

## DIGLOSSIA: PART 1

Dr. Negadi M. N  
Tlemcen University  
English Dept

What engenders diglossia and under what conditions?

- (a) The existence of an ancient or prestigious literature, composed in the H variety, which the linguistic culture wishes to preserve as such.
- (b) Literacy is usually a condition, but is usually restricted to a small elite. When conditions require universal literacy in H, pedagogical problems ensue.
- (c) Diglossias do not spring up overnight; they take time to develop.

These three factors, perhaps linked with religion, make diglossia extremely stable in Arabic and other linguistic cultures such as those of South Asia.

Various scholars have proposed terminologies for a taxonomy of diglossias:

- Marçais (1930)
- 'Classical' diglossia (Ferguson, 1959)
- 'Extended' diglossia (Fishman, 1967)

Ferguson provided a 'sample listing of possible situations' that show 'specialization of function' arguing that this is one of diglossia's most important features. For ease of reference, the list will be presented below: (Ferguson, 1959, p.329)

	High	Low
Sermon in church or mosque	x	
Instruction to servant, waiters, workmen, clerks		x
Speech in parliament, political speech	x	
University lecture	x	
Conversation with family, friends, colleagues		x
News broadcast	x	
Radio "soap opera"		x
Newspaper editorial, News story, caption on picture	x	
Caption on political cartoon		x
Poetry	x	
Folk literature		x

Kloss has proposed the terms "in-diglossia" (for the kind where the two varieties are closely related) and "out-diglossia" (for situations where the two languages are unrelated or at best distantly related) (Kloss, 1966: 138).

**'endo-diglossia' and 'exo-diglossia,'**

Scotton (1986) proposes the terms "narrow" for Ferguson's 1959 version of diglossia, and "broad" (or "diglossia extended") to refer to Fishman's expansion of the discussion.

According to Scotton, few truly diglossic (in the 1959 sense) communities actually exist, because to meet the criteria, two conditions must hold:  
 "(1) Everyone ... speaks the Low variety as a mother tongue" and  
 "(2) The High variety is never used ... in informal conversations."

## Diglossia and literacy

- **Diglossia as a continuum:**

Between H & L there exist shadings from style to another (eg depending on the degree of formality).

## Diglossia and literacy

This does not mean that illiterates have the option of using the L variety in H-variety domains; rather, the expectation is that they will remain silent rather than exhibit inappropriate linguistic norms. Their linguistic behaviour is in fact restricted to the L domains, and use of H domains is de facto the monopoly of the educated few.

- **Shifting domains and diglossia:**

The distribution of domains reserved for one variety or other can vary (political speeches, religious preach, game shows, sport report, etc.).

## Partial vs total diglossia

Some speakers control H but others have L as a mother tongue, and learn H as a second system. Thus in some linguistic cultures, all speakers exhibit diglossic behaviour (i.e., use both H and L varieties in complementary distribution), while in others, only some members of the society do.

Thank you for your kind attention