during leisure time. Lesley Milroy then examined three vernacular variables indicative of network strength in Belfast, (a), (th) and (Λ). The conclusion she drew is that the first two variables are important as gender markers for men but as network markers for women. The last variable is a weaker gender marker but important to men as a network marker which shows the essential interdependence of both types of marking and the complex relationship between them.

1.4 Types of speech communities

When linguists talk about the people who use languages they refer to *speech communities*. Lay people tend much more to refer to countries when talking about such groups. Certainly in the western world, countries are strongly associated with single languages and vice versa. Linguists see this as due to the rise of nation states in the past few centuries where single languages attained official status in individual countries, English in the United Kingdom, French in France, Italian in Italy, etc. However beneficial the official status of one language may be for a modern country in terms of government, public discourse, higher education, etc., it is not helpful to other languages which may be found within the borders of a particular country. Furthermore, even in countries where only one language is spoken by nearly everybody, say Dutch in the Netherlands, there may well be different dialects of this language which themselves stand in a certain relationship to the standard of that country.

Even within Europe, and most certainly outside of it, the equation of one country with one language breaks down. Switzerland is a good example of a country where a single national identity exists across three major and one minor speech community: Swiss German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance. Beyond Europe it is more the rule than the exception for countries to have several languages within their borders. One need only think of such countries as India and China or Siberian Russia to see how many languages can be integrated into a single state. In such instances, there is of course an official language which serves the function of a *lingua franca*, that is, a language which is used as a means of communication among those groups who do not speak each other's language.

A sub-set of bilingual countries can be recognised in those regions of the world where former European colonial powers were once to be found. Many such countries have conferred official status on the European language they have been exposed to, with the languages of their native peoples having a precarious status. This is true for all South America (with the exception of Paraguay): Spanish or Portuguese (in Brazil) has official status and local languages are spoken to varying degrees, particularly in rural communities.

Some countries have been fairly successful in reconciling the status of the colonial language with that of local languages. In India, English is a *lingua franca* but indigenous languages, primarily Hindi but many others as well, have large numbers of speakers and are used in all spheres of society.

Still other countries have had mixed colonial backgrounds and various European languages may or may not survive from earlier periods. Cameroon was subject to British and French rule, even German rule briefly. Both English and French are spoken in present-day Cameroon. South Africa has maintained both the English and Dutch legacies with forms of English and Afrikaans (a former of early colonial Dutch) being spoken by large numbers alongside many indigenous languages. In the Philippines Spanish was more or less ousted by English (from America) at the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century. In the past 50 years of so, forms of the major indigenous language, Tagalog, have asserted themselves, above all around the capital Manila.

Occasionally the role of *lingua franca* can be played by a non-European language. In large stretches of east Africa the Bantu language Kiswahili (influenced in its vocabulary by Arabic) serves as a general means of communication, for instance in Kenya and Tanzania.

Diglossia This is a type of situation in which there is a division between two languages or two varieties of a language such that one variety, the so-called 'high' or H variety, is used in public life – in addresses, in the media, in schools and universities, etc. – and another variety, the so-called 'low' variety or L variety, is used in domestic life – with family and friends. Examples of diglossic situations are to be found in Switzerland (Hochdeutsch and Schwyzerdütsch), in Greece with the literary form of the language *Katharevousa* and the colloquial

form *Dhimotiki*, in various Arabian countries (Classical Arabic and the local dialect of Arabic), Paraguay (Spanish and Guaraní).

Bilingualism A type of linguistic situation in which two languages co-exist in a country or language community without there being a notable distribution according to function or social class. Within Europe, Belgium, in those parts where French and Flemish are spoken side by side, provides an example of bilingualism. Finland, in the area of Helsinki, with Finnish and Swedish is a further example. In North America, Canada with English and Quebec French is another example. Not all countries offer official recognition to the languages spoken within its borders. France has not accord Breton the same status as French. Turkey does not recognise Kurdish as an official language.

In discussions of bilingualism it is normal to distinguish societal bilingualism and individual bilingualism. Naturally, a bilingual society consists of bilingual individuals. But such a society is not necessary for many bilinguals who speak two languages almost equally and do not show a functional distribution of the languages.

Bilinguals often illustrate a feature which can contribute over time to language change. This is what is called *code-switching* which occurs when speakers move from one language to another and back again within the same sentence, e.g. *J'ai mangé toujours oatcakes en Angleterre* 'I always ate [oatcakes] in England'. There are many speculations about why this takes place, for example, speakers have first become acquainted with some phenomenon in the second language and switch to it when talking about it, or maybe they switch because they just feel the second language is momentarily more appropriate.

The switching may involve single words or whole clauses, e.g. *Ma c'est vrai, she wants to play cricket, incroyable!* 'But it is true [she wants to play cricket] unbelievable!'. The latter type is governed by strict rules about what point in a sentence can act as a pivot for the switch-over. If code-switching is widespread in a community and becomes socially accepted then it may lead in the fullness of time to changes in the original language just as borrowing or structural transfer has done (see section on language contact below).

Minority languages This is a reference to languages which are spoken by small numbers of people within the borders of a country which has another language spoken by the majority. Irish is a minority language in Ireland, Rhaeto-Romance is in Switzerland and is Saami in Finland (in all these cases the languages have official status). Sorbian is a minority language in Germany, though without official status (it is spoken by a dwindling number of speakers). A minority language in one country may be a national language in another. For instance, Danish in northern Germany is spoken by a small minority as is Turkish in Bulgaria or Swedish in Finland. Within the European Union a degree of official status is accorded to languages which the European administration recognises as living languages, irrespective of numbers or of status in the host country.

Some minority languages are spread across more than one country without having official status in any (though there are varying degrees of recognition). Basque, for instance, is found in both north-east Spain and south-west France. Kurdish is spread across a number of countries: Turkey, Armenia, Syria, Iraq and Iran, to mention the main ones. Although the Kurdish cultural region has over 25 million speakers of Kurdish, about half of whom live in Turkey, the language does not have official status.

Language split This term is used to refer to the type of situation which obtains when for political reasons two varieties of a language, which are scarcely distinguishable, are forcibly differentiated to maximise differences between two countries. This applies to the Moldavian dialect of Rumanian, which is now written in Cyrillic and is the language of the Republic of Moldavia, and the remaining dialects of Rumanian. It also applies to Hindi, the official language of India, alongside English, and Urdu, the official language of Pakistan. In these situations much use is made of different writing systems. Thus Hindi is written from left to right in the Devanagari script while Urdu, the language of a Muslim country, is written right to left in the Persian variant of Arabic. Once language split has been introduced the differences may become real with time, e.g. with Hindi and Urdu the different religions make for different vocabulary which helps the originally artificial distinction between the languages to become real. Historically in Europe, Dutch and the Lower Rhenish dialects represent a case of language split.

Language maintenance This refers to the extent to which immigrant speakers of a certain language retain knowledge of the original language in the host country into following generations. Here language communities vary. The Irish, for example, gave up their native language immediately in the United States whereas the Estonians have shown a remarkable degree of language maintenance. The reasons for this often have to do with the attitude of the respective groups to their original language. For the Irish their native language was associated with a background of poverty and so they switched rapidly to English in America.

Language preservation This is the extent to which a country has official institutions to preserve the language in an ostensibly pure form. For example, in France an academy has existed since 1634 which acts as a watchdog over the supposed purity of French. There is no corresponding institution in England or Germany (though South Africa, as the only anglophone country, does have a language academy). In the latter two countries, major publishing houses play the role of language academies, the Oxford University Press in England and the Bibliographisches Institut (Mannheim) in Germany, the publishers of the Duden series of reference books. One should add that the value of prescriptive organs is very much disputed as they cannot stop language change in the form of

borrowing (cf. the influence of English on French despite the efforts of the academy).

Language death This emotive term is sometimes applied to those situations in which a language ceases to exist. The fact itself is not of major concern to linguists, it is rather the stages which the language goes through which are of interest. A well-studied instance of language death is Scottish Gaelic in East Sutherland in the north-east of Scotland. The language was progressively abandoned from one generation to the next and during this process the grammar of the language showed clear signs of disintegration, for example in its morphological system. In some instances the very last speaker of a language may be identified. It is reported that Dolly Pentreath was the last native speaker of Cornish in the late eighteenth century. For Ubykh, a north-west Caucasian language, the last native speaker of which, Tefvik Esenç, died in 1992.

Language revival Occasionally a language which has died out may be revived. Such a process can be triggered by a number of circumstances. The most famous instance is that of Modern Hebrew which was formed from Classical Hebrew (a written language) during the later nineteenth and early twentieth century when Jews began to settle in Palestine. It then became the language of the state of Israel and is now a fully fledged language adapted to the needs of a modern society. A less spectacular instance, and one on which opinions are divided, is that of Cornish which has ardent supporters who claim to have revived the language as a viable medium of communication in their community.

1.4.1 *Where do standards come from?*

The term ‘standard’ has been used frequently in the present chapter and it might be worth considering for a moment how standard forms of language have arisen in various countries. If one looks at European nations for a moment it becomes evident that different historical developments have led to a particular variety of a language attaining status as standard. A small selection of countries is offered below to illustrate typical situations which have given rise to standard languages.

England

In the present-day United Kingdom (England, Wales and to a much lesser extent Scotland and Northern Ireland) there is a single type of pronunciation which enjoys the highest social prestige. Linguists call this *Received Pronunciation* from a label first used by the early twentieth century phonetician Daniel Jones to refer to that modified accent of English in London and the Home Counties which is accepted and used on higher levels of society, typically in private education, among the higher military and clergy and by figures in public life. Other terms for this accent are Queen’s English, Oxford English or indeed BBC English. All

of these are inaccurate (in different ways, Oxford has its own accent and nowadays not everyone at the BBC speaks Received Pronunciation). Historically, Received Pronunciation is a modification of London speech of the early modern period which from the eighteenth century onwards became more and more a sociolect and distinct from Cockney, the vernacular of London city. The acceptance of Received Pronunciation varies, extreme forms are regarded as snobbish, ‘plummy’ and socially condescending. Intermediate varieties between RP and Cockney – often referred to loosely as Estuary English – have arisen and gained increasing acceptance in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The situation just described has meant that in Britain the question of standard is defined primarily via pronunciation. Using standard grammar is not enough, the accent must be non-regional too (compare the situation with Germany below).

The grammar of standard English in Britain derives from usage in the south-east in the early modern period. Certainly the language of the Authorized Version of the Bible (the King James Bible of 1611) played a role, but many of the features of standard English derive from prescriptive writings and attitudes in the eighteenth century. Normative, prescriptive grammars appeared, such as the *Short introduction to English grammar* (1762) by Bishop Robert Lowth (1710-1787) which achieved great popularity by laying down the law with regard to grammatical usage. For instance, the prohibition on double negative (a common feature of Shakespeare’s) is stated clearly by Lowth. He was not alone in his crusade against grammatical ‘incorrectness’: he had an even more popular successor in Lindley Murray (1745-1826) whose *English grammar* (1794) went into several editions and was influential in the teaching of English in schools.

This kind of prescriptivism meant that many widespread features of English dialects did not make it into the standard, for instance, the use of *them* as a demonstrative, e.g. *Them clothes are wet*, the use of *seen* and *done* as past forms of *do*, e.g. *I seen it; He done it*, or the lack of the subject relative (although this is possible with the object relative), contrast *There is a man wants to speak to you* with *This is the man you met yesterday*.

France

Before the Middle Ages the French language began to divide into two separate regions north and south of the Loire river, called the *langue d’oil* (the northern form) and the *langue d’oc* (the southern form) respectively. The labels are based on the word for ‘yes’ in each case. The *langue d’oil* fed into what was later to become modern French with its centre around the city of Paris. There were other dialects, such as that of Normandy which influence English after 1066, but for the French the language of the capital and the court became the prestige variety. This situation has obtained ever since and was no doubt reinforced by the fact that France is a highly centralised country.

Italy

Vulgar Latin yielded to Italian during the second half of the first millennium AD. Various dialects developed and some of these were used for writing, such as Sicilian for poetry. In the early fourteenth century, Italy's greatest writer Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), a Florentine by birth and inclination, composed his greatest literary works, the collection of love poetry *La vita nuova* 'The new life' and the epic *La divina commedia* 'The divine comedy' in his native Tuscan Italian. Due to his stature as a poet, his language became a yardstick for standard Italian in the following centuries when Italy was divided into many principalities. It was not until 1871 that Rome became the capital of united Italy but without imposing its dialect as standard.

Spain

Standard Spanish is the dialect of Castilian which is also spoken in the capital Madrid. This variety has been that of the Spanish court and government for centuries. The region of Castile once stretched from the north coast of Spain down to Andalusia and achieved dominance in Spain in the late Middle Ages. Dialectally it includes Madrid, though in present-day Spain it is split into two provinces Castile-León in the north and Castile-La Mancha in the south with Madrid city in an autonomous region of the same between the two.

There are other languages and major dialects in modern Spain, chiefly Catalan in the north-east of the Mediterranean and on the Balearic Islands, Basque in the north and over to the border with France on the Bay of Biscay, Galician (close to Portuguese) in the north-west and Andalusian in the south.

The Netherlands

During the sixteenth century Spain ruled over the Low Countries. The northern provinces revolted against this dominance and The Dutch Republic was formed in 1648. In the early nineteenth century the southern parts seceded and in 1830 Belgium was formed. The Dutch language, its close relative Flemish in present-day Belgium, derives from the Old Low Franconian dialect of German which was spoken in the Lower Rhenish area and along the North Sea coast north the estuary of the Rhine. This area formed the centre of the new state and the name of the province, Holland yielded the unofficial name of the country.

The language of the capital Amsterdam (in this province) was the basis for standard Dutch which established its position as a language independent from German – with its own orthography – during the centuries of Dutch maritime power. West Frisian is a further Germanic language which is spoken in the north of the Netherlands.

Norway

There are two forms of Norwegian which have official status in present-day Norway. The one is *Bokmål* 'book language' and the other is *Nynorsk* 'new Norwegian'. Bokmål is the language of the majority, spoken in the north and in

the south including, importantly the capital city Oslo. It is derived from an extraterritorial form of Danish spoken in Norway during its dominance by Danish and Sweden (to a lesser extent).

After independence in 1905 Bokmål was given official status as was Nynorsk, the set of varieties spoken in the west of the country which were assumed to be a purer and more original form of Norwegian. The tension between both main versions of Norwegian continued throughout the twentieth century and has not been fully resolved yet.

Germany

Like Italy, Germany was not united as a single nation until 1871. Before that there were many individualities with their own dialects. These have survived to this day, but the pronunciation standard in the country is derived from a general north German accent which prevailed with Prussian hegemony in the nineteenth century and Berlin as capital of the country. The status of the present-day dialects is connected with the relationship of the region to the north of the country. Thus Bavaria has a marked dialect with an unmistakable pronunciation which many people use in public to stress the independent stance of this state within modern Germany.

In grammar, the situation is slightly different. Standard written German – in morphology and syntax – derives from the translation of the Bible by Martin Luther (1483-1546) in the early sixteenth century. For Germans today, using standard German means adhering to this grammar. Local accents have a high tolerance in public, much more so than in Britain.

Finland

The significance of translations into vernaculars of the holy scriptures, mainly the Old and New Testament, should not be underestimated in the development of standard varieties in the early modern period across Europe. Finland is another country which, like Germany, received an authoritative translation of the Bible in the sixteenth century which established a norm for written Finnish. This translation was made by Michael Agricola (c. 1509-1557), a later contemporary of Martin Luther who produced a Finnish version of the New Testament in 1548. The pronunciation of Finnish which has greatest prestige today is roughly that of the southern coast, especially of the Helsinki area.

1.4.2 Artificial languages

In the late nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century various scholars turned to the task of devising an artificial language which could be used as a general means of communication among speakers who do not understand each other's language. This function is fulfilled by English nowadays but before the spread of the latter as a world-wide lingua franca, other practical suggestions were put forward about how to fill the perceived gap.

A proposal which enjoyed brief, if intense, popularity was *Volapük* ‘world talk’ (in this language) put forward by the German priest Johannes Martin Schleyer in 1879. He devised the language ‘out of pure love for troubled and divided humanity’. It was initially very successful with conferences and public discussions. Even an academy for Volapük was founded in Paris in 1889. However, the language was very cumbersome with too many endings (it was largely agglutinative in structure, see section on typology below). The community of Volapük supporters found the language too much of an ordeal to learn and around 1890 most of them switched allegiances to the following.

Esperanto is another artificial language invented by the Polish scholar Ludwig Zamenhof (1859-1917), again in the late nineteenth century. It was intended as an easy-to-learn, regular language which would, like Volapük, further international communication and understanding. The language is based on Romance elements and was intended to be easy for Europeans to learn. The name clearly suggests Spanish *esperanza* ‘hope’. Of all the various proposals for an artificial language, Esperanto is the only one which can be said to survive to this day. Although it is not used widely, there is nonetheless a dedicated community of Esperanto users world-wide.

In the course of the twentieth century various modifications of Esperanto have been put forward, largely to rid it of what were perceived as unnecessary difficulties in the language. Even the great historian of English, the Dane Otto Jespersen, offered a greatly modified version called Novial which, like so many others, did not catch on.

Various suggestions have also come from Romance scholars, such as *Interlingua*, to devise a sort of common-core language which would be comprehensible for all speakers of Romance languages.

In the English-speaking world, attempts have been made to provide non-natives with simplified versions of the language for rudimentary communication. The English literary scholar C. K. Ogden put forward his proposal for Basic English in 1930. This consisted of only 850 words but interest in the suggestion quickly waned because it was impracticable.

1.5 Language and gender

The word ‘gender’, originally a grammatical term, has come to refer to the social roles and behaviour of individuals arising from their classification as biologically male or female. This is a huge complex embracing virtually all aspects of social behaviour of which language is only one. In the past three decades or so intensive research has been carried out into the relationship of language and gender, largely by female scholars who have felt drawn to the topic because of the obvious discrimination against women which has taken place in the past and which is still to be observed today.

Within linguistics the initial impulse was the work of the American linguist Robin Lakoff who in the early 1970s focussed her attention on certain themes with the language and gender complex above those which she rightly felt were in need of rectifying. Her work stimulated other scholars to engage in this study and soon language and gender was a burgeoning research area in universities across the western world.

It is in the nature of language and gender studies that they are concerned with contrasting language as use by men and by women. Various opinions emerged on this relationship with two gaining particular focus. One is the *difference approach* which established that male and female language is dissimilar without attributing this to the nature of the social relationship between men and women. The other is the *dominance approach* which saw language use by females and males as reflecting established relationship of social control of the latter over the former. With the maturation of research on language and gender the simple ‘difference – dominance’ dichotomy was increasingly regarded as unsatisfactory and insufficiently nuanced.

Before beginning a discussion of language and gender it is important to stress that statements made in this context are taken to apply to groups of people, in this case men and women. They are generalisations whose justification, if this holds, derives from their applicability to majorities with groups. As any field of inquiry, statements made about groups are not taken to apply to each member – that would be to use clichés. The personality of the individual can always lead her or him not to conform to a pattern claimed for her or his group. For example, to maintain that men have a competitive style of social behaviour in western countries is a generalisation which virtually everyone would agree on. However, they are men would are not competitive in this respect. Because they form a relatively small minority the generalisation still holds.

The opening sentence to this section contains the phrase ‘biologically male or female’. In a book of this nature it is not possible to discuss the issues around possible transitions between the unambiguously female and the unambiguously male in the physiological sense.

Lastly, it should be stressed that all statements in this section are intended to be non-evaluative. That the social discrimination of women, including its linguistic dimension, is to be deplored is taken as given.

1.5.1 Growing into a gender role

It is assumed by all researchers on language and gender that men and women use language differently. This is taken to result from what is called socialisation, the growing into a society from early childhood onwards. Gender roles are presented to infants and lead them along paths full of preconceived opinions.

The first act of genderisation is the giving of names. Females and males are usually recognisable by their firstnames although a few English names, e.g. *Hilary; Chris, Pat* (abbreviated forms), can apply to both genders. Infants are

then treated as one gender or the other, though occasionally parents resist the allocation of gender to children if this does not match what they were wishing for. So much seems fairly innocuous but the reinforcement of gender allocation can take on subtle forms based on whether children comply to the role they are assigned. Parental approval or disapproval is often expressed according to how one conforms to one's gender role: *good boy, good girl; bad boy, bad girl* are common assessments made of children. While many parents use such labels without thinking it may well show how much they in turn internalised notions of gender roles during their own youth, i.e. in their own formative period.

Attributes of the two genders are conveyed early on to children. There are essential differences between boys and girls, not just in external physiology, but in mental makeup. Reason is for boys while emotions are for girls. Crying becomes increasingly unacceptable for boys who are supposed to come to terms with unpleasant situations in a rational manner. Girls are allowed displays of emotions which is not a male thing, only in extreme circumstances which are regarded as exceptional. Girls can show (or feign) fear, for example when they classify films as 'spooky and scary'. Boys learn early on to hide fear and anxiety.

There are linguistic manifestations of these slots for the genders. Diminutive formations are commonly used for girls, which stresses their lack of power and conversely their need for protection. For instance, there is *girl* and *girlie* but no *boy* and *boyie*. Some labels seem to imply that one gender is particularly well adapted to the expected role, e.g. the word *lad* is an approving term which refers to a boy who is clearly boyish in character.

Different ways of passing their time are related to children at an early stage. Think of the toys given to children to play with: guns for boys, dolls for girls. A competitive, public role is suggested for boys and a more domestic, docile role is assumed for girls. Already in early childhood there is an asymmetry which increasingly widens into many areas of social behaviour.

What happens to those individuals who do not conform to the gender role which is expected of them? Boys are taunted for being sissy and girls can be referred to as tomboyish. There would seem to be another asymmetry here, though this time of a different kind. In western societies the taint of effeminate behaviour is more serious than that of boyish behaviour for girls. One explanation for this is that male patterns are unmarked, they are the yardstick for general behaviour while female patterns a special subset. Deviation from the general norm is therefore less tolerated than that within a subset.

There is a separation of boys and girls which is often found in childhood, at least in terms of games and outdoor activities (though in the home one cannot avoid contact with opposite sex siblings). This situation changes quite dramatically just before puberty when boys and girls enter what has been called 'the heterosexual market'. Boys and girls engage in pairing off, they test their value for the opposite and the feedback they receive in this activity plays a crucial in their later self-image as adults. Western societies assume adolescents

partake in this behaviour and those who do not – for whatever reasons – are marginalised by their peers. For adolescents heterosexual desirability is a strong indication of the individual's value, even if that individual is not especially interested in this market. Peer pressure is enormous among adolescents and those who do not conform to it, such as homosexuals, suffer stigma and exclusion which can mark them for life.

Adolescence is about conformity. To adults this may seem strange at first, after all adolescents continually criticise their parents for their social conformity. Nonetheless, adolescents show the most extreme forms of group conformity themselves, probably because their personalities are not yet firmly established and individuals are not prepared to risk rejection by the group. Those instances of individuals who appear to stand out among their peers usually embody established roles to a heightened extent, for instance in sports, dress or as active heterosexual couples in schools.

In industrialised nations, the commercial sector is a powerful factor in maintaining perceived notions of mainstream behaviour. It gears its products towards the statistical majority in society and thus plays a pivotal role in reinforcing gender roles. A good illustration for the mainstream character of the commercial sector is provided by clothing. Certain patterns and colours are promoted as typical of one or other gender, flowers and frills are definitely for girls as are the colours orange, pink and lilac (in ascending order).

Fashions and styles come and go, exaggerated shoulder pads in womens' blazers and blouses were common in the 1980s but not anymore. Low cut waistlines are now (early 2000s) common in slacks for women.

The naming of objects is also closely linked to gender distinctions. For clothes one finds not just *skirts* and *dresses* (which only apply to women in western countries) but *blouses* for females and *shirts* for men although the items of clothing are essentially similar.

1.5.2 *Gender roles in adulthood*

By and large gender roles are kept throughout one's life. It is true that some people put their assumed role aside in later life, frequently as a result of questioning the basis for such roles. But such major re-orientations in life are not the rule. Instead most people continue along the path which was set for them in childhood and adolescence. There are advantages to this. The gender roles supplied by society allow those who conform them to enjoy the benefits. Men can assert themselves in public and occupy good jobs and women can accept the support and economic backing from men which goes with a domestic role. Such descriptions are close to stereotypes but they are accurate for large sections of western societies and many others as well, if they were not, these societies would be organised differently. The problems arise with the discriminations which are endemic to such a socio-economic system. The very public presence

of males can be interpreted as hegemony over women. Even if not all women wish to assume such public roles, the opportunity should be open to them. The extent to which we carry assumptions about what gender should occupy what positions in society can be seen in the unmarked or default use of many titles. Surgeons are taken to be male unless specified otherwise. Nurses are females unless one speaks of male nurses. Now while the work of neither of these individuals is inherently of greater value than that of the other, the social prestige of the surgeon is far greater.

Traditionally, the justification for different employment patterns along gender lines appealed to the larger physique of men and their greater strength vis a vis women. These physiological differences were often compared to those in the animal world. It is true that in the mammal world, the males of species are generally stronger, one just needs to look at a bull or a boar to see that. But division of labour according to gender would only make sense in manual jobs, but even there the ever increasing automation of labour has meant that physical strength is becoming less and less of a consideration. The employment opportunities of women versus men have to do with power in society.

1.5.3 Gender and power

If gender consists of roles allocated to males and females and determined by society then it is not a given, at least very much less than one's biological sex is a given. Scholars nowadays refer to gender as constructed, it is something which is performed by individuals who adopt categories of beliefs and behaviour which are associated in a given society with their biological sex.

Gender roles are perceptually merged with biological sex and unless one stops to think about the matter this seems to be perfectly natural. The gender roles of males and those of females have been established for centuries in societies across the world. Such roles have the power of the familiar and the conventional. For example, in various religions, it seems 'natural' that men should occupy the most senior positions. In governments and public institutions it again seems 'natural' that men should lead. For instance, all 43 presidents of the United States have been male (and white for that matter). How often does one hear pseudo-arguments like 'that's the way it has always been' when someone questions the legitimacy of male hegemony.

Women who rightly insist on equal rights as men are often regarded as 'ungrateful', as betraying their partners, parents, society or whatever, as rejecting male protection and kindness. The assumption here is that if the people in power are nice to you, you are supposed to be thankful.

1.5.4 Language used by women

Early researchers into language and gender, above all Robin Lakoff, stressed the lack of power which the kind of language women use seems to embody.

Various features were listed which were intended to document this powerlessness. These are listed in the following table.

Putative features of women's language

Powerless, non-confrontational language

indirect statements

It would save a lot of money if we bought a smaller car.

tag questions

It's not that much to ask, is it?

use of hedges, alternatives

It's not really that difficult. Well, why not?

We could go for a drive or a walk this afternoon.

high rising intonation at end of sentence

We could go away for the weekend. ↗

Emotional, 'genteel' language

use of augmentatives

I'm 'delighted you're going to help. They're 'so kind!

use of euphemisms

Peter's gone to wash his hands.

It is important to note that, if at all, such features indicate vague tendencies in the language of women. Individuals may or may not show these features. Furthermore, it would be wrong to maintain that those who do should adopt a more assertive style in order to overcome social powerlessness. Offers of remedial instruction to lend more authority to the language of individual women miss the point that it is the general position of women which needs to be changed and not the speech of single persons.

1.5.5 *Gender and standard*

The standard of any language is the one with greatest prestige. It is chosen for official usage, taught in schools, used in universities and is the universal medium for writing. All western societies have a standard form of their official languages, standard French, Italian, Spanish, English, etc. Dialects of the same language are usually viewed unfavourably in relation to the standard. In some countries, e.g. Spain with Catalan and Galician (Gallego), there may be other languages spoken. These normally have more status than 'mere' dialects but never the clout of the standard.

An observation made by researchers on gender-specific language usage is that women tend to use more standard language than men. Not everyone agrees with this, but the evidence for it is very powerful and many investigations have shown this objectively. Those who disagree with this should remember that the observation is not a criticism of female linguistic behaviour. At any rate the key

question is, why do women use more standard forms of language? An explanation which appeals to a power differential between men and women would seem to give an acceptable answer. If one group has been traditionally discriminated against, then assuming the accent of prestige will afford some power by association.

Some data to illustrate the more standard use of language by women can be taken from the study of English in Norwich city which was referred to above (see section ???). Trudgill in his investigation noted that besides stylistic differentiation, linguistic differences correlated very closely with the gender of speakers. This correlation can be illustrated by the figures for (ng)-alternation, already touched upon above. In a class and gender array for (ng) based on formal speech, (ng)-pronunciation can be shown to have the following distribution.

Index scores for (ng) variable across social group and gender

	shift from [ŋ] to [n] (percentages represent occurrences of [n])	
	Male	Female
MMC	4	0
LMC	27	3
UWC	81	68
MWC	91	81
LWC	100	97

It can be noted that there is a consistency in the pattern of this array. Even though [n]-scores increase down the columns in both male and female cases, in each social class male speakers tend to use more lower status [n]-variants than female speakers. The same kind of pattern was found for other variables as well. The result common to all these findings is that on average women consistently prefer more standard variants where a choice is possible – irrespective of social class and style. The striking point is that gender differentiation even occurs in the speech of children. In an investigation of the pronunciation of postvocalic /r/ in Edinburgh, for instance, it was shown that there was a pattern of gender differentiation even in the speech of six year old children.

There is another reason why women, certainly in English-speaking countries like the United Kingdom, tend to use more standard forms of language. There is, or at least was, an association of dialect with working-class male culture in which women, again at least previously, did not participate directly. Another aspect of this complex concerns the use of ‘strong language’, e.g. curses and swear words, like ‘four-letter words’. Using such language has been part of the ‘rough and tough’ male image in many western countries. Women were supposed to be more ‘genteel’, strong language was regarded as not ‘ladylike’.

1.5.6 Gender-neutral language

Even a cursory glance at English shows that it, like other western languages, are inherently sexist, i.e. embody discrimination in their structure and/or vocabulary. This may be by assuming that the default case is always male as in *The linguist must gather data and be careful that he organises it properly*. One could, when making a generic reference to the linguist or reader, assume that the individual is female and use 'she' as pronoun. It is perfectly understandable for female authors to do this. However, it may appear slightly ingratiating for male authors to do so. One could vary the pronominal references at will, but this may leave the reader wondering why 'she' is used in one instance and 'he' in the next.

Apart from the issue of generic usage, language may be sexist in the labels sometimes used for women. Animal comparisons are common in metaphoric usage, e.g. *strong as an ox, meek as a lamb, sly as a fox*. But many of these are also used derisively for women, e.g. *stupid cow, silly duck, awful bitch*.

A further type of sexism is found in expressions which stress women as objects of sexual desire, e.g. *chick* or *peach*. Even the fairly innocuous *honey* has its origin in the association of women with sweetness. The converse of this situation is the use of special vocabulary to describe women who, because of age, are not regarded as sexually desirable and hence viewed negatively by men, consider such expressions as *old hag*. Other abusive labels for women with a sexual origin are also found, e.g. *cunt*. Such terms stem from derisory male attitudes to women.

1.5.7 Desexification of language

There have been many attempts to desexify language, that is to remove inherently sexist structures. One obvious means is just not to use such language, as in the case of abusive terms like those just mentioned. But there are many instances where one cannot avoid the issue and speech communities have reacted in various ways, for example by creating new generic forms. *Humankind* for former *mankind*, *chairperson* instead of *chairman* / *chairwoman* or indeed *chair*. However, this type of reduction does not always work, e.g. one could hardly call a *spokesperson* a *spoke*. The use of a different word to indicate occupation is sometimes possible, e.g. *police officier* for *policeman*. In other cases a form has been replaced, e.g. *air hostess* by *flight attendant*.

The goal of such creations is to arrive at a neutral label which can be used for either gender without highlighting this. There are difficulties where a lexical replacement is not possible. The word *doctor* has sometimes been qualified by an adjective or further noun to indicate the gender of the individual. Apart from the distinctly quaint *lady doctor*, there is *female doctor* or *woman doctor*. There are differences, too, within the anglophone world. What is

acceptable in the British Isles does not necessarily meet with approval in the United States or Canada.

Different strategies can be employed to avoid being overtly sexist in language use. Instead of using a generic masculine reference of the type *the linguist – he...* (see remarks above) one can use a plural: *linguists – they...* English is forgiving in this respect as it allows the use of plural anaphora with singular antecedents (not permitted in synthetic languages such as German) so that one can have sentences like *Anyone interesting in taking part should see their tutor*. Other pronouns like *one* or *you* are another option. Reformulations are often a solution *man the position* can be re-formulated as *occupy/staff/fill the position*.

Using formally marked feminine forms is decreasing in popularity. Often one finds *actresses* referred to as *actors* (generic for both genders); *poetess* is definitely antiquated. However, specific feminine forms of titles tend to be retained, for instance, *The Duchess of Kent*, *Baroness Thatcher*.

In the area of written address English has had considerable problems, for instance, with the forms *Mrs.* and *Miss* – stressing the marital status of the woman, but not of the man – and which are now rightly regarded as unacceptable. The use of *Ms.* shows some of the difficulties with attempts to desexify language: the success depends on whether the new form is accepted in the society in question. A new form can also backfire which is obviously not intended by its inventors. However, if official guidelines are adamant, as is for instance the case with *Ms.* for official correspondence in Britain, then individual resistance may give way to a general acceptance and the form may become neutral through constant use. In current British English usage it is also common to address people (in writing and on formal occasions) by simply using their firstname and surname, avoiding the issue entirely.

Finally one should mention that some of the suggestions for desexifying language border on the comical because of the seeming sexist attitudes which are imputed to words which are not related to gender reference. For example, *human* does not contain the word *man* nor does *history* mean ‘his story’ (both words derive from Latin stems). Indeed with the normal initial stress of English the elements *-man* and *-story* both have an indeterminate central vowel [ə]. This fact raises another issue which deserves more serious attention. Take the word *postman*. This does contain the element *-man* meaning ‘man’ but it too is pronounced with a schwa, i.e. the word is [ˈpəʊsmən]. It is a moot point whether all speakers of English using this word think that it consists morphologically of *post* and *man*. If the word *postman* is lexicalised in English to mean ‘anyone who delivers the post’ then one can hardly classify it as sexist language. Nonetheless, if the conscious perception of some people is that the word is discriminatory, then one could change it in order not to offend sensitivities.

1.5.8 Gender and language change

It was noted above that women tend to use more standard forms of language. But there is another valid observation which seems paradoxical in this light: when language change is taking place then women seem to be the vanguard of such change. This can be illustrated clearly by considering change in present-day Dublin English. A new pronunciation of English has been evolving in the past fifteen or twenty years which was probably triggered by dissociation from local Dublin English accents by fashionable individuals in the city enjoying the prosperity and status attendant on the recent economic boom in Ireland. There are number of features in this change, two of which are relevant to this discussion. The first is the diphthongisation of the vowel in GOAT and the second is the retroflex realisation of /r/. The GOAT vowel has been developing a central starting point, very different from the back or low initial position for traditional Dublin English. Equally the retroflex /r/ – [ɻ] – can be seen as a movement away from the low rhoticity of conservative Dublin English. The figures below are from recordings made by the present author in recent years. They show a clear preference by females for the new pronunciation.

Change in present-day Dublin English and gender-related differentiation

GOAT diphthongisation

[gəʊt] versus [gout, gʌʊt]

n = 40, 40	yes	no
Male	18 (45%)	22 (55%)
Female	34 (85%)	6 (15%)

Test sentence: *They had a GOAT on their farm.*

R-retroflexion

[nɔ:ɻt] versus [nɔ:ɪt]

n = 40, 40	yes	no
Male	17 (43%)	23 (57%)
Female	36 (90%)	4 (10%)

Test sentence: *They're travelling up NORTH.*

Findings like those above have been reached in many investigations of language change in different countries. The question of interest here is why women are at the forefront of ongoing change? One explanation which connects this fact with a greater use of standard forms of language by women has to do with power. Individuals with relatively little power compared to others, have a higher sensitivity to aspects of social behaviour which can give them more power.

Where a language/variety is fairly stable and there is a standard, using this standard confers more power on women speakers by increasing their relative social status. In a situation where a language/variety is changing, as in present-day Dublin, participating actively in this change, indeed pushing it somewhat, also confers power on women because the change is something which has status associated with it, especially in Dublin where it is motivated by dissociation from those conservative speakers who do not have much social clout.

1.6 Language and culture

Sociolinguistics can be given a broader remit and consider questions of language and culture and/or ethnicity rather than just of language and society. This broader approach is labelled *anthropological linguistics*. Anthropology is a holistic science which encompasses every aspect of human society and culture at present. It can also trace human evolution and development stretching back into prehistory. There are two main branches of anthropology: 1) *Cultural or social anthropology* which studies living human societies and their cultural systems; 2) *Physical or biological anthropology* which is primarily concerned with human evolution at a much greater time depth. Typical issues in anthropological linguistics are linguistic relativity, kinship terms, colour terms, systems of address, honorifics, politeness or different modes of communication across cultures.

1.6.1 *The ethnography of communication*

The ethnography of communication is concerned with cultural differences in acts of communication, in particular what additional features accompany speech. The cultural assumptions which we have internalised in our childhood as part of the process of socialisation guide our social and linguistic behaviour for the rest of our lives. However, these assumptions must be relativised, indeed questioned, when we come into contact with other cultures. The following are some features of non-verbal behaviour which differ across cultures.

The distance which speakers keep to their interlocutors (proxemics) is important. Italians tolerate a smaller distance than do English people who may feel uncomfortable in situations where what they regard as the minimum distance between speakers is not kept.

Countries also differ in the use of the hands when talking. The body movements used in communication (kinesics) can vary over relatively small distances. Northern Europeans in general use their hands sparingly when talking, indeed Irish men very often just keep them in their pockets. Hand movements and facial expressions can often reinforce what is being said. Italians often press their elbows to their sides and hold both hands in front of their chest with the

tips of the fingers and thumbs together when explaining something, touching the chest when referring to themselves and opening the hands when making general statements or referring to their interlocutor. A common facial gesture among Mediterraneans is to protude the chin somewhat and draw the corners of the mouth downwards to express uncertainty or lack of knowledge. In many countries raising the eyebrows with deliberate eye contact and a slight twist of the head is used when seeking approval or asking a question. Touching the left corner of the forehead with the index finger of the left hand usually signals incredulity.

The angle one stands at and whether it is polite to seek eye contact is another factor. In certain African cultures it is regarded as impertinent to look someone in the eye who is perceived as socially superior. The lack of eye contact can be disconcerting for Europeans who may regard it as a sign of deviousness.

The question of touch is another sensitive issue. In most European cultures, shaking the hand of someone you meet is normal at the beginning of an encounter. Women may hug each other and men on occasions too, though it is by no means established behaviour. This does not apply outside Europe to any like the same extent. In east and south-east Asia one might make a slight bow instead or press one one's hands together under one's chin and nod as in Thailand. There are strong taboos on touching others in various cultures. This question is related to gender as well. It is not allowed for strangers to touch a woman they do not know in Arabic countries so one should not attempt to shake the hand of another man's wife.

Every conversation has a beginning and an end. The right to initiate a conversation may not apply to everyone, but only to an older person or a social superior. The termination of a conversation is less strongly codified though this too may be done by the person with relatively more social status.

In all cultures the language used to open and close an exchange is frequently formulaic. It is proverbial to say that the British and Irish can open an exchange by a reference to the weather. In west European languages *hello* or a related form is almost universal as an opener. The origin is French *holà* (from the exclamation *ho!* and *là* 'there') which entered English in the sixteenth century. There are other instances of expressions from one language which spread across countries, e.g. Italian *ciao* 'goodbye' (from a dialect word *schiaivo* 'I am your slave').

Greeting and parting formulas may derive from religious usage, although the words used may be opaque nowadays. The word *goodbye* comes from 'God be with you', though this is not obvious to all speakers of English. In Irish (Gaelic) one greets with *Dia dhuit* 'God be with you' and replies with *Dia is Muire dhuit* 'God and Mary be with you'. It is also common to thank the deity in such formulas, as in *Lá maith, buíochas le Dia* 'lovely day, thank God'.

1.6.2 Colour terms

In the late 1960s the American anthropologists Brent Berlin and Paul Kay published the results of an investigation into basic colour terms in some 98 languages from across the world. They wished to discover which colours had this basic function in each language and hence determine if there were overall patterns in colours. For a word to be a basic colour term (i) it must be a single lexeme and morphologically simple, so *redish* is not such a term, (ii) it must not be included in another term, e.g. *sepia* which is a kind of brown, (iii) it is not limited to a subset of object which it can classify, e.g. *blond* which only refers to hair, (iv) it must be wellknown and listed among the first colour terms in a language, something that would exclude English *turquoise* or *lilac*.

From their investigation they concluded that there are eleven basic colours which occur in a specific implicational order, for instance the authors claimed that if a language had a word for ‘green’ then it had a word for ‘red’, if ‘brown’ then ‘blue’, etc. The ordering for their eleven colours is as follows.

Implicational hierarchy of colours (items on right imply those on left)

	←	←	←	←	←
white	red	green	blue	brown	purple
black		yellow			pink
					orange
					grey

In order to find out what colours the words of individual languages referred to, Berlin and Kay presented their informants with colour chips which had 320 equally spaced hues and eight degrees of brightness. They found remarkable consistency in the colour chip chosen as best match to basic colour terms across the selection of languages. The hue of the colour chips chosen was termed the ‘focal hue’ for that colour. With red, for instance, the focal hue across languages was a fire-engine red.

Apart from the existence of basic colour terms, many languages show different ranges for specific colour terms. In this respect one can say that they encode distinctions in the ‘outside world’ differently, assuming that the visual perception of colour is the same for all individuals with normal vision. The following table offers some examples from a selection of European languages.

Range of colours in selected languages

In French there are two words for ‘brown’: *brun* and *marron*, the former refers to a shade of brown intermediary between yellow and black whereas the latter refers to a reddish type of brown.

In Russian there are two words for ‘blue’: *goluboi* denotes (sky)blue while *sinij* is used for a darker shade of blue.

In Irish the word *glas* can mean ‘blue’ when referring to the sea (in literary usage), ‘green’ when referring to grass, plants, etc. and ‘grey’ with reference to an object/being which cannot be green, e.g. *caora ghlas* ‘grey sheep’, *spéir ghlas* ‘grey sky’ (the same is true of the etymologically identical word *glas* in Welsh). There are also other words for these colours: *gorm* ‘blue’ and *uaine* ‘(vivid or artificial) green’ and *liath* ‘grey’ (Welsh *llwyd*).

1.6.3 Kinship terms

The basis of all kinship systems is the nuclear family, consisting of mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters. Within this unit the relationship of mother to child is the centre. The role of the father is more socially constructed than biologically given, because in some cases the father is not known and another man may act as father, one mother may have children by more than one father or no father or other man need not be present when the child is reared by the mother. The relationship of parents to children is a genealogical one which lays out who one’s ancestors are. Husbands and wives enter a mating relationship which is different in kind (not a blood relationship), hence languages have different words for these than for fathers and mothers. By and large languages further differentiate between relationships between generations, as with parents and children and those within a generation as with siblings.

The kinship terms found in a given language will first have lexicalised terms for the members of the nuclear family. Relations beyond this unit, either vertically backwards, i.e. grandparents and great grandparents, or vertically forwards, i.e. grandchildren or grandchildren, may have lexicalised terms. But these can also be constructed from elements of the nuclear family, e.g. something like ‘mother-mother’ for grandmother. Horizontal distinctions are a further plane on which relationships can be distinguished: one has uncles and aunts on the level of parents, nephews and nieces on that of one’s children. From the children’s point of view, i.e. within a generation, these individuals are cousins. Where languages have cover terms, e.g. cousins for all children of parents’ siblings, gender distinctions may or not be made, in English they are not but in French, with *cousins* ‘cousins’-MASC and *cousines* ‘cousins’-FEM, they are.

Languages furthermore distinguish between neutral and familiar terms for relatives. In German, *Großvater* is ‘grandfather’ as is the familiar term *Opa*, *Großmutter* is ‘grandmother’ as is *Oma*. Sometimes the familiar terms are restricted to parents, e.g. *mum/mom/ma* and *dad/da/pa* in English and by extension are used for grandparents as well, e.g. *grandma*, *grandpa*. English is unusual in having a scientific or academic level of usage where the term ‘sibling’ is used. This is not normally found in colloquial usage, one says instead ‘my brothers and sisters’, except in some set expressions like *sibling rivalry*.

A further axis of distinctions in kinship systems is the side on which relations are located. All relations can be identified as either paternal or maternal. Language will always have a way of indicating this. English uses a special adjective before the kinship term in question. But some languages have lexicalised terms, i.e. single words, for paternal and maternal relations respectively. Swedish, for instance, uses single-word combinations of ‘mother’ and ‘father’ to indicate the side on which grandparents are located, e.g. *morfar* ‘mother-father’, i.e. maternal grandfather, *farfar* ‘father-father’, i.e. ‘paternal grandfather’.

In the following the kinship terms in Thai are shown in a table as an example of a relatively complex system (compared to west European languages). Note that the terms for grandfather/mother/child are lexicalised. There are also terms for members within a generation who may be older or younger than others (a special feature of the Thai system).

Basic kinship terms in Thai

<i>sami</i>	‘spouse’	<i>bida marn-da</i>	‘parents’
<i>phoua</i>	‘husband’	<i>bida, phaw</i>	‘father’
<i>phanraya</i>	‘wife’ (polite)	<i>mae, marn-da</i>	‘mother’
<i>mia</i>	‘wife’ (informal)	<i>nong, phi</i>	‘brother, sister’
<i>phi-shaai</i>	‘elder brother’	<i>phi-sao</i>	‘elder sister’
<i>nong-shaai</i>	‘younger brother’	<i>nong-sao</i>	‘younger sister’
<i>louk-shaai, bout-shaai</i>			‘son’
<i>louk-sao, louk-ying, bout-ying</i>			‘daughter’
<i>laan</i>	‘grandchild’	<i>lenn</i>	‘great grandchild’
<i>pou</i>	‘grandfather’	<i>ta</i>	‘maternal grandfather’
<i>ta-thuad</i>	‘maternal great grandfather’		
<i>ya, khun-yaai</i>	‘grandmother’	<i>shouad</i>	‘great grandmother’
<i>yaai shouad</i>	‘maternal great grandmother’		
<i>aa</i>	‘father’s younger brother or sister’		
<i>na</i>	‘mother’s younger brother or sister’		
<i>yart</i>	‘cousin’	<i>yart haang-haang</i>	‘distant relations’

The word for ‘parents’, *bida marn-da*, consists of the word for ‘father’ and ‘mother’ together. Other combinations yield other new terms, e.g. the masculine ending *shaai* with *laan* ‘grandchild’ gives the word for nephew *laan-shaai*. The feminine ending *sao* forms a similar compound: *laan-sao* ‘niece’. The combinations of age groups seem strange here. Consider *phaw-ta* ‘father-in-law’ which consists of the word *phaw* ‘father’ and *ta* ‘maternal grandfather’. Equally the word *mae-yaai* ‘mother-in-law’ is made up of *mae* ‘mother’ and *yaai* ‘grandmother’. But the reasoning here seems to be that grandchildren and nephews/nieces are twice removed from oneself, in the first instance vertically through one’s own children and in the second horizontally through one’s sibling

whose children they are. The same holds for parents-in-law: they are twice removed from oneself, they are a generation older and (horizontally) the parents of one's wife whereas one's grandparents are also at two removes, this time only vertically.

1.6.4 Counting systems

As a final example of variation across languages and cultures a remarkable feature of the counting systems of a few European languages will be considered. In most languages the base 10 which is used when counting. This system derives from the ten fingers of both hands, in fact the word English *digit* is from Latin *digitus* 'finger'.

Some cultures (and their languages) use a base 20, going on the fingers and the toes. The perceptual status of the toes vis à vis the fingers is interesting: some languages see them independently and have separate words for toes (English, German, etc.). Others like Latin, Turkish, Irish call the toes the 'fingers of the foot'. French does this as well, 'toe' is *doigt de pied*, but it does give special status to the big toe: *orteil*, analogous to the thumb (lexicalised word for this finger).

The base 20 is found for counting in some languages in western Europe. French sometimes uses multiples of twenty for what are multiples of ten in other languages, e.g. *quatre vingt six* 'eighty six', i.e. four-twenty-six. The Celtic languages also show remnants of this counting system, e.g. the Welsh for twenty is *ugain* and *deugain* '40' is morphologically 'two-twenties'. Similarly in Irish twenty is *fichead* and *daichead* is etymologically *dá fichead*, again 'two-twenties'. Basque also uses the ventigesimal system and some historical linguists believe that the Celtic-French system has its origin in the language group of which Basque is the sole present-day survivor.

Summary

- *Sociolinguistics* looks at the role which language plays in society, the identity function it has in communities and how attitudes frequently determine language use. Vernacular forms of language are important for the internal cohesion of social networks.
- Socially driven *language change* can be observed by minute investigation of variation. Such change can be triggered by the imitation of prestige groups and their forms of language.
- *Lower middle class* speakers figure prominently in language change as they are at the interface of the working and the middle class and strive upwards. *Dissociation* from people further down the social scale is a strong motivating factor in language change.
- A change can start with a small set of words and can spread through the lexicon of the language (*lexical diffusion*). Alternatively, minute

variation for all instances of a sound may occur in a community (*Neogrammarian advance*). The difference between the forms with the change and those without increases in time, due to a process known as phonologisation whereby small differences are exaggerated to make them distinct from others.

- Only a subset of variations in a language at any one time lead to later change. Just what variations result in change depends on their status for the speakers. This status may be conscious in the case of identification markers or subconscious, the latter not being any less important than the former for language change.
- Women tend to use more standard language than men (perhaps due to their position in western societies). On the other hand they also tend to be at the forefront of linguistic innovations.
- The *ethnography of communication* concerns itself with discourse strategies in cultures which differ considerably from each other.