



A View into the Role of Regional Diversity in Language

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Abstract:

The discipline of Sociolinguistics is a vast one in which there are many fascinating topics of research that can give an excitement to scholars who are interested in knowing more about the riddles of the languages of the world. One of these topics is the topic of language and regional variation. If one looks at different parts of the world, he will find that there are many people who have different and various kinds of languages and these languages will have different variations whether socially or regionally. Also, it can be seen that the same language that can be found in one country will be influenced in its vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation by the speakers who live in different regions that belong to the country in which this language is found. This topic is one in the discipline of Sociolinguistics that can reveal many interesting facts about the same language which is spoken differently depending on the regions of the country. As a result, this study tries to provide a brief discussion to show some information about the topic of language and regional variation to the Iraqi EFL college instructors and to clarify to them the importance of considering the topic of regional variations of the English language that they are trying to teach to their students.

Keywords: Regional Variation, Sociolinguistics, dialects, accents



Introduction

An observation about the topic of the research is a good way to start the research. Swann et al. (2004, pp.176-177) say that language variation can be defined as a feature of a language which is significant. It can also be noticed that, most recent, the variation in language is a term that can be used to make a reference to the variable usage of forms from one language. In addition, there is also the term language diversity which is a term that can be used to refer to the situation that can be found in bilingual communities where there is a usage of multiple languages. The research in sociolinguistics has shown that variation is a structured matter not a random one. It is a structured matter along with dimensions that are social, linguistic, and stylistic. For example, in progressive constructions, the pronunciation -in is more common than the pronunciation in nouns.

Moreover, Swan et al. (2004, p.261) also say that the term regional variation is a term that can be found in sociolinguistics to refer to the differences that are linguistic in nature that can be found among speakers who live in different geographical areas such as cities, town and villages. These linguistic differences encompass morphology/sentence structure, accent and vocabulary. For example, it can be seen that the term 'Dutch cheese' is a term that can be used by speaker who live in north-eastern part of North America. The same can be refer to by the usage of differ word in the American midland where speakers use the term 'cottage cheese'.

Since the topic of variation is a crucial one in Sociolinguistics, this research was written as an attempt to investigate the topic of regional diversity in Sociolinguistics. This research will try to introduce the topic of regional diversity and talk about some of the matters that are connected to the topic. It is important to notice that when the word regional is mentioned one must keep in mind that dialects are the main focus. As a result, this research will start by mentioning the topic of dialectology and the concept of dialect, then goes on further to reveal some of vital matters that are related to the matter of dialectology and dialects.

As a result, the topic of variation carries a significant weight of importance in the field of Sociolinguistics. It is hoped that, by presenting this research, Iraqi EFL college students can have a good understanding of this matter and encourages them to focus on this topic. Also, it is hoped that this research can be beneficial in presenting some of the information to the Iraqi



EFL college instructors and to increase their background knowledge about this topic so they can carry various insight that they can teach to their students and to encourage them to enrich the academic process of research. This thing cannot be done without the support that comes from establishing different and various types of workshops that focus on the matter of regional variation whether locally or internationally.

1.2 Regional Variation

When talking about the topic of variation it is important to notice a small consideration. Trudgill (1994, p.1) says that the English language is a one which is similar to all other languages in the sense that it is very varied. In other words, there are different and various varieties of the English language that are regional or social. It is important to see that Linguistically, all these varieties are equal. In this language, no one of these varieties is superior than the other varieties.

Trudgill (1994, pp.1-2) also continues by saying that people are very used to talk about the language that they use -English for example- as if the language is considered as a clearly defined entity and a single one also. This thing is sensible when people think of the written language of the English language. There are dictionaries, literature, and grammar books that are dedicated to the English language only. Therefore, the English language is a kind of language that is quite clearly different from other languages such as German, French, and Chinese. Like all the languages that are spoken in the world, the English language can appear in various and different forms, especially one people think of the spoken English. For example, in the British Isles, any person can say the type of the English language that is used by the people there is different from the English language that is used by the people who live in Australia or in the United States. Also, within, the same country, one can notice that the English that is spoken by the people who live in England is clearly different from the one that is used by the people who live in Wales or Scotland. The same thing can be said to the English of Lancashire which is noticeably different from the English which is spoken in Kent or in Northumberland. People in Liverpool use a type of English which is not similar to the English that is used by the people of Manchester. Therefore, it can be seen that there is very substantial variation that is regional within the English language that is used different locations in the world. The same thing can be said about the English language in the British Isles. The idea here is that the way a person speaks a language -such as



English- has a great connection to the place of birth of this person, that is, where this person grew up and first learnt this language. If one person grew up in Liverpool, then he will use a type of English that is different from the one that is used in Manchester, which in turn will not be similar to the English that is used in city like London.

Before starting talking about the topic of regional variation, it is important to understand some of the terminology that are related to the topic under investigation. Trask (1999, p.49) says that the term dialect can be defined a kind of a language's variety that can be social or regional and this variety can be a more or less identified by people. It is worth to note that when the term 'regional dialects' is mentioned, then one must understand that this terms refers to every language that people use as a way of communication over any significant area by the usage of somewhat different forms that are used in different kinds of places. In addition, it can be seen that the language that are used by people who belong to different social groups may be spoken in different ways. This thing is known as 'social dialects' or another name for this term is 'sociolects'. For example, the people who live in London use a variety of the English language that is noticeably different from the variety of English that is used by the people who are living in Sydney, Liverpool, New York, Birmingham, New Orleans, or Glasgow. It is important to see that even London stockbrokers use the English language in way that is different from the motor mechanics. As a result, it is crucial to understand every person use some dialect or other. It is difficult and not possible to just use the language without the incorporating some dialect with it.

Also, there are two terms that needs to be known. These term are the 'regional language' and the 'regional dialect. Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 492) say that the term regional language can be given the definition of a language that is used by people as a way of speaking in a part of a country. It can be seen that in the province of Guangdong which is located in china and in the nearby areas, the people use a regional language which 'Cantonese'. Also, in parts of the country of France and the country of Spain one can notice that 'Catalan' which is a regional language spoken by the people at these parts of these two countries.

Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 492) also define the term regional dialect as a dialect that is related to people who use who live in a particular location. Regional dialect may incorporate national varieties of a language

such as the English language, that is, American English versus the British one. In addition, the dialects that can be found within a country such as New England can be grouped under the term of regional dialects. The same thing goes the Midland dialects and the southern dialects that can be found in the United States. The northern English dialects and the southern ones that are found in Britain can also be grouped under the term regional dialects.

1.3 Dialect Geography

Before talking about the topic of dialect geography, it is important to understand a small observation. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011, p.432) say that there is always a change in language that happens in a continuous way, such changes happen in gradual manner. Such changes may appear inside one social group or may be found in one geographic region. These changes may spread little by little to others. Such thing may, often, occur over the life spans of numerous generations of speakers. When these changes that happen in one group or even in one region do not spread, then the development in dialect diversity can be noticed. In addition, when a regular contact occur between people, then there will be a spread to linguistic properties and the children will have an acquirement to these linguistic properties. However, it needs to be seen that if a group of people are separated a barrier that prevent their communication process then there will not be a spread to linguistic changes. These barriers can be physical ones such as a mountain range or an ocean, or it can be barriers of a social natures of a religious, political, educational, class, or racial kinds. Moreover, when there is an accumulation to numerous linguistic differences that appear in a specific geographic region such as in the southern are in the United States or even in a city like Boston, then it will be noticed that the language the t people use as a way to communicate between them has its own nature or character. In such situation, the language will have various versions. The term regional dialect will be term that will be given to every version of these versions of the same language.

It is also important to know the definition of dialect geography. Crystal (2010, p.210) says that the term dialect geography can be defined as kind of study that put a focus regional distribution of languages and dialects. Another terms can be sued instead of the term dialect geography; these terms are areal linguistics or dialectology. These two terms are more common terms that have a common usage. Also the tem regional dialects have another term that can be used which is the term geographical dialect.

It is significant to know something about the investigation of regional dialects. Trask (1999, p.50) says that, since the late nineteenth century, the term dialect geography which is the term that is given to the study that focuses on the investigation of regional dialects has been a main player in the science of Linguistics. In other words, many investigations and explorations have been made to reveal regional variations. Such investigations, often, lead to the creation of many dialect atlases. A series of dialect maps could be found inside these dialect atlases. These maps revealed the variation of linguistic features. Furthermore, a serious study to the type of dialects known as social dialects began since the 1960s. William Labov which is an American linguist was the pioneer who started the investigation of social dialects.

Concerning the mater of dialect atlases, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011, p.436) say that dialect maps were published by the linguists Hans Kurath in addition to the publication of dialect atlases of a region on which there is a geographical marking to dialect differences. The map which was made by the dialectologists was marked by the places in which there is usage of a one word by speakers, and the usage of alternative word for the same item by other speakers. For example, in such a map, one can see a small pocket, this represent the place, in west Virginia, in which the usage of the term Dutch cheese is not contagious. In maps of such kinds, one can notice that there is area in which the differentiation is based on differences in the way the same word is pronounced. For example, (krik) and (krik) for the word creek. The concentrations that are created by the various ways of pronunciation and the different usages of words create dialect areas. The term isogloss is one which is given to the lines that appear on the map to make a separation between the areas. When an isogloss is cross, then there is a passing from one area to another area.

Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011, p.433) also say, in American English, the roots of many regional dialects can be traced to the group of settler show lived in North America in the 17th and the 18th centuries. The reason that made these different dialects appear is that the early settlers came from different locations of England, and those settlers used different types of dialect as a way of communication. As a result, these differences in dialects were carried with them.

1.4 Stimulus of Dialect geography

Concerning this matter, Chambers and Trudgill (2004, p.13) say that one can be surprised to observe that the major thrust to the systematic study of dialects started only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This thing is surprising because noticing the differences between dialects is so common. It can be seen that in the year 1284, the main separation between the dialect of the north and the dialect of the south was characterized by one poet in France. The name of this poet is (Bernart d'Auriac). There was a coinage to two terms by this poet. the first term is (langue d'oïl) and the second term is (langue d'oc) from the words for 'yes'. The first term was used in the north (oïl, now oui) and the second term was used in the south (oc). To this day, the terms of the poet D'Auriac are still used to characterize the dialects spilt.

In addition, Chambers and Trudgill (2004, p.14) say that the characterisations that was directed towards dialect areas were causal and spontaneous. However, this was only until the latter half of the 19th century. then, it became obvious that the characterisations of dialect areas were insufficient at the side of the striking advances in the science of philology and the striking advances that happened in other language studies which paved the way to the modern science which is known today as the science of Linguistics. The first attempts to give the dialect difference a systematise exclamations were straight response to the advances that happened in the science of philology and the other language studies. There was a group who was named the Neogrammarians, started the examination for general principles of language change due to the studies that those group made them that led them to reach to discoveries that were considered revelatory about the connection that is found between numerous modern and classical languages. The clarifying and the helpful power of one of the laws which is the verner's law was one of the basics of that made their researches apparent. This law is a atatment which clarified the phonological conditions which determine or govern those classes of words which are Germanic that can be considered as an exception to grimm's law, which was a previous discovery that showed the major phonological changes of the Germanic dialect from the Proto-Indo-European dialects. The theoretical importance of the Law of Verner was that it removed the major set of noticeable exceptions to Grimm's Law. This thing was made by displaying that theses exceptions also demonstrated rule-governed properties. There was a principle by The Neogrammarian which clarified that "sound changes are exceptionles". So,

with this strong statement or hypothesis that can be considered as a bold hypothesis and admirably refutable one at the same time, the evidence of dialect would be clearly relevant. As a consequence, dialect geography was developed. Dialect geography can be considered as a methodology, or to be accurate, a set of methods that can be used to collect and gather evidence of dialect differences in a systematic way. it must be noticed that, sometimes, another term can be used to refer to dialect geography which is the term of dialectology.

Chambers and Trudgill (2004, p.14) also say that the claims of the exceptionlessness of sound changes was demolished by the earlier results that were obtained by the dialectologists. The reason for this thing is that unimaginable heterogeneity was revealed by these results. Moreover, this kind of heterogeneity looked like almost random to the first researchers with responses that were wildly inconsistent which -in some cases- were given by neighbours. In addition, the own responses from the neighbours were, sometimes, inconsistent from day to day. This kind of inconsistency or variability got the attention of linguistic theorizing in recent years with its specific principles plus the systematicity which is rule-governed. Dialect geographers gave an initial reaction to such a thing. In other words, a profound suspicion was the initial reaction to this linguistic theorizing. The reason that made dialect geographers, make this initial reaction is because, partly, a little focus was given to the type of variability linguistic theorizing. It is this variability that was encountered by the dialectologists in their field studies.

Furthermore, Chambers and Trudgill (2004, p.15) say that, for much of the history of it, the field of dialect geography barely made any involvement with general linguistic issues. Some of the specialists in this field preoccupied themselves with the study of minutiae. the understanding of human knowledge of language could hardly be affected by this thing. One dialect collector which is the English man Alexander Ellis, stated in 1875 that accumulating or gathering country words can be seen or considered as an amusement. In other words, this gathering is for amusement purposes and it is not to place a block in the temple of science. Consequently, a little contact happened between the field of dialectology and the field of linguistics. There were some attempts to incorporating dialect research structuralist linguistics and also the generativist kind of linguistics. However, these attempts were considered thought-provoking but not particularly influential

Additionally, Chambers and Trudgill (2004, p.15) say that, in recent time, a rapprochement happened between the two fields, with the acknowledgement that the investigation of variation in language is manageable and, in tandem, dialect investigation and exploration is a fundamental source from variation data is provided. An interesting thing to observe is that there is not any kind of radical change that happened to positions assumed by the dialectologists and the linguists in this rapprochement. Instead, the appearance of the area of sociolinguistics made the dialectologists obtain natural allies. With such a thing, the exploring of language variation was broadened.

1.5 Programs of Dialect Awareness

As for this matter, Wolfram and Schilling (2016, p.348) say that, from a humanitarian view point, the resemblances in human behavior and the differences can be understood by dialect awareness programs. These programs help the people to understand these similarities and differences. In addition, an opportunity is offered by these dialect awareness programs to the people to observe how different historical and cultural development are reflected by the language and how these historical and cultural development are or helped to be shaped by the language. it is important to notice that, in the United States, it is, to some extent, surprising the recent focus on multicultural education has left out the exploration of linguistic diversity. This is to some extent a surprising matter because, to the cultural identity of people, the language is so often essential. For example, there are special programs that are owned by many schools and communities that have a connection to “Native American Heritage Month” which takes place in November, the same thing goes to the “Black History month” which takes place in February. However, with such events, one can notice that the history of the language of ‘Black American’ and the history of the language of the ‘Native American Indians’ tends to be left out and not included. Also, it can be notice that the exploration of differences in dialects have another basic or underlying reason which has a connection to the nature intellectual examination. a fascinating window is afforded to the people through the study of dialects which can enable them to observe how language works. Without doubt, a vital aspect of knowing a language such as the English language or any language in general is acquiring knowledge about how change happens to the languages over time and space. Also there will be an acquirement to the knowledge of how numerous dialects arise.



Wolfram and Schilling (2016, p.348) also say that a wealth of information is provided by studying dialects, in a formal and informal way, for inspecting the dynamic nature of language. it can be seen that because of the inherit interest of the people in dialects, then such a kind of study that focuses on dialects has a high possibility for triggering the interest of the students and the members of community in understanding how language works. Furthermore, with the process of focusing on one dialect and studying this single mainstream variety, one can see that, by the exploration of dialects and patterning of these dialects, the language's inner working is just as readily observed.

Wolfram and Schilling (2016, p.348) also mention that an exceptional form of knowledge is the knowledge about language. this also includes the knowledge of dialects. The reason for this thing is that those who speak a language are have a knowledge of the language basically by the virtue of the fact this language is spoken by them. A great weight of this knowledge cannot be found on a conscious level. However, systematic investigation can be used to examine this matter. Additionally, the patterning of language features can be given hypotheses by the students through the exploration of the differences in a dialect. After that, these hypotheses can be checked by making a study and a description process, in a careful way, to a group of data on the real usage patterns of people of this dialect. Of course, this procedure is a kind of a scientific investigation. At first glance, it may be seemed that such a rationale for focusing on dialects study a bit mysterious. However, making hypotheses about the patterns of language and then putting these hypotheses to the test is to a certain extent within the reach of students, even the younger one of them.

Furthermore, Wolfram and Schilling (2016, p.348) say that, they have been in charge of classes of students who are in the middle elementary grades. They led these students to through steps to formulate a hypothesis and making this hypothesis undergo a test by the usage of exercises that encompass dialect features. These exercises are ones that focus on “a-prefixing” and “habitual be”. These exercises actually come from a curriculum on dialects that is directed to be taught to eighth-grade students. this type of curriculum on dialects have been taught in North Carolina by them for over a couple of decades now. With such a curriculum on dialects, hypotheses can be formulated and tested, in an inductive way, by the students



at the same time they are taught about the complicated nature of the patterned differences that can be found in a dialect.

Conclusion

This research tried to introduce some information to the Iraqi EFL college instructors about one of the most significant topic in the field Sociolinguistics which is the topic variation. Variation in language can be other social or regional in its nature. The aim in this research was to present some introductory information about the role of regional diversity in language.

It can be noticed that dialects, often, have slightly different vocabulary from each other. Dialects also vary and differ from each other in having different phrases in spoken and written language. In other words, each dialect has different kind of syntax and pronunciation that makes it differ from the other dialects. These differences that can be found in dialects can appear more obviously with people who live in the countryside and in places that are remote from the big cites. The kind of dialect the person acquire is highly tied to its place of birth. All of these dialects are at the same level of importance. No dialect is better or superior than the other dialects. Furthermore, it's important to know that, one may found different kinds of dialects of one language in one country, or there may be a different dialect of the same language that is spoken in different countries. Also, one can observe that language can be changed as time goes by. The changes in the language can appear gradually, spread little by little and be clear to different generations of speakers. Such a thing lead to the appearance of different dialects. As a result, it was crucial to explore these differences in dialects. The field of dialectology or dialect geography was the answer to this issue. As the scenic of linguistics was flourish in in the middle half of the twentieth century, the area of dialect geography studies was not getting enough focus. This equation changed by the appearance of the field of Sociolinguistics. Dialect geography gained an important ally that helped him to flourish with the assistance of the pioneer William Labov who was an American linguist who started the investigation of social dialects.

It is also important to understand that, in education, the topic of dialect varieties and its usages by students in educational institutions such as schools and universities is not much focused on. Also, there is no educational Curriculums at schools or universities that focus a lot on the differences that can be found among dialects and present the material with the usage of these



different dialects. This topic is a vital one since, in local context, one can find that there are different kind of dialects that can be found across the country. Every student has a type of dialect that makes him unique than the other students. As result, there is a high necessity to establish different types of workshops that gives the topic of regional diversity and language a high priority. Such workshops can be beneficial to the college students. In addition, the Iraqi EFL college instructors can benefit from these workshops since it will increase their background knowledge about this topic. Such a thing can make them gain new insights about this the topic of regional diversity of languages.

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نظرة إلى دور التنوع الإقليمي في اللغة

مستخلص البحث:

إن تخصص علم اللغة الاجتماعي هو مجال واسع يوجد فيه العديد من موضوعات البحث الرائعة التي يمكن أن تثير الإثارة للعلماء المهتمين بمعرفة المزيد عن ألباز لغات العالم. أحد هذه الموضوعات هو موضوع اللغة والتنوع الإقليمي. إذا نظر المرء إلى أجزاء مختلفة من العالم ، فسيجد أن هناك العديد من الأشخاص الذين لديهم أنواع مختلفة ومختلفة من اللغات وأن هذه اللغات سيكون لها اختلافات مختلفة سواء اجتماعيا أو إقليميا. أيضا ، يمكن ملاحظة أن نفس اللغة التي يمكن العثور عليها في بلد واحد ستتأثر في مفرداتها وقواعدها ونطقها من قبل المتحدثين الذين يعيشون في مناطق مختلفة تنتمي إلى البلد الذي توجد فيه هذه اللغة. هذا الموضوع هو واحد في تخصص علم اللغة الاجتماعي الذي يمكن أن يكشف عن العديد من الحقائق المثيرة للاهتمام حول نفس اللغة التي يتم التحدث بها بشكل مختلف اعتمادا على مناطق البلد. ونتيجة لذلك ، تحاول هذه الدراسة تقديم مناقشة موجزة لإظهار بعض المعلومات حول موضوع اللغة والتنوع الإقليمي لمعلمي كلية اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية العراقية وتوضيح لهم أهمية النظر في موضوع الاختلافات الإقليمية للغة الإنجليزية التي يحاولون تدريسها لطلابهم.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الاختلاف الإقليمي ، علم اللغة الاجتماعي ، اللهجات ، اللهجات.