



Research Article

ETHNOLECTS IS THE STUDY OF ETHNIC DIALECTS

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the problems of dialect which is a variety of language that is characteristic of a particular group among the language speakers. The groups of people who are the speakers of a dialect are usually bound to each other by social identity. This is what differentiates a dialect from a register or a discourse, where in the latter case, cultural identity does not always play a role. Summing up the results, it can be concluded that dialects are speech varieties that have their own grammatical and phonological rules, linguistic features, and stylistic aspects, but have not been given an official status as a language.

KEYWORDS

Ethnic dialect, identification, nationality, origin, variety, discourse, linguistic feature, stylistic aspect, official status.

INTRODUCTION

The term dialect can be used to describe differences in speech associated with various social groups or classes. An immediate problem is that of defining social group or social class, giving proper weight to the various factors that can be

used to determine social position, for example, occupation, place of residence, education, income, “new” versus “old” money, racial or ethnic category, cultural background, caste, religion, and so on. Such factors as these do



appear to be related fairly directly to how people speak. There is a British “public-school” dialect, and there is an “African American” dialect found in many places in the United States. Whereas regional dialects are geographically based, social dialects originate among social groups and are related to a variety of factors, the principal ones apparently being social class, religion, and race/ethnicity. In India, for example, caste, one of the clearest of all social differentiators, quite often determines which variety of a language a speaker uses. Studies in social dialectology, the term used to refer to this branch of linguistic study, examine how ways of speaking are linked to social differences within a particular region. Another factor in social dialectology which has received a great deal of attention is race/ethnicity; about which a wealth of sociolinguistic researches has been carried out, and which are emerging as an important focus in the study of ethnic dialects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

So-called ethnic dialects do not arise because members of particular ethnic groups are somehow destined to speak in certain ways; like all other social dialects, ethnic dialects are learned by exposure and anyone, regardless of their ethnic identification or racial categorization, might speak in ways identified as ‘African American Vernacular English’ or ‘Chicano English.’ The connection between race/ethnicity/nationality and linguistic variety is one that is entirely socially constructed, it is in no way linked to any inherent attributes of a particular group. Dialectal words are introduced into the speech of personages to indicate their

origin. The number of dialectal words and their frequency also indicate the educational and cultural level of the speaker.

A dialect is a variety of language that is characteristic of a particular group among the language speakers. The group of people who are the speakers of a dialect are usually bound to each other by social identity. This is what differentiates a dialect from a register or a discourse, where in the latter case, cultural identity does not always play a role. Dialects are speech varieties that have their own grammatical and phonological rules, linguistic features, and stylistic aspects, but have not been given an official status as a language. Dialects often move on to gain the status of a language due to political and social reasons.

RESULTS

The literary language greatly influences the non-literary language. Many words, constructions and particularly phonetic improvements have been introduced through it into the English colloquial language. This influence had its greatest effect in the 19th century with the spread of general education, and in the present century with the introduction of radio and television into the daily lives of the people. Many words of a highly literary character have passed into the non-literary language, often undergoing peculiar morphological and phonetic distortions in the process. The difficulty that one faces when attempting to specify the characteristic features of the non-literary variety lies mainly in the fact that it does not present any system. The best way



to check this or that form of non-literary English is to contrast it to the existing form.

The processes that create ethnic dialects are poorly understood, and much research remains to be done into how and why they develop. However, we do know that ethnic dialects are not simply foreign accents of the majority language, as many of their speakers may well be monolingual speakers of the majority language. Chicano English, for example, is not English with a Spanish accent and grammatical transfer, as many of its speakers are not Spanish speakers but English monolinguals. Ethnic dialects are in group ways of speaking the majority language.

DISCUSSIONS

One study which gives us insights into the motivations for the development of an ethnic dialect was done by Kopp (1999) on Pennsylvania German English, that is, the English spoken among speakers of what is commonly called “Pennsylvania Dutch,” which is a German dialect which developed in certain regions of Pennsylvania. Kopp analyzes a variety of features associated with speakers of Pennsylvania German in both sectarian (i.e., Amish and Mennonite) and nonsectarian communities. He discovers what at first seems to be a paradoxical pattern: although the sectarians are more isolated from mainstream society, and they continue to speak Pennsylvania German, their English has fewer phonological features that identify them as Pennsylvania German speakers than the nonsectarians, who are integrated into the English mainstream and less likely to be speakers of Pennsylvania German.

An ethnolect is generally defined as a language variety that marks speakers as members of ethnic groups who originally used another language or distinctive variety. According to another definition, an ethnolect is any speech variety (language, dialect, subdialect) associated with a specific ethnic group. Ethnolects are used by members of different ethnic groups to help establish personal and ethnic identity, as well as reflect their position in society. They also help outsiders understand the characteristics of certain ethnic groups and the different ways people can express themselves through language. Although ethnolects and dialects can become confused with one another, there are differences between them both. Let's begin by defining what a dialect is.

A dialect is a form of language that is spoken by a specific group of people. It may not be understood by outsiders. An example of a dialect is Southern American. Unlike an ethnolect, a dialect is not dependent on ethnicity alone. Instead, the specific groups of people are connected through a range of social factors, such as region, gender, age, ethnicity, job, etc. On the other hand, an ethnolect is a type of dialect that focuses solely on ethnic groups. What's the difference between a language and a dialect? Even to linguists, the boundaries aren't always clear, and the two are often used interchangeably in casual conversation.

In most definitions, however, a dialect specifically refers to a variety or form of a language that is regionally or socially distinguished—that is, a variety that displays unique characteristics of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, which



are often influenced by social class and/or geographical region. Examples of dialects abound in both modern and ancient languages, from Aeolic Greek (a distinctive dialect group of Ancient Greek) to Southern U.S. English, as found widely throughout the southern United States.

So the nonsectarians, who are in many cases English monolinguals, exhibit more phonological features reminiscent of a Pennsylvania German accent in their spoken English than the sectarians! As Kopp explains, this makes perfect sense when we think of language as providing a way to construct identity. The sectarians speak Pennsylvania German, and thus can use that language to create group boundaries; the nonsectarians, who increasingly do not speak Pennsylvania German, have only their variety of English to use to construct themselves as members of a particular ethnic group. Cities are much more difficult to characterize linguistically than are rural hamlets; variation in language and patterns of change are much more obvious in cities, for example, in family structures, employment, and opportunities for social advancement or decline. Migration, both in and out of cities, is also usually a potent linguistic factor.

CONCLUSION

In research which examines the complexities of urban speech, Jaspers (2008) also addresses some of the ideological issues at stake in the study of ethnic dialects. He addresses the practice of naming particular ways of speaking as ethnolects, pointing out that it is indicative of the ideological

positions of the sociolinguists doing the research themselves. Labeling and describing a particular way of speaking as an ethnic dialect implies a certain homogeneity about the variety and its speakers, and it inevitably also places the dialect and the group who speaks it outside the mainstream.

Jaspers writes (2008): “The point is not that code-establishment and naming as such should be frowned upon, but that they limit our understanding of inner-city social and linguistic practices, and that they have ideological consequences sociolinguists should take into account. As an alternative, I have advocated that ethnolect be regarded as a useful term for speakers’ perceptions of particular ways of speaking (and of course, some scholars of ethnolects are already attending to perceptions of this kind), with the understanding that speakers’ perceptions, and the names they develop for them, do not necessarily correspond to systematic linguistic differences (and vice versa)”.

An ethnolect is a variety of language that is associated with a particular ethnic group. In the United States, for example, both Chicano English (Mexican-American English) and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) have been described as ethnolects. There are also multiethnolects, or language varieties that have been influenced by multiple languages, especially in dense, working-class urban areas.

The term is not without controversy. Some researchers express concerns that the focus on ethnicity could overlook other factors of language development, or that it could lead to incorrect and



harmful stereotypes. For instance, it's important to avoid falling into the trap of standard language ideology, which suggests that a majority group speaks a "standard" or purer language, while its minority ethnic groups speak a substandard "ethnolect."

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