

Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
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The Process of Standardization of Language


Welcome to class. Today we are going to talk about standard languages and the process of standardization. It is a very important topic in sociolinguistics and lots of research and scholarly discussion have undergone to develop a consensus on the stages and processes of standardization. When we say the process of standardization, the phrase itself implicitly expresses a deliberate attempt in doing so.

Why do we need to standardize a language? Language is a social phenomenon and language is owned by people, then who does this, in quotes “standardization process”, even without standardization, in quotes, “language functions perfectly fine” and it has been used by the community for various purposes. It has extended social functions. So, what is the need for standardization, why do we standardize a language?

So if you have any extended institutional function and in most of the cases this standardization process happens when you want to declare a particular language as an official language or national language or if you extend its function, label it differently then we need to standardize it and we do it.


This process of standardization is always contentious, and debatable and the supporters and opposition both have been engaged in debates for years and years, but today we will briefly look at the process of standardization and how and why we do it.

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Language Standardization

- "The process by which a language has been codified in some way. That process usually involves the development of such things as grammars, spelling books, and dictionaries, and possibly a literature".
◦ Wardhaugh (2006)
- Standard variety is generally one which is written, and which has undergone some degree of regularization or codification (for example, in grammar and dictionary); it is recognized as prestigious variety of code by a community.
◦ Holmes (2013)



If we go by the idea of Wardhaugh, I quote, “the process by which a language has been codified in some way that is the process of standardization, standard language, that process usually involves the development of such languages in terms of grammar, spelling books, dictionaries and possibly a literature”. So, deliberate attempts are made to make a particular variety, a particular code standard.

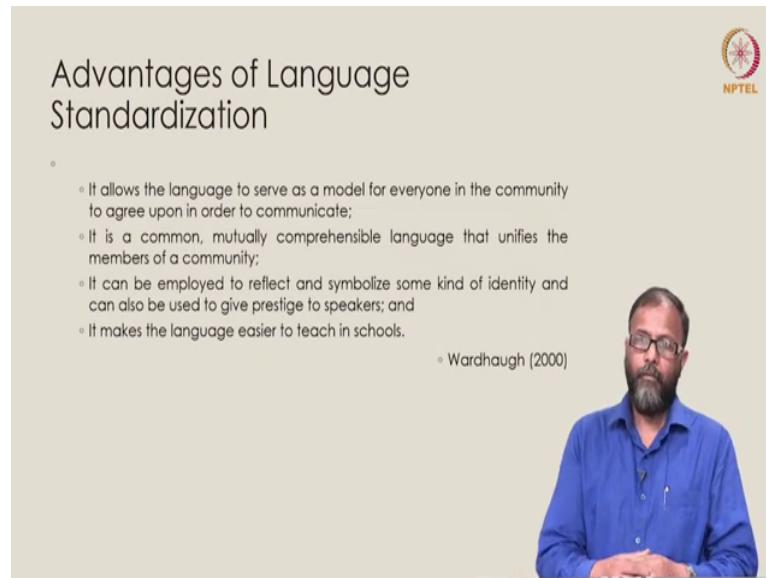
Holmes, 2013, says “Standard variety is generally one which is written and which has undergone some degree of regulation or of regularization or codification, for example, in terms of grammar and dictionary it is recognized as a prestigious variety of the code by a community.” So, in some way, it is a deliberate attempt and a language is chosen and codified. So, it gets institutional support.

It gets extended institutional functions and suddenly the status of language changes. Holmes underlines the fact that standard language will have written literature, a written format, but if you look at the languages of the world majority of them do not have a writing system, because language is primarily oral and not all languages have a script, even if a language has a writing system majority of them do not have a script.

So, such activities as making them standard, assigning a script, and writing in a language are all volitional deliberate attempts. In order to assign a high status and institutional support, we do standardization of a language and the speakers of the language attain a kind of status and

elitism, so it is an elite initiative by institutions to give it a prestige value, to give a particular code of prestige value.

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The slide is titled "Advantages of Language Standardization" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains a bulleted list of four advantages:

- It allows the language to serve as a model for everyone in the community to agree upon in order to communicate;
- It is a common, mutually comprehensible language that unifies the members of a community;
- It can be employed to reflect and symbolize some kind of identity and can also be used to give prestige to speakers; and
- It makes the language easier to teach in schools.

The citation "◦ Wardhaugh (2000)" is located at the bottom right of the text area. A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt, is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide, appearing to be the speaker.

Now, Wardhaugh lists four advantages of standardization and says, his recommendation says, “It allows the language to serve as a model for everyone in the community to a degree upon in order to communicate.” So, it is almost prescriptive in nature, it is not natural, it is prescriptive. So, a particular code is being prescribed after codification and of course, it brings uniformity in the use and it becomes a model for others in the community and they use it.

Second, he says, “It is a common and mutually comprehensible language that unifies the members of a community.” So, it develops solidarity among the community members, as he says. “It can be employed to reflect and symbolize some kind of identity and can also be used to give prestige to speakers,” fourth he says, “It makes the language is easier to teach in schools,” so extended function.

So this advantage, advantages of it is that it develops solidarity among the speakers of the language, it makes the use of language uniform, it produces a lot of referential materials and literature and the grammar, thesaurus and other things, either reference document and it can be formally taught in this school or at any level, so it can be learned by any other speaker of the non-native speaker of the language. These are the advantages that Wardhaugh lists about the standardization of language.

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Janet Holmes proposes these four stages. So look at these four stages of language standardization. So, the first stage is called selection, the second stage is codification, the third stage is elaboration and the fourth stage is acceptance. So, there are four stages involved in the process of standardization of a language and all of these four are interrelated, and interdependent, they are not independent processes and they go in that sequence.

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The slide contains two bullet points: '• Selection and acceptance are steps which involve social and political factors.' and '• Codification and elaborating the code to handle a wider range of functions are, by contrast, essentially linguistic processes. Producing a dictionary and ensuring there are words available for teaching science in the variety, for instance, are problems for linguists. (Holmes,2013)'. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner. A speaker in a blue shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the video frame.

So, the first is selection. So, if you look at the selection, selection and acceptance are steps that involve social and political factors. Now, suppose let us take the case of India for that matter which is multilingual in nature, hundreds of language is spoken in this country. There

are four major language families and the fifth one is a minor language family, minor families, so five language families are five different groups of languages.

Like you have Indo-Aryan language families, you have Dravidian language families, you have Austroasiatic language families, you have Tibeto-Burman language families, so each of these families has hundreds of languages in them as a member, and suppose I have to choose one language for a standardization process, it is such a controversial, political and social problem. What are the criteria for choosing a language for standardization and what about the other languages that we leave behind

Is not it a discriminatory process? Is not it institutionally favoring a particular variety, a particular language, within the same language which variety are you going to adopt or select for standardization? For that matter look at Hindustani, the case of Hindustani and Hindi, after partition Urdu was declared as the official language of Pakistan, and Hindi was declared as the official language of India.

But look at Hindustani, which is spoken in the streets, in the markets, in the family domain or informal domain, among friends, and relatives, we do not just make a distinction and Hindustani is an amalgamation of this composite culture, Hindi and Urdu two separate labels assigned and attempts were made to make them look, sound and feel different. Apart from a few phonological factors, phonological characters and one or two syntactic, morphosyntactic rules like genetic phrases, the grammar is the same.

So, at all levels of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, they both look the same, but they have two different levels, so the process of standardization began after being adopted as official languages. Commissions and committees were set up in Pakistan for Urdu, and in India for Hindi and we have got a lot of continued effort being carried out to develop, promote and make Hindi acceptable all over the country.

But again, regional languages are also given, some of them not all of them, have been given constitutional associate status where schedule eight of the constitution lists 22 languages as scheduled languages, but if you look at the census 2011, we have the government identifies 121 languages as full-fledged languages spoken and used in the country. Out of 121, 22 are listed and called scheduled languages in the 8th schedule of the constitution and 99 languages are called non-scheduled languages.


If you go by the entries and returns of the respondents to enumerators, you find more than 15000 varieties being returned in the 2011 census as the mother tongue. So, that is the complexity and diversity of this country. So, selecting a particular code or a particular variety, a particular language, and then making it a standard is an uphill task, but of course, the first stage of standardization involves a selection of a particular code for this purpose of standardization.

So, out of the four stages, two stages are socio-politically sensitive and they have a lot of socio-political factors implied in the selection and also responses of the people towards this selection, so two stages, selection, and acceptance are socio-political in nature. But the remaining two, codification and elaboration, these two stages are pure linguistic exercises where efforts are made to create resources.

When you say codification that means we are codifying the rules, developing the reference material for the grammar, setting up grammar rules, developing dictionaries, thesaurus, reference documents and elaboration means you are extending the scope and the function of language to different extended domains, be it intellectual, literary, science, technology, education, administration.


So, language has to be developed to such an extent that it fulfills all these functions in all these extended domains. So, out of the four interrelated stages of standardization two stages, selection and acceptance are socio-political in nature, and codification and elaboration are purely linguistic in nature. So, let us go to each of these stages one by one.

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Selection

- Standardization represents an attempt to curtail, minimize if not eliminate this high degree of variability (Stadler, 1983).
- A variety or code is selected to be developed.
- The chosen dialect may be the one spoken by the powerful and elite educated groups and has wider acceptance and spread.



So, we will start with selection. So, standardization represents an attempt to curtail, minimize if not eliminate the high degree of variability. Stadler, 1983, said. So, what do you do? We try to minimize the variation which means we try to make the grammar huge and function of the variety or the code is chosen for the purpose of little or with no variability. So we try to fix it, and make it uniform so that we minimize the variation. So, the variation in the language is minimized and becomes minimal.

A variety of codes is selected for this purpose and the chosen dialect may be the one spoken by powerful and elite educated groups and has wider acceptance and spread. But in some cases, look at, for example, cases in African countries, in order to protect their indigenous languages governments in African countries have adopted, selected, codified, elaborated, and have made efforts to make it accepted by the population as a standard variety in order to preserve their culture, their inherited knowledge, and their heritage.


So it is also an attempt to preserve a language where we see the declaration of some indigenous languages as official languages in certain European, sorry, African countries. So a chosen dialect is usually, widely popular, acceptable, and used by a large population and it enjoys primacy over the rest of the varieties and rest of the languages. So, that is the variety chosen for this purpose.

Sometimes it may be for preservation like some African countries are doing, sometimes it is for declaring them as official languages like Pashto and Dari in Afghanistan, Urdu in

Pakistan, Hindi in India, and regional languages like Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Punjabi, Marathi, Bangla at regional levels, Bangla in Bangladesh, you can understand the case of Bangla that led to a division of us while east and west Pakistan.


Now, Bangladesh in 1971 was carved out, so the language was so, such a bone of contention between these two systems, and Bangladesh fought a war for its Independence in 1971. So, these languages have been chosen and have undergone a huge amount of codification. So, the selection is the first stage, once you select, then we go to the next stage. And what is the next stage?

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Codification

- It refers to standardising its structural or linguistic features. This kind of 'linguistic processing' is known as corpus planning.
- As an elaborate linguistic exercise, the norms and rules of grammar, use, etc. are formulated, and laid down definitively in grammars, dictionaries, spellers, manuals of style, texts, etc. , so that it can be used in official documents, taught in schools and learnt by non-native speakers and foreigners.

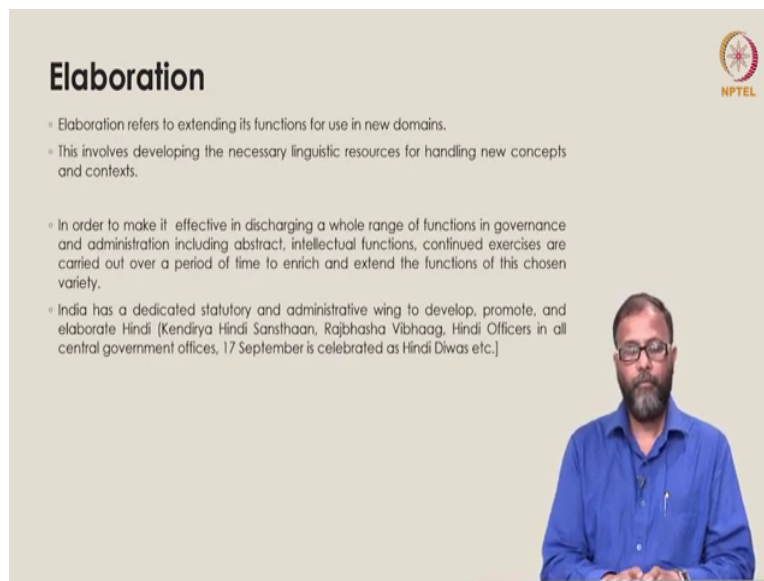


Codification, and what do you mean by that? So, the codification refers to standardizing its structural or linguistic features and what are these features in terms of grammar, extended vocabulary, an elaborate linguistic exercise, the norms, and rules of grammar, use et cetera, are formulated and laid down, new dictionaries are created, a thesaurus is created, manuals are created, spellers are created, style sheets and text and we work on the scripts. So, lots of linguistic exercises we do to codify it.

So, this is a purely linguistic exercise carried out by groups of experts, committees, commissions, and language bureaus created by the institutions and governments they create manuals, and they are codified in such a way that all the official activities can be carried out. A huge body of literature is created, textbooks are created, and curricula are created, so that it can be taught in the school and learned by non-native speakers.

So, this is the second stage where a lot of linguistic exercises are carried out and the language is enriched in terms of extended descriptions of grammar, creating grammar books, formulating rules, creating dictionaries, creating thesauri, creating user manuals, creating spellers and the styles and the texts, so a lot of resources are generated to support this initiative of making it standard. So, resource materials are created, and that is the second stage.


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Elaboration

- Elaboration refers to extending its functions for use in new domains.
- This involves developing the necessary linguistic resources for handling new concepts and contexts.
- In order to make it effective in discharging a whole range of functions in governance and administration including abstract, intellectual functions, continued exercises are carried out over a period of time to enrich and extend the functions of this chosen variety.
- India has a dedicated statutory and administrative wing to develop, promote, and elaborate Hindi (Kendriya Hindi Sansthaan, Rajbhasha Vibhaag, Hindi Officers in all central government offices, 17 September is celebrated as Hindi Diwas etc.)

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The third stage is called elaboration. And elaboration refers to extending its function for use in new domains. So, elaboration refers to extending the functions of language in new domains. And in order to make it effective, in discharging a whole range of functions in governance, in administration as well as abstract intellectual functions, continued exercises are carried out over a period of time to enrich and extend the functions of this chosen variety.

So, this variety is or this code is made equipped with all referential materials, the document supports, extended vocabulary list, reformulated and extended grammatical functions. India has dedicated a statutory and an administrative wing to develop remote and elaborate Hindi. For example, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan is the apex body in looking after the growth of Hindi, its spread, and acceptability pan India.

Then all the departments, the parliament has Raj Bhasha Vibhag and all central government departments have a Hindi officer whose job is to look at the implementation of constitutional provisions, general orders, and rules being made, which have been made to promote Hindi in


all government functions and functionings. 17 September for that matter is celebrated as Hindi Divas, Hindi day. So, a lot of exercises are carried out for acceptability; that is the fourth stage.

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Acceptance

- The status of the new variety is important, and so people's attitudes to the variety being developed must be considered.
- Steps may be needed to enhance its prestige, for instance, and to encourage people to develop pride in the language, or loyalty towards it.
- This is known as status planning or prestige planning.
- This is done through institutions, agencies, authorities such as schools, ministries, the media, cultural establishments, etc.



So, after elaboration, we work for acceptance of this variety or the standard code among the population, among the people. So, the status of a new variety is important and people's attitudes to having this variety being developed must be considered. Because all these exercises become futile if people do not accept them, so that is why we said that selection and acceptance are socio-political in nature.

So, then the standardizing body or the body which is primarily responsible for making it standard variety takes a lot of measures and campaigns to make it acceptable and it is not achieved within a short period of time, it takes time, it is a time taking process and gradually people start accepting this variety at standard variety, a kind of prestige, a perceived prestige is achieved, assigned to it and accepted by the people.

This variety also offers social upward mobility, opportunities for employment, and for growth. So, steps may be needed to enhance its prestige for instance and to encourage people to develop pride in the language you can see these are all prescriptive in nature, but it takes time and gradually it evolves. This is also known as status planning or prestige planning. We will talk about language planning in some other class, not here today.

And this is done through the institution, agencies, authorities such as schools, ministries, and the media and cultural establishment, so it is a whole gamut of effort and a huge range of agencies. Some agencies are created by the government, then the media, then the establishment, then the cultural agents and other opinion makers extend support in promoting this variety and also helping perceive an added prestige to this variety, and gradually it is accepted by people as the standard variety.

So sum up, the process of standardization is a deliberate attempt by institutions for achieving a particular purpose, maybe for the preservation of culture and inheritance. Like some African countries do so where they have announced a particular variety, indigenous variety as their official language, and they have standardized that and adopted it as an official language. However, the majority of the works are carried out in colonial English, but still, they have given official status to such indigenous languages.

They have been adopted, they have been codified, and they have been elaborated and are now accepted by a majority of the population. Functions could not be extended in those cases, but here in India we have declared Hindi as an official language and at the regional level various languages like Tamil, Telugu, Oriya, Bangla, Punjabi, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada, so these are the languages which are adopted, codified, elaborated and accepted as the standard variety. This is a decision by institutional and standard language has institutional support.

And any variety qualifies, any code qualifies to be standardized by the institution but the selection of it is socio-political. So, there are social-political factors why we select a particular language for the standardization process and once we select then two other stages are involved which are purely linguistic in nature, one is called codification, and the other is called elaboration.

So in codification rules are fixed, they are extended, functions are extended, grammar books are created, thesauri are made, reference materials are created, manuals, user manuals, spellers, and style sheet, these are all mentioned and developed in elaboration, the functions of the language are elaborated because the functions of language are extended, it can now go up to abstract functions, literary functions, other government official functions, science, technology, education.

So, depending on the need code is elaborated and lots of reference materials, thesaurus are created and then the fourth stage which is called acceptance is again persuasive in nature,

deliberate attempts are made by the government or the agencies to promote, support and make it accepted by the larger part of the population. So, this is the process of standardization.

We will continue our discussion about the case of India and the linguistic diversity of India and how this process of standardization or adopting some of the languages at a regional level as an official languages, we will talk about all these later. Thank you, for now, thank you very much.