***DIGLOSSIA*: A Sociolinguistics Term in Linguistics**

*Sanjida Abedin Rafha*

*Department of English Language*

*Institute of Modern Languages*

*University of Dhaka, Dhaka*

*Bangladesh*

The word ***“Diglossia”*** derived from the Greek word *“diglossos”* meaning *‘bilingual’* based on the pattern of French *“diglossie”*. Diglossia, a sociolinguistic term refers a kind of situation where two language varieties occur in same time and are used under various conditions within a community, often by the same speakers. It is the use of two widely divergent forms of the same language by all members of the community under different conditions. This term is defined as social and institutionalized bilingualism. It occurs in two varieties which are needed to hide all the community’s domain. If a language is dialect, then that language will not be called diglossia. That’s why, diglossia is not a dialect.

**History and Definition of Diglossia**

The term Diglossia was first introduced in English by Charles A. Ferguson in 1959. He is credited to be the first linguist who used the specific term, “diglossia‟ in his article (1959) entitled, “Diglossia” in the journal “Word”, to refer to a situation “where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play” (Al – Huri, H., I., 2011 - 2012). He was one of the sociolinguists who gave this phenomenon great interest. Ferguson gave the classical definition of diglossia. According to Ferguson, “diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation”. Later on, Joshua Fishman gave a modification of Ferguson’s (1959) original concept and rather strict definition of diglossia in1967. Fishman generalized the concept of diglossia to bilingual communities. **Fishman presented an expansion of Ferguson’s definition of diglossia in two respects –**

* A diglossic speech community is not characterized by the use of two language varieties only. There may be more than two language varieties used within a diglossic community.
* Diglossia refers to all kinds of language varieties which show functional distribution in a speech community. Diglossia, as a consequence describes a number of sociolinguistic situations, from stylistic differences within one language or the use of separate dialects (Ferguson’s standard – with – dialects’ distinction) to the use of (related or unrelated) separate languages.

“When two languages or language varieties exist side by side in a community and each one is used for different purposes, this is called diglossia” (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1985). Diglossia is the use of two widely divergent forms of the same language by all members of the community under different conditions. “Diglossia refers to the societies with two distinctive codes of speech which are employed in different situation” (Wardhaugh, 2006). Diglossia is the characteristic of a speech community, groups of people with common rules of speaking – rather than individuality (Holmes, 2008).

**Features of Diglossia**

Diglossia has been used both in a narrow and in a much broader sense. In the narrow and original sense of the term, it has three crucial features –

1. Two distinct varieties of the same language are used in the community, with one regarded as a high (or H) variety and the other a low (or L) variety
2. Each variety is used for quite distinct functions, H and L complement each other
3. No one uses the H variety in everyday conversation

**Varieties of Diglossia**

Diglossia has two types of variety –

1. High variety
2. Low variety

**Diglossia**

**High Low**

**Formal Informal**

**Official Professional**

**Friendly, slang, vulgar**

**High Variety**

High variety (H) is regarded as the standard variety and people use it as formal or official situations such as government, conference event, formal letters, broadcasts, religious services and teaching etc. High variety is used for literary and literacy purposes and for formal, public and official uses (Spolsky, 2008). A more standard variety called the high variety or H – variety (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1985).

**Low Variety**

Low variety (L) is regarded as the non – standard variety and people use it as informal situations such as family member, neighbors, local markets and talking between friends or close friends etc.” Low variety is used for informal conversation and daily use” (spolsky, 2008). “A non – prestige variety called the low variety” (Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1985).

Everyone can speak the L variety and will do so in informal situation, but not everyone can use the H variety. This phenomenon is due to the distinct level of linguistic knowledge the speakers have. In diglossic community, the High variety which is linguistically related to but significantly different from the vernacular of Low varieties has no native speakers.

**Examples of High Variety and Low Variety**

Promito Bangla is high variety, but everyday Bangla is low variety. Arabic is high variety and colloquial Arabic is low variety. Standard German is high variety and Swiss German is low variety.

Church and Mosque

Newspaper Editorials HIGH Political Speeches

University Lectures

**Fig 1: High variety**

Giving Instruction to Waiters, Servants and Clerks

Personal Letter LOW Radio Soap Operas

Captions on Political Cartoons and folk literature

**Fig 2: Low variety**

**Characteristics of Diglossia**

Ferguson listed nine specific characteristics of a diglossia language situation involving the function, prestige, literary heritage, acquisition, standardization, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and phonology of the high and low variety (Ferguson, 1996). Diglossia happens because people use more than on language, which can be consist of their native language and their official language as national language. In diglossia, basically, people use one specific language in a certain situation and another language in another situation.

* **Prestige** – prestige speakers consider high as the more powerful, low in a number of respects. Speaker’s attitude towards H variety is more positive as L variety is seen as less worthy, ‘corrupt’ and broken.

**Example** – high variety is more beautiful, logical, and expressive than the low variety

* **Acquisition** – the main difference between high and low varieties is the way of acquiring each one. Low variety is usually used by adults while speaking to children and children use it among each other. The high variety is taught whereas the low variety is learned.
* **Literary** **Heritage** – in ancient period, poetry was written and introduced in High variety. In most diglossic languages, literature is written in high variety except what is known as folk literature, which is written in low variety.
* **Standardization** – Grammar system is the main point in H variety. Ferguson calls H variety as “grammatically more complex”. Kaye says that high variety may be viewed as a “marked system” and the colloquial as “unmarked system”.
* **Phonology** – High and low variety vary in case of phonology. In using high variety, phonological rules are most important. But in low variety, it is not necessary.
* **Lexicon** – High and low variety has differences in case of their lexicon. High variety includes in its lexicon some rules which have no equivalents in low variety.

**Functions of Diglossia**

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| **High variety** | **Low variety** |
| Sermon in church or mosque | Instruction to servants, waiters, workmen, clerks |
| Speech in parliament, political speech | Personal letter |
| University lectures | Conversation with family, friends, colleagues |
| News Broadcast | Radio “soap opera” |
| Newspaper, editorial, news story, caption in picture | Caption in political cartoon |
| Poetry, novels, prose | Conversation in tea – stall |
| Court or government office | Folk literature |

**Table:** *Ferguson’s 1959 illustration of the status of French and Creole in Haiti*

**Examples of Diglossia**

There are some examples of diglossia situation in different country given below –

In medieval Europe, Latin was the H variety alongside daughter language such as Italian, Spanish and French, which had developed from its more colloquial form. Arabic, Modern Greek, German Swiss and Haitian creole. For instance, in Swiss German country, the students will use standard German in their school because mostly the books and newspapers that they use is Standard German, but when they get home, they will switch their language and use the local Swiss German in their home as the dialect on daily conversation. There are some communities of limited individual bilingualism as happens in Haiti which ninety percent of the population is monolingual that using Haitian Creole. Therefore, they cannot activity contribute to additional formal domains. This often becomes the way of considering vary of potential relationship between diglossia and bilingualism. It as associates the degree idealized model.

**References**

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