

Subject name: Language and Society
Prof. name: Prof.Rajesh Kumar
Department: Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Institute name: IIT Madras
Lecture number: Module -16
Lecture title: Fluidity and Continuum.

We will talk about two specific terms namely Fluidity and Continuum in order to understand complexity in relationship between language and society. In fact these two terms help us understand true nature of language in society.

We have looked at the nature of language in terms of its structure, relations with the components, at the level of sounds, words and Sentences. Today we are going to be looking at the nature of language in society the nature of language in the real world and how it projects itself as a very fluid system and therefore we say Fluidity which transforms itself into a Continuum happens to be true nature of language in the real society.

By the real society once again we mean the world, the surroundings, nearby places where we use languages. So we will examine this these two terms what we mean by them and how they work in the next few minutes for us to understand the term language in society to be. To begin with

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Introduction

- It is difficult to count languages.
 - We do not know where one language stops and the other begins.
 - This is probably why no body knows the total number of languages
- Standard and non-standard languages
 - Super structure is language
 - Varieties are dialect
 - Varieties are non-standard



We wanted to start with the idea that it is difficult to count languages. Now I want you to consider this in terms of a question.


How many languages are spoken around? How many languages do you speak? How many languages are spoken in your city? How many languages are spoken in your state? and eventually

How many languages are spoken in India or around the world? We can expand the scope of geography but it is very difficult to answer these questions precisely for the reason that it is difficult to count languages. Now I want you to understand this term with some seriousness and only in the context we are not saying that there are not several languages.

We are only saying that the idea to count them is difficult and we will justify why we say it is difficult and what we mean by such a difficult. This is because we do not know where
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one language stops and the other begins and that is the precise reason why it is difficult to count.

We will situate it in a proper context for us to understand. And this is why probably nobody knows the total number of languages. In fact if you start at an individual level with the question that how many languages do you speak you can come up with the numbers like 1, 2 or 3 but the point is why this how do we distinguish one with the other.

Do we make sure that they do not merge with one another or do we merge them on purpose these are the tricky questions which help us understand the Fluidity and Continuum. We will get back to this point once again but last time we have looked at two terms standard and non standard in the context of language.

Let us look at it very briefly once again in this context of the two terms of Fluidity and Continuum. When we want to establish the distinction or similarities between language and variety we have one what we call language as the super structure and then we have several variants of that which are known as different varieties or dialects of that.

So if we take the example of Hindi that will serve as the super structure and several varieties of Hindi that is several distinct varieties which are spoken at different places in the world would constitute its variants from Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar, Bengal and Assam and hence several other places.

I am only naming a few Hindi spoken in these places have their own distinct identities as a super structure term call them Hindi we call this Hindi but they are group of varieties with their local identities. The idea that we associate the term Standard with Language and Non standard with its varieties or dialects clashes very soon, because the whole point that the language exists, does not hold its ground. If you understand it carefully you will know that the super structure does not exist what really exists is its varieties of language.

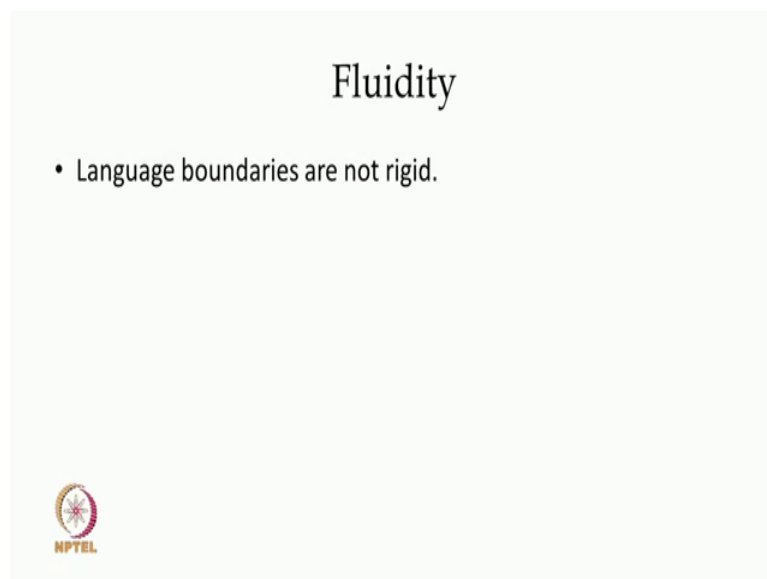
Therefore everything would be what one would want to call non standard. Hence the distinction between the two would not make much of the point, therefore no distinction between standard and non standard. The when we put this point that there is no distinction between standard and non standard we do not want to make it as a statement which could have potential or being politically correct.

The non-existence of the distinction between standard and non standard is not a politically correct statement rather it is how language looks on the ground and how we understand technicalities underlying language is the point that we are trying to make with non-existence of the distinction between standard and non standard.

So once again we establish the point that, in society, people speak only varieties people speak only dialects and they are all the same. There is no question of standard and non standard given that and given the human ability to negotiate between varieties. This is the point where we begin the question of multilinguality that even the capacity to negotiate between varieties could be considered as multilingual capacity.

So we want to connect it with the question of Fluidity that the minimum variation minimal distinction at the level of Phonology, Morphology or Syntax between distinct varieties of language would be connected with one another because of its nature of fluidity. The fluidity also means that there are not rigid language boundaries. In other words, language boundaries are not rigid.

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they are rather porous. Languages merge into one another effortlessly and one of the examples of this merging into one another results one of the outcomes of this hypothesis of fluidity is next.

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Mixing

- **Jab** we met,
- English **Vinglish**,
- **Jodi** Breakers,
- **kya** Super Cool **Hain Hum**,
- *India's got Talent*,
- *Big Boss*,
- **Teri Meri** *Love Stories*, etc.



We can look at several examples from well known context of Hindi and English. However, this phenomenon is not limited only to major spoken language or only to these two Hindi and English. However let us take the example from Hindi and English and see the phinage of these terms some of them are names of different movies they are Hindi based and therefore some of them are names of different television serials or television programmes in India and most of them all of them are Hindi.

The it is the fluidity, it is the fluid nature of language and it is the porous boundaries which allow this phenomena when we come up the term, jab we met, so without getting into the details it sounds like somebody wanted to say when we met and came up with this attractive question about the title jab we met but this is dramatically and socially permitted a sequence of words and it is acceptable. Look at the next term English Vinglish.

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This comes out of a very productive pattern that exists in language. In this particular example Hindi, it is the takeover formation where the first sound of the word changes to va and rest of it, rest of it gets be duplicated so the first sound of the word English is e and we have va in that place and then the vowel continues and we get the echo word Vinglish which is semantically noun. In other words would not mean a thing. However this creates a Hindi phrase and the term English Vinglish which is an acceptable term comes to be a name of the movie.

And likewise we can go down the list and see the innovative use of mixing through very creative and very creative style and productive patterns available in languages. And thus we get several such examples.

Again I would like to add such examples are available in all languages in among all varieties and they the two varieties of two languages tend to mix with one another and the speakers of the two varieties are the speakers of the two languages allow them that phenomena to happen without a concise effort or without much effort. To take some more examples on the level of sentence these are some of the sentence

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Mixing at the level of sentence

- Perfect nikhaar ke liye kya kya fairness treatment karne honge.
- pahle tumhari skin dekh lein,....spots, dullness, tan, darkcircles, aur saawlapan....sabka fairness treatment karana hoga
- ye sirf cream nahi.. fairness treatment hai
- Bharatiya railway ne safar ko musical banana ke liye kuch selected traino me classical music va hit song track sunane ki scheme banayi hai...



is from television commercials of different products. I only want to draw your attention of sentences, use of these words in the sentence. I am using these sentences without clauses for you to spend some time on this to make sense of this productive pattern of mixing.

However it is not difficult to get the meaning out of it whether or not you know one or the other language. Take a look at the first example. perfect nikhaar ke liye (Refer Slide Time : 13:52)

Mixing at the level of sentence

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kya kya fairness treatment karne honge. The things in bold are terms from Hindi and rest of them are from English. Look at it, at the some point it is difficult to say which part of it is Hindi and which part of it is English and if you do not pay close attention to this, this sentence could pass as a good Hindi sentence. This means what all do I need to do for perfect

fairness. Similarly the second sentence which comes from the commercial is pahle tumhari skin dekh lein.

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spots, dullness, tan, dark circles, aur saawlapan sabka fairness treatment karana hoga. Look at the use of terms in the sentence. We only want to draw again your attention to do the uses of terms and the creativity of these terms between Hindi and English. Third ye sirf cream nahi fairness treatment hai. Cream, fairness treatment all of these are the words from a different language and the grammar of this sentence is Hindi with hai .Bharatiya Railway ne safar ko musical banana ke liye kuch selected traino me classical music va hit song vah track sunane ki scheme banayi hai .

This is again a Hindi sentence which means Indian Railways has arranged for classical music and hit rock songs tracks and this is for making travel little musical and the railway has come up with this scheme. If you read this sentence it is difficult to put a finger on the boundaries of the two languages where one begins and the other ends.

We are not again going into the details, technical details of what is allowed to mix and what is not allowed to mix. In other words the constraint of mix is not the point at we are trying to make it but the point is with an example of Hindi and English we are trying to show the two unrelated languages will allow mixing with us the boundaries or porous.

Because the boundaries are not rigid therefore such a creative mixing, of course, there are motivations behind why these things are mixed together but we do not want to read into

motivation at this point. For the simplicity of the point so this is an example of how languages are fluid we will I would extend the meaning of fluidity to more examples which follow shortly. However two terms that we know, Pidgins and Creoles are also part of this fluid fluidity which

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Pidgins and Creoles

- Pidgin
 - Minimal pattern in communication
 - No body's language
 - Arises when there is no common ground between the speakers of two different languages.
- Creole
 - Regularization of pidgins in the process for creation of creoles.



is the nature of language and such things would happen then and once again without technicalities. I would try to define these two terms Pidgins. Pidgin the term used for the communication system which has got minimal functional patterns that minimal functional items in communications. Imagine a situation where two people have must communicate and there is nothing common ground between the two.

This is why I have indicated that Pidgins arises out of situation when there is no common ground between the speakers of two different languages and the strategy that they adopt to communicate results into a pleasant. Such a thing has taken place and continued to take place is only because of the fluid nature of language.

And it does not stop there. When such a language with minimal grammar and words from one language or both the languages and sentence patterns from either both the languages or one of the languages they get regularised and comes up and we know that by the kind of process as creoles and the whole process is called Creolization.

So the terms present in particular and also creoles are outcomes of the nature of language which is fluidity. Such a fluidity follows from the basic understanding of language dialect


and variety where we want to stress again and again that language is only a super structure like a phoneme (19:48) and people only speak different varieties of that super structure.

And that helps us reduce load of some groups speaking Standard varieties and other Non standard varieties, however, that remains to be a social question. A problem that we have to undergo in order to understand language in society now we extend the term fluidity into continuum.

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Continuum

- Continuum of Hindi
 - Varieties of Hindi from Kabul to Kohima and Rangun
- Continuum of Tamil
 - Ongole, Tirupati, Chennai, Maduria to Kanyakumari
- Continuum across language families.
 - Assamese, Bangla, Oriya, Telugu



And we brought out the term Fluidity from the possible capacity of humans to negotiate between varieties and the term continuum simply connects those varieties to create a longer chain. And so let us take again the example of Hindi and create a continuum of it. So like we have mentioned several places where Hindi will be spoken in its distinct identities we can roughly say that Hindi in one form or the other even in a minimal sense can be possibly used.

Beginning from Kabul in the west and Kohima or Rangoon in the east and everywhere else in between somewhere in some places one or the other varieties would have more number of the speakers and in some other places fewer.

However it could be used now there is no attempt to make any point in terms of geographical boundaries it is just the use of the term. If it creates any kind of difficulty in understanding you can bring resize for the continuum but whatever size you want to begin if you want to create a continuum only from Lahore to let us say Dhaka or you just want to restrict it between Amristar to Kolkatta.

My point is not the names of the places my point is continuum and different varieties and their distinct identities of a super structure term like Hindi would create a continuum which will have mutual intelligibility and this is the question of continuum of one. And similarly we can have a continuum of Tamil where different varieties of Tamil which are spoken in different places beginning from Ongole in the north to Tirupati to Chennai to Madurai to kann all the way to Kanyakumari and every other place in between.


There will be several different varieties spoken in the geographical boundry of Tamil Nadu. Language continuum is also possible with cross language families. With the example of Hindi we have seen the continuum of Indo Aryan language; with the example of Tamil we have seen the example of continuum of Dravidian language.

However a continuum is also possible between Indo Aryan languages or for that matter Tibeto-Burman and Indo Aryan languages. Language families do not become barriers for Continuum. In fact the true nature or the true definition of the nature of language fluidity, which results into continuum, is a fact that nothing becomes a barrier.

So if we start looking at this Continuum that I have here on the screen
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Continuum

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let us start with Assamese. When we move southward from Assam we see the Assamese are spoken in upper hills upper Assam and lower Assam upper Assam areas of Hafah and lower Assam areas of northern Dohati or all the way to Kokrachen. There is a huge distinction between the varieties spoken in these places. In fact there are names used.

There is a place called Kalbai and there is a name used Nalbody as Assamese which gives a clear identity to the distinct variety of Assamese and downward when we move the moment we touch West Bengal we merge Assamese merges into Bangla and then at that point it is difficult to distinguish between the two but again there is a huge distinction between Bangla spoken bordering Assamese and then all the way in between and Banglas spoken bordering Oriyan.

Similarly there is a huge distinction between Oriya spoken in the bordering areas where it merges with Bangla and everywhere in between and then where Oriya merges into Telugu or Telugu begins. Similarly and keep in mind Telugu is a Dravidian language and when Telugu begins that Telugu has strikingly distinctive features if it is a contrasted with Telugu spoken down south where it merges into Tamil now it creates a bit continuum.


And then comes the question of and such places are technically known as convergence areas. But whether or not we use the term convergence, the point is creation of continuum within the language or across families to talk about convergence.

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Convergence

- Languages merge in to one another.
- At that point it becomes difficult to identify the two.
- This takes place across language families too.
- This has potential for creating a new language.

– Assamese and Naga = Nagamese
– Tulu and Marathi = Konkani



As we know it refers to the term to the situation to where two languages merge into one another. And at that point it becomes difficult to identify one or the other. This takes place as cross language families and this has potential for creating the languages. We have to look at the Assamese if we go further upward and we see the continuum between Assamese which is

a invariant language and Naga group of languages merge are the part of Tibeto-Burman languages.

We see it that such a convergence, such a contact area, has created a new language and it has its own name. It is called Nagamese and that has quite acquired its own identity.


It is not yet a Creole it has moved from the point of being a Creole alone. These are just few examples. This happens. The main claim is this happens at every single point on the continuum. One more example to take, Tulu has Dravidian language and

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Marathi has Indo Aryan language when they merge with one another. The language that comes out of it is given the name of Konkani and when we study various aspects of Konkani we realize is what it is made of.

So languages, it is easy to come up with new languages or to give a new set of identity to the speakers of a language with a new name, particularly when it happens across language. However this phenomenon is not restricted only across languages. The all these help us point out one single thing the continuum, the creation of continuum whether it is an outcome of convergence or fluidity is does not have to be in a continuous line.

We have taken continuous lines only for the purpose of simplicity and understanding the point. It happens in all directions. It happens in all possible manners and makes the point that language is not really accountable entity and because of these things we could keep and after

going through these things we can understand what we mean when we say, it is not possible to count these languages with their minimal or maximal variations.

So it will be too radical to make to see that language is not a countable entity rather it is more like a liquid and therefore the true nature of it is lies in fluidity which creates a continuum and that is how it is, it comes up, it shows up in the real world where we use language.

Thank you.