Howard University

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Communication Differences & Disorders

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Human Communication Disorders
An Introduction

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perspective

When I was 12 years old, my family moved from North Carolina to New York City. I quickly discovered that there were regional and social differences of speech when my typical pronunciation of "dooag" for our family pet drew gailes of laughter from the other children. Of course, their expression, which sounded something like "doog," was equally humorous to me. Beyond the amusing aspects, there are many consequences to be endured for sounding different in a place where everyone else sounds alike.

My fascination for language differences led me to study languages and psychology in college. Thus, it was not difficult to select speech-language pathology as a field for master's study and sociolinguistics for doctoral study. Today, I consider myself an advocate for the appreciation and preservation of social varieties of language.

As a professor of communication disorders at Howard University, I instruct students in distinguishing language differences from language disorders. There are many clients who enter the clinic to acquire Standard English as a second dialect or improve a foreign accent. Clinicians must appreciate that these individuals are not communicatively disabled. Assessing true disabilities and language differences is analogous to performing cleft palate surgery and a cosmetic face lift. Similar skills are needed, but each purpose is distinct. One is necessary while the other is optional.

I remain fascinated with the field because of its interdisciplinary nature. In distinguishing differences from disorders, the speech-language pathologist must possess the sensitivity and understanding of a linguist, psychologist, sociologist, cultural anthropologist, historian, development specialist, teacher, bilingual counselor, and even a political scientist. The issues relate to children as well as adults and to education as well as health. There are clinical issues as well as much research to be conducted.

Just as I was, I hope that this chapter captures your imagination and inspires you to read and develop new knowledge and thinking. Our knowledge will never be static, for languages and cultures will continually change for generations to come.

perspective

When, as an undergraduate student at Hampton University, I was invited to consider "speech correction" as a major, I had no idea of the possibilities and events that would ensue. During graduate study at Indiana University and the University of Michigan, my interests were diverse and my outlook was futuristic. It was indeed an exciting time to be
alive to witness the changes occurring in the nation as a result of the Civil Rights Movement—and I was a part.

Prior to 1968, there was extreme emotion but little visible evidence in the profession with regard to culturally diverse populations. A climactic event occurred at the 1968 ASHA Convention in Denver when President John V. Irwin decided to forego the usual presidential address to permit a debate on "The Role of a Professional Association in a Conflict Society." In that historic debate, I urged the association to provide aggressive leadership for moral, ethical, and judicial behavior in all areas of social significance.

This moment changed the history of our profession. One important outcome was the formation of the ASHA Black Caucus, which urged the association to require coursework on sociolinguistics and to organize a committee to generate ideas for training and research in sociolinguistics, especially the language of African Americans. ASHA responded with a number of important actions that are still relevant and evident today.

Since that time, I have continued to be an advocate for progress on behalf of culturally diverse populations. It has been both professionally and personally rewarding. We have come a long way, but there is still far to go. Let the ideas of the chapter kindle your spirit of adventure to continue to seek new and amazing horizons for our future.

Communication is generally thought to be disordered when it deviates from the community standards sufficiently enough that it (a) interferes with the transmission of messages, (b) stands out as being unusually different, or (c) produces negative feelings within the communicator. Central to this is the idea that a communication disorder can only be determined in the context of a community, more specifically a speech community. A speech community is any group of people who routinely and frequently use a shared language to interact with each other (Fasold, 1990; Cummer & Hymes, 1972; Hymes, 1974; Petrasa, 1981; Saville-Troike, 1989). An accurate understanding of what constitutes a communication disorder requires an understanding of the distinction between a communication difference and a communication disorder.

This chapter highlights the salient issues arising from cultural and linguistic differences that may result in misdiagnosis of communication disorders. Examples that reflect the current status of research are given mainly from the four most populous cultural groups in the United States, including Hispanic Americans (Latino), African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. We recognize that there are many more ethnic and cultural groups whose concerns deserve equal regard. The guiding principles that can be gleaned from the examples presented in this chapter can be useful to clinicians serving all populations.
In a specific geographical area or governmental jurisdiction—a city, state, or nation, for example—there might be several speech communities, although a common national language (English, for instance) is spoken. Governmental boundaries and the boundaries of speech communities need not be isomorphic. From community to community, use of one or all of the major structural or functional components of a given language—phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse, pragmatics, conversational rules, and so on—might differ in varying degrees. These varieties of the national language are called dialects of that language. Despite their differences, speakers of various dialects of a national language can generally communicate across speech communities. For example, New Englanders can obviously converse with Southerners.

At this juncture, it is important to distinguish between dialect and accent. An accent refers to the phonological, idiomatic, suprasegmental, and vocal characteristics of spoken language. Accents are generally derived from the influence of geographical region or foreign language. While accents relate only to the surface structure of language, dialects include surface structure, deep structure, and rules for language use. Dialects derive from historical, social, regional, and cultural influences. Both dialects and accents are language differences rather than disorders.

Because of the intrinsic differences among the dialects of a language, speakers of certain dialects—usually ones thought by school personnel as being nonprestigious or nonstandard—are often mistakenly perceived as having communication disorders. It is incorrect to presume that every person who speaks a dialect different from one’s own, or even different from the school’s standard, has a communication disorder, even if that dialect results in breakdowns of communication, excessive audience attention, or (because of ridicule) emotional distress for the speaker. The speech-language pathologist must distinguish differences and disorders to accurately separate individuals who need speech-language pathology services from those who may need instruction in a second dialect (or language). In determining the communication needs of an individual, several factors must be considered, including communication behavior, communication context, and the culture from which communication emanates. Moreover, a descriptive rather than a prescriptive posture should be assumed in determining these needs.

To accurately evaluate a person’s communicative behavior, it is essential to understand some basic concepts pertaining to communication, language, and culture, as well as the characteristics of the dialects of American English. The same type of information can also enhance the quality of therapeutic and educational services provided to individuals with communication needs.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has recognized the importance for speech-language pathologists to understand the nature of social dialects. In a 1983 position paper, ASHA asserted that no dialect of English is a disorder or a pathologic form of speech or language. ASHA supports the view that professionals must be able to distinguish between legitimate linguistic differences and speech-language disorders. Finally, ASHA suggests
that two major professional competencies are needed to make these distinctions: (1) knowledge of the rules of a particular speaker's dialect and (2) knowledge of noninvidious assessment procedures.

**Basic Concepts Related to Culture and Language**

*Culture* may be defined as the set of values, perceptions, beliefs, institutions, technologies, survival systems, and codes of conduct used by members of a specified group to ensure the acquisition and perpetuation of what they consider to be a high-quality of life. Culture is arbitrary and changeable. Cultures overlap among one another and have internal variations. In addition, culture is learned and exists at different levels of conscious awareness. Culture should not be confused with race, nationality, religion, language, or socioeconomic status, although such groups may demonstrate a common subset of identifiable cultural behaviors. The fact is that, within any one of these groups, there is enormous internal variation.

In addition to the elements of culture contained in the preceding definition, Saville-Troike (1978) claims that cultures tend to be characterized by modes of conduct in at least the following areas:

- Family structure
- Important events in life cycle
- Roles of individual members
- Rules of interpersonal interactions
- Communication and linguistic rules
- Rules for decorum and discipline
- Religious beliefs
- Standards for health and hygiene
- Food preferences
- Dress and personal appearance
- History and traditions
- Holidays and celebrations
- Value and methods
- Education
- Perceptions of work and play
- Perceptions of time and space
- Explanation of natural phenomena
- Attitude toward pets and animals
- Artistic and musical values and tastes
- Life expectations and aspirations
No matter how you define it, language is a universal human phenomenon. Some form of language is used by every known group on the planet, regardless of its race, region, education, economic, or technical development. Despite the existence of thousands of languages in the world, all share a common set of universal rules (Greenberg, 1966). Even their patterns of acquisition are universal in some ways. It is also true that social and cultural factors universally affect the nature and use of language within human groups.

Language and culture share an intimate relationship. Although there are many more cultures than languages, the communication styles and forms adopted by a group are an important aspect of the culture. For example, proverbs, idioms, and jokes reflect beliefs and values and serve as vehicles to transfer and maintain them within the culture. Within a culture, there is usually great loyalty to the language, probably because language serves as the major unifying force for the people. Clear evidence can be seen by the fact that dialects of social groups are extremely resistant to eradication by the schools or other forces outside the culture.

Sociolinguistics

The study of social and cultural influences on language use and structure falls within the domain of sociolinguistics. The notions of language dialects and standards are central to the understanding of sociolinguistics and its role in the study and treatment of communication disorders. A dialect is a variety of language that has developed through a complex interplay of historical, social, political, educational, and linguistic forces. In the technical sense, the term dialect is never used negatively as is frequently the case with the lay public. A dialect should not be considered an inferior variety of a language, merely a different variety. In this context, all dialects are considered to be linguistically legitimate and valid. No dialect is intrinsically a better way of speaking the language than any other dialect.

Despite the linguistic legitimacy of all dialects, the various dialects of a language tend to assume different social, economic, political, utilitarian, or educational value within a given society. Standard dialects are those spoken by politically, socially, economically, and educationally powerful and prestigious people. It is not unusual for speakers of standard dialects to have negative attitudes toward nonstandard dialects and their speakers. These standard dialects become the de facto official versions of the national language and are used in business, education, and mass media. There may be several standard dialects within a national language.

In the United States, several dialects of Standard English exist. Almost all of these varieties are identified with specific regions of the country and with certain racial, ethnic, or language groups. While the dialects of Standard English (or General American English) contain differences in phonology, semantics, discourse, conversational prosodics, and pragmatics (particularly in informal situations), these dialects share a common set of grammatical rules. It is, indeed,
in syntax and morphology that social attitudes regarding dialect prestige are strongest (Wolfram, 1972).

Within the dialects of a language, there may be structural, stylistic, or social variations. For example, a vernacular or colloquial variation may be used in informal, casual, or intimate situations but not in writing or in school. Variations in language use may occur as a function of the social situation in which communication occurs or the speech community of the participants. Thus, a specific linguistic structure may have various functions or values depending on the intent of the speaker. For instance, an interrogative sentence such as Do you have the time? is not always intended as a question but may also be used to request the time or to command someone to provide you with the time. The selection of a specific linguistic structure, then, depends on the speaker's perception of the social situation as well as the communication intention. Finally, certain sociolinguistic variables, such as the speaker, listener, audience, topic, or setting, identify the nonlinguistic dimensions of the social context that may influence the selection of a particular language variety.

Seven major factors typically influence the type of language and communicative behavior acquired by an individual:

1. Ethnicity
2. Social class, education, and occupation
3. Geographic region
4. Gender
5. Situation or context
6. Peer group association or identification
7. First language

Depending on an individual's language experiences and social networks, he may acquire the capacity to effectively speak several dialects of a language, selecting each for use when needed. The shifting from one dialect of a language to another is called code-switching. Code-switching is generally determined by the preferred code of the speech community and domain in which a communicative event is occurring (Saville-Troike, 1989).

Ethnicity

Ethnic influences on language and communication are neither biological nor genetic in nature. They are related to the cultural attitudes and values associated with a particular group and the group's linguistic history. Some linguistic forms and communicative behaviors are so characteristic of certain ethnic groups that, when used, they immediately mark the speaker as either being from that group or as having had a great deal of interaction with the group.

One must be careful, however, not to assume that ethnic group membership automatically predicts language behavior or prevents an individual from
using language codes usually associated with other groups. To do so would be prejudicial stereotyping. In fact, many people know the structural and normative rules of the linguistic and communicative systems of several groups. Such persons are considered bilingual if two languages are involved or multilingual if two dialects, or so.

**Social Class, Education, and Occupation**

In addition to correlating with ethnicity, linguistic behavior tends to reflect social class, education, and occupation. In some societies, it is considered highly inappropriate for members of the relevant classes to speak the language of the aristocracy (A. H. Edwards, 1973). Even in these societies, however, it is not unusual for language behavior to be further reinforced by factors such as segregation or geographical isolation. In addition to these factors, educational achievement and occupation may have a major role in determining language function (Hollingshead, 1967).

Researchers have attributed many dimensions of language variation to social class influences. Chief among such factors are home environment, child-rearing practices, family interaction patterns, and travel and experience. Research suggests that perhaps social class is more important than either class or ethnicity in shaping language development. Studies that focus on mother-child interaction have found that mothers from the lower socioeconomic class talk less to their infants and usually give relatively more directives, in contrast to middle-class mothers, who vocalize more frequently for a wider variety of linguistic purposes. The results of these studies must be interpreted with caution since in many instances, culture and socioeconomic status have been intermingled.

Field and Widenayer (1981), for example, found cultural differences among low socioeconomic class families with respect to frequency of vocalization to infants. In this study, Hispanic American mothers vocalized more often than African American mothers. Fasano and Freeman’s (1981) investigation of Navajo mothers found negligible vocal interaction with their infants.

These studies are founded on the assumption that language development is directly related to the quantity of social interaction and stimulation of the infant. This assumption is culturally based and, therefore, may serve as a faulty basis for judgments about the parenting style of various groups. It is crucial to note that cultural styles of verbal interaction do not hinder language development; however, differences may be manifested in the patterns of acquisition as well as verbal expression. For example, L. L. Flisher (1970) observed that Japanese mothers, emphasizing nonverbal and physical forms of communication, verbalize less to their infants than middle-class American mothers. Hence, Japanese children develop a pattern of silence with respect to adults, whereas American infants interact verbally in accordance with middle-class American cultural expectations. No one, of course, would suggest that Japanese children are inferior in language development.
Child-rearing and family interaction practices may also be related to culture and social class status. The American middle-class family is typically a nuclear family in which the mother is the primary caregiver. Therefore, it is assumed that the mother will be the primary source of language learning. In other cultures and lower socioeconomic families, mother caregiver responsibility may lie with siblings, other relatives, or the entire community. Werner (1984) observed that sibling child-rearing practices are common among African American, Hispanic American, Hawaiian, and Native American populations. In these cultures, children may learn language in interaction with other children. Naturally, the first learned linguistic functions and structures of sibling-reared children may differ from those of children reared by adult caregivers. However, sibling-reared children become language proficient in accordance with their cultural environment as much as their adult-reared peers.

There is no doubt that access to travel and other experiences outside one's culture is a privilege of the middle class. These experiences are particularly valued in the school environment as children acquire literacy and develop language use in settings other than the home environment. Cultural differences between white middle-class Americans and other groups have been observed in reading, written language, and narrative styles. Two factors attributed to these differences are the presence of books and other written materials in the home and the reading of books to children by parents. Heath (1983) compared middle-class and working-class families and observed that middle-class homes had more children's books and that children were often read to at an early age. In contrast, working-class homes had fewer reading materials for children, and children were rarely read to. Rather, activities involving an oral focus were emphasized.

To distinguish communication differences from communication disorders, it is necessary to have an understanding of (a) the difference between poor academic performance and communication disorders and (b) those factors necessary for language development and advantages that enhance academic achievement. The culture of the classroom is often based on expectations of a white middle-class lifestyle. Thus, a child from a lower socioeconomic class or culturally different environment may experience difficulty in school but have no problem in the home or community.

Bernstein (1971) has been at the forefront of those scholars who claim that social class determines a person's access to certain communication codes. He suggests that lower-class groups use a more restricted, context-dependent code with particularistic meanings and that the upper classes use a more elaborated, context-independent code with universalistic meanings. The argument against Bernstein's theory is that it has a built-in bias toward middle-class communication because it implicitly assumes that the former is the standard for determining "normality." This type of bias is reflected in the use of such measures as mean length of utterance (MLU), which is often used to assess language development of lower-class children using a middle-class criterion. "Normal" utterance length within a group can be determined, however, only
by the content of the language or dialect spoken by that group, and the group's norms governing the quantity of speech must be allowed before one is considered as talking too much or, for that matter, too little.

Geographic Region

Regional dialects are closely tied to social dialects but are generally defined by geographic boundaries. At least ten regional dialects are recognized in the contiguous United States, including Southern, Eastern New England, Western Pennsylvania, Appalachian, Central Midland, Middle Atlantic, and New York City (Mott, 1966). Figure 4.1 shows a map delineating these dialect regions. Table 4.1 contains some examples from four of the more significant regional dialects in the united States—African American English, Southern English, Southern White Nonstandard English, and Appalachian English.

The distribution of linguistic forms as a function of geography is typically related to factors such as (a) geographical features (climate, topography, water supply); (b) trade routes; (c) cultural and ethnic backgrounds of settlers; (d) religion; and (e) power relationships in the region (Wardhaugh, 1974).

In general, regional dialects are marked by specific linguistic patterns. Few native-born Americans, for example, would have difficulty recognizing a stereotyped Appalachian, New York City, or Boston dialect. The speech of people from these geographical regions is usually identifiable by a set of specific phonological features, word choices, idioms; or characteristic syntactic, prosodic, or

Figure 4.1 Major American English speech varieties.
Table 4.3  Selected Phonological and Grammatical Characteristics of African American English (AA), Southern English (S), Southern White Nonstandard English (SWNS), and Appalachian English (A). Presence of each feature in the dialect is denoted by (X).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>AA</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>SWNS</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consonant cluster reduction</td>
<td>Deletion of second of two consonants in word final position belonging to same base word</td>
<td>tests (test)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deletion of past tense -(ed) morpheme from a base word, resulting in a consonant cluster that is subsequently reduced</td>
<td>rub (rubbed)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural formations of reduced consonant cluster assume phonetic representations of sibilants and affricatives</td>
<td>dresses (dress)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/w/ phoneme</td>
<td>/w/ for /oo/ between vowels and in word final position</td>
<td>nothin (nothing)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/br/ phoneme</td>
<td>/br/ for /br/ in word initial position</td>
<td>dia (his)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/b/ for /br/ between vowels and in word final positions</td>
<td>bavin (bathing)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel nasalization</td>
<td>No contrast between vowels /n/ and /l/ before nasals</td>
<td>pin (pin, pen)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

pragmatic devices. These markings should not be confused with those associated with various registers of the language that address different styles (for example, formal or informal) of communication within a given linguistic system. A particular speaker may choose to use a regional dialect for a variety of reasons, including local pride, local activities, or a deliberate rejection of wider affiliations. Other people may give up regionalisms because of their occupational, political, or social aspirations. Some regional dialects are viewed negatively by outsiders or by members of the upper class from the same region. Some speakers compromise by using regional dialects locally or in intimate situations and more nonregionalized dialects when they are away from home or
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>A/H</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>SWHS</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The /i/ and /a/ phoenemes</td>
<td>Deletion preceding a consonant</td>
<td>ba: game (ball game)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future tense forms</td>
<td>Use of go/a</td>
<td>She gonna go (She is going to go.)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go/a reduced to 'gma, 'mana, 'mum and 'ma</td>
<td>'gma go</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'mana go</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'mum go</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'ma go</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I might coulda done it. (It is possible that I could have done it.)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensifying adverbs</td>
<td>Use of intensifiers, i.e., right, plitás to refer to completeness</td>
<td>Right large (very large)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation</td>
<td>Ain't for have/has, any/aor, didn't</td>
<td>He ain't go home (He didn't go home)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative clauses</td>
<td>Deletion of relative pronouns</td>
<td>That's the dog bit me (That's the dog that bit me.)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Same interrogative form for direct and indirect questions</td>
<td>I wonder was she walking? (I wonder if she was walking.)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In formal situations, since regional standards within a given language tend to be close to the general standard, many speakers do not find it necessary to abandon their regional dialects. Excellent discussions of several regional dialects may be found in Fasold (1984, 1990).

Gender

Few would claim that it is difficult to distinguish between male and female speakers. We usually identify gender by pitch and intonation differences. The male pitch is generally perceived to be lower than female pitch because males
have longer, thicker vocal cords. There may be reason to believe, however, that
social conditioning greatly influences men to use "masculine" voices. Women
are also influenced by social definitions of voice usage. Wardhaugh (1976) ar-
gues, for instance, that women typically vary their intonation patterns more ex-
tensively than men to signal excitement, excitement, "mothering," pleasure,
and so on. The key point to keep in mind when discussing gender and voice
usage is that culture may be at least as important as biology in determining
voice use. One need only observe different voice patterns of men for women
in various cultures around the world, even when race is constant.

Vocabulary and pragmatics may be even greater markers of gender than
voice. For instance, in the United States there are certain taboo words (for ex-
ample, profanity) and topics (such as sexually oriented jokes) that are often
considered inappropriate for women to use in formal, mixed company (Thorn
et al., 1983). These same words and topics, when used among working-class
men, may be considered signs of masculinity and toughness. Trudgill (1974)
even notes that men tend to use more nonstandard forms than women, as
women tend to place more value on the status of standard language usage.

Recent investigators have made explicit observations in the language uses
of men and women. Tannen (1990) traces the origins of gender difference in
the stages of upbringing in boys and girls. For example, it is observed that in early
play activities boys display more aggressive language especially giving orders,
arguing about themselves, and using wit and humor, all within the context of
competitive activities. Contrastingly, girls use speech to promote closer social in-
teraction rather than competition. For example, sharing is emphasized and the
goal of talking is to be accepted. Sorather than giving orders, girls share secrets,
preferences, and opinions. As a consequence of differences in upbringing, adult
men are observed to talk mainly to give information and solve problems while
women continue to engage in "rapport talking" and seeking information. Thus,
communicative functions such as apologizing, soothing criticism, and avoiding
confrontation are more common among women (Tannen, 1994).

Wardhaugh (1970) makes the following explicit observations concerning
the difference between the "characteristic language uses of men and women":

Women tend to be more precise and "careful" in speaking; for example, they
are more likely than men to pronounce the final -ing forms with a g, to say
fighting rather than fighting. In general, they take more "care" in articulation.
This behavior accords with other findings that women tend to be less innov-
ating than men in their use of language and to be more conscious of preferred
usages. They are also more likely than men to use "appeal tags" such as "aren't
it?" or "don't you think?" Women use more different names for colors
than men: mauve, lavender, turquoise, tunic, and beige are good examples.
Men either do not use such color words, or if they do, tend to use them with
great caution. Intensifiers such as so, much, and quite, as in "He's so cute."
"He's such a dear," and "We had a quite marvelous time" comprise a set of
words used in a way that most men avoid: emotive adjectives such as
adorable, lovely, and choice are hardly used at all by men. (p. 126)
R. Lakoff (1975), the author of one of the pioneer works in women's role of language in the United States, has outlined a number of gender-marked linguistic devices in semantics, syntax, and intonation. In addition to the observations already mentioned, Lakoff includes:

- Greater use of "weaker" emotional particles—police explanations versus personal explanations
- Greater use of declarative answers with yes/no rising intonations to questions—(man) "When will dinner be ready?"; (woman) "Oh... around six o'clock...!" (with rising intonation)
- Large stock of women's mother-tongue words—mama, nan, don't (in sewing), etc.
- Greater use of hedging words of various types—well, you know, kinda, sorta, etc.
- Greater use of the intensive so—"I like him so much" versus "I like him very much."
- Greater use of Standard English phonology and syntax
- Greater use of hyper-polite forms
- Lesser use of jokes
- Greater use of intoner in speech; that is, greater use of calling attention to specific words as a failure to do so will result in their going unnoticed

Lakoff makes the case that women—at least white, middle-class women—are taught to be "ladylike" in their speech from childhood. Therefore, such traits as nonassertiveness, uncertainty, politeness, and propriety are highly stressed. Likewise, women are relegated to being authority on the less important issues of the world, at least from the male perspective—subordinates in color differences, superordinates grammatical forms, and empty adjectives. Lakoff concludes that women are placed in a "damned if they do and damned if they don't" position because of these gender-marked linguistic expectations. If women fail to perform in accordance with these expectations, they are considered assertive, authoritarian and masculine. On the other hand, if they do perform in accordance with them, they are seen as being weak and trivial and behaving "just like women."

In the Western world, where traditional sex roles are coming under attack, it is likely that we will see fewer surface differences between male and female speech in the future. Indeed, many modes of communications previously restricted to men are being used by women without penalty. In viewing male-female differences in language use in the United States, however, it is important to consider cultural and class factors. To date, most of the work on this subject has focused on gender differences among white, middle-class persons. Stanback (1985) is among a growing group of scholars who have begun to pay particular attention to the language of African American women. For example, their work confirms earlier suspicions that gender issues in
communication must take both culture and socioeconomic status into account, not to mention the matter of domain. Considerably more research is needed before a complete picture can be drawn on the relationships between gender and communication from a cultural perspective.

**Situation or Context**

As stated earlier, language may vary according to the situation and context in which it is spoken. Several important situational and contextual variables may influence all dimensions of language behavior. We have already discussed the notion of domain. Other situational and contextual issues include occasion, purpose, spatial position of participants, and speaker's role in two-person interactions.

For example, several researchers have identified a special form of address used by white parents to children, often called baby-talk or motherese. They claim that parents, particularly mothers, tend to vary their pitch, intonation patterns, speed, sentence length, structure, and vocabulary when talking to their children. Both Moore (1974) and Bruner (1978) claim that the mother's language gradually becomes more complex as the child's language becomes more complex.

Some researchers have also suggested that children, like adults, vary their speech as a function of their listener (Evin-Trepp, 1977; Gleason, 1973; Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan, 1977; Shatz & Gelman, 1973). For instance, children may use a more restricted linguistic code when talking to strangers, especially if the strangers belong to an outside group. This point is of extreme importance for the speech-language pathologist who is attempting to obtain a valid linguistic sample from a child.

**Peer Group Association/Identification**

It is widely believed that linguistic behavior, particularly during childhood, is under the control of the speech community and the parents. There is also strong research evidence to support the claim that the role of peers, including brothers and sisters, is of equal importance. Thus, a child with strong associations or identification with children from other speech communities might learn forms of language that are different from those of the home community or family. In these cases, the child may use the nonhome language or dialect only for communicating with people outside the home or home community.

Wolfram and Fasold (1974) are among several researchers who stress the importance of peer influence on language during adolescence. They report that adolescents typically learn an "in group" dialect that is primarily used by their immediate peers. Sometimes peer pressure prevails over parental standards during this period. This point often shows up in parents' complaints that they don't understand their teenage children.
Fordham (1988) has reported that many working-class African American high school students feel so strongly about their African American English vernacular that they resist learning Standard English because they see it as “talking white.” Of course, it is an error to perceive Standard English as “white English” since it is merely a way of speaking the English language by individuals within a racial group who have had successful access to education. O. L. Taylor (1983) suggests that certain ethnic subtitles may be retained in speaking Standard English (e.g., prosodic characteristics, rhetorical styles) without losing ethnic identity. Taylor uses African American Standard English to describe ethnically-identifiable educated English spoken by many African Americans, for example, Martin Luther King’s impromptu section of his “I Have a Dream” speech (1963):

This is our hope. This is the faith I shall return to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to win together, pray together, struggle together, go to jail together, stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

Standard African American English is identified not so much by its linguistic structural characteristics as by its rhythm, rhetorical style, interplay with the audience, vocal patterns, metaphor, imagery, and phrase and word emphases. Finally, language is often an indicator of a person’s age group. Language patterns of the elderly, for instance, are different in some ways from those of younger adults (Obler & Albert, 1981) that, in turn, vary from those of teenagers, and so on. Violations of linguistic age constraints tend to draw attention to the speaker. Thus, it is not unusual to hear pronunciations like “That boy talks like a man” or “That man sounds like a teenager.”

First Language

Many individuals whose native language or culture is different from the official language and culture of a society learn the official language but retain distinct vestiges of their first language. Often these persons are considered bilingual, in that they presumably control parts or all of two languages. In recent years, the term bidialectal has been coined to refer to persons who control parts or all of two dialects.

Research has shown that, prior to age three, simultaneous acquisition of two languages may occur systematically and without negative influence of one upon another (Grosjean, 1982). Successive acquisition occurs when individuals acquire a second language after the onset of development of the first language, for example, when one language is learned in the home and another at school. Cummins (1984) describes what is known as semilingualism, a phenomenon whereby exposure to a second language prior to mature development of the
First language results in failure to reach proficiency in other language in other cases. Schiffrin (1992) notes that metalinguistic skills acquired in school age actually facilitate development of a second language. Successful bilingualism depends upon many personal factors including frequency of use, need, motivation, attitude, and age.

Bilingual and bidialectal persons typically code-switch from one language or dialect to another, depending on the social situation (R. T. Bell, 1976). In the process of code-switching, the first language may interfere with the use of linguistic structures in the second language. A person of Asian origin who speaks English, for example, might mix English and Spanish words in the same sentence. May I have coffee con leche? Other such speakers may have morphological differences, such as the absence of plural or possessive inflection. Phonology and syntax in the second language may also be affected by the first language. For example, English sounds such as /ŋ/ and /θ/ do not occur in Spanish, and adjectives follow nouns rather than preceding them. The Spanish rules may be followed by Spanish speakers who learn English as a second language.

Social factors such as age, education, and situation influence an individual's efficiency in code-switching. The frequency with which a person hears and interacts within the second language code and the nature of instruction in it also determine a person's skill in using the second language. If a person uses a second language more than a first language, facility in the native language might be lost if it is not reinforced at home. When a whole generation of children in a given culture moves toward usage of a second language as the preferred mode of communication, "death" of the first language is inevitable. Language death is occurring rapidly, for example, for several Native American and Eskimo languages in Alaska.

As you can see from this discussion of the social and cultural factors that influence language, no one variable operates independently of other variables. The language used in any speech event depends on the simultaneous interaction of many social, cultural, and situational factors. Therefore, no one sample of a person's speech taken from a single situation or from interaction with a single person is likely to be representative of that individual's complete linguistic repertoire. While we may be able to identify a typical speech pattern, that pattern cannot be considered the only speech variety available to that person. The speech-language pathologist must recognize an individual's potential for language variation during both assessment and intervention.

**Dialects of American English**

As we have mentioned, several varieties of English are spoken in the United States. These variations are caused by several factors, central among which are (a) the languages brought to the country by various cultural groups, that is, speakers of English, Polish, German, Welsh, and so on; (b) the indigenous
Native American Languages spoken in the country; (c) the mix of the various communities and regions where the cultural groups settled; (d) the political and economic power wielded by the various cultures settling in the regions; (e) the migration patterns of the cultural groups within the country; (f) geographical isolation caused by rivers, mountains, and other features, as in the dialects of the Ozark and Appalachian mountains; and (g) self-imposed social isolation or legal segregation.

In many parts of the southern United States, for instance, the original languages spoken included a type of English brought from the southern portion of Great Britain, indigenous Native American languages, and a number of languages brought from West Africa, including Wolof, Mandé, and Pulaar. Political and social power was usually held by the British settlers, and thus their language came to assume power in education and commerce. At the same time, English speakers were probably influenced by the languages spoken by the African and Native Americans. As a result, a particular type of English emerged in the region, which may be loosely called Southern English. Of course, within the South, there are further regional differences.

Within each speech community, we find other linguistic variations, each of which is influenced by the social variables discussed earlier—age, gender, socioeconomic class, and so on. Again, note that these variables are not biological, although certain speech communities exist with biological (racial) groups, such as the African American community in the United States. Recall that the social variables are not mutually exclusive.

Many speakers are knowledgeable about and sensitive to the linguistic expectations of varying audiences and, therefore, are capable of code-switching to different dialects—even dialects that are not indigenous to their speech communities—when the situation dictates. This interaction between structure and function might be an important pragmatic consideration of sociolinguistics generally and dialectologists in particular. For example, an articulate southern African American speaker might well use one dialect variety when communicating with working-class African Americans (African American English Vernacular), another when communicating with educated African Americans (Standard African American English), and still another when communicating with working-class southern whites (Southern White Nonstandard English). This process can work with languages as well as dialects; a teenager might use Standard English with his employer, a vernacular English with his friend, and Chinese with his parents.

Several excellent descriptions of dialects commonly spoken in the United States are available (Fasold, 1984; Petrosky, 1981; Smitherman, 1978; Wolfram, 1986; Wolfram & Schilling, 1974). Williams and Wolfram (1977) have prepared an excellent summary of most of the research in this area for six English dialects frequently encountered by speech-language pathologists in their professional practice—Standard English, Nonstandard English, Southern White Standard English, Southern White Nonstandard English, African American English, and Appalachian English. We will now look at some of these dialects.
African American English

Perhaps the most controversial and most frequently written about dialect of American English is African American English, variously referred to as Black English, Black Dialect, Black English Vernacular, and Ebonics. Writings on this subject began to emerge in the sociolinguistic literature in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Loosely defined, as in much of this research, African American English may be thought of as the linguistic code used by working-class African Americans, especially for communication in informal situations within working-class African American speech communities. Its linguistic features, like those of any other dialect, are explained on the basis of social, cultural, and historical facts, not biological differences. Speakers of African American English are presumed to be knowledgeable in other dialects of English, notably Standard English, as demonstrated by their comprehension of these other dialects.

African American English, like other dialects, is not exclusive of other dialects of English. In fact, linguistic analyses of transcripts of African American English speakers show that the overwhelming majority of their utterances conform to the rules of General American Speech (Lottman, 1987).

A selected sample of the major characteristics of African American English, as described by the many writers on the subject, is presented in Table 4.1. Remember, these linguistic variations are not errors in the use of English. Instead, they are characteristics of linguistic systems with their own rules, which are as complex and valid as those of Standard English. We can actually identify at least twenty-nine linguistic rules of African American English that differ from Standard English (Williams & Wolfram, 1977). Careful review of these linguistic rules shows considerable overlap between African American English and several other dialects, notably Southern English and Southern White Nonstandard English. Because of this overlap, we need to be careful not to assume that a particular linguistic feature used by African American speakers is a feature of African American English. Because African Americans in the United States have a strong historical link with the southern states, it is not surprising that there appears to be considerable overlap between African American English and the numerous dialects spoken in the South.

Several theories have been advanced to explain the development of African American English. One of the most popular of these theories is the creole theory. Briefly stated, the creolist position holds that African American English is a complex hybrid involving several African languages and four main European languages—Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English. These hybrids are believed to have developed in Africa, as well as on American plantations, in the form of pidgins and creoles.

According to DeCamp (1971), pidgin languages develop when peoples speaking different languages come in contact with each other and have a need to find a common language, usually for commerce. Typically, a pidgin is developed by speakers of a nondominant group who are in direct contact with
A dominant group that speaks another language. Good examples include the pidgins still used by many Chinese and Hawaiians. At the outset of its development, a pidgin language may be informal, consisting of single words, a simplified grammar, and many gestures.

Over time, pidgin languages may become more formal, in that vocabulary items selected primarily from the dominant language are embedded into a phonological and grammatical system derived from the non-dominant language. When this happens and the pidgin is accepted as a native language, the language is referred to as creole. As stated earlier, "death" of the first language often occurs at this point. Eventually, as the speakers of creole languages become more assimilated into the dominant culture, creole languages tend to move toward the standard language through an intermediate stage referred to as decreolization.

There are some problems with the creole theory of African American English. For instance, it tends to view the language as being European-based rather than African-based. Despite its problems, however, the creole explanation of African American English at least provides a historical orientation for the analysis and understanding of African American speech.

Several researchers dispute the validity of the concept of African American English on other grounds. Some of their objections are based on the argument that it is impossible to assume that a single variety of speech accurately describes a population as culturally and geographically diverse as African Americans. Still others reject the notion of African American English on the grounds that it describes the speech of only the working class, while implicitly denying the existence of more educated forms of speech spoken by the African American middle class. Finally, writers such as Smitherman (1978, 1988), Labov (1972), and Kochman (1971, 1981) argue that focus on the study of the structure of language, rather than on use of language as a communication tool, has prevented scholars from appreciating the richness of African American communication behavior. For instance, oral traditions such as proverbs, rhetorical style, and verbal contests are totally ignored by the formal structured analyses of contemporary linguistics. Moreover, some interesting data suggest the presence of identifiable pragmatic (Peters, 1983) and narrative (Taylor & Matauda, 1988) behaviors among many African Americans that serve to provide an additional measure of richness to the communicative style of their community.

O. L. Taylor (1983) is among a small group of scholars who have attempted to define African American English in such a way as to account for the language and communicative behaviors of the full range of African American people in the United States. He defines African American English as the speech spoken by African Americans in the United States, ranging from the standard (Standard African American English) to the nonstandard (Nonstandard African American English). Taylor's model is broad enough to take the situation or context into account as well as the rules pertaining to language structure and to language use in interpersonal interaction.
English Influenced by Other Languages

Obviously, African American English is not the only social dialect of English used in the United States. Any cultural group’s acquisition of a new language is influenced by the linguistic characteristics of that group’s native language. Because there are people in the United States from so many different backgrounds, it is impossible to identify and describe all the varieties of English that have been influenced by other languages. On the other hand, these native languages typically interfere with the speaking of English when they do not contain elements that are part of English or when the elements take a different form in the native language. A familiar example is the stereotype of the Asian speaker who cannot produce the English /r/ and so substitutes the /l/ instead.

Examples of language interference are commonly found in the United States among such groups as Hispanic American, Native American, Asian American, French Cajun, Gullah, Eskimo, Hawaiian, and Virgin Islands populations. In all cases, the linguistic processes underlying the variations are identical, the only differences being related to the actual languages involved and the social, political, and economic histories of the speakers.

The largest group in the United States today with native language influence on English consists of people from Spanish-speaking backgrounds (including both Mexican Spanish and Puerto Rican Spanish). Tables 4.2 and 4.3 present some examples of how Spanish can interact with English phonology and syntax, respectively. Table 4.4 presents some influences of Mandarin, Cantonese, and Vietnamese on English phonological patterns. Cheng (1987) has also provided examples of grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic differences observed in Asians in their speaking of English. Shekar and Pegg (1995) present some characteristic features of languages of the Indian subcontinent, which are summarized in Table 4.5.

Table 4.2 Examples of Spanish Influence on English Phonology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Environments</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ʃ/ phoneme</td>
<td>/ʃ/ for /ʃ/ in all positions</td>
<td>chair (shoe); watch (watch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tʃ/ phoneme</td>
<td>/tʃ/ for /tʃ/ in all positions</td>
<td>sip (tip); tacer (taxer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ŋ/ phoneme</td>
<td>/ŋ/ for /ŋ/ in the word final position</td>
<td>sin (sing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/v/ phoneme</td>
<td>/v/ for /v/ in all positions</td>
<td>bit (vat); tabbed (wall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɛtʃ/ phoneme</td>
<td>/ɛtʃ/ for /ɛtʃ/ in all positions</td>
<td>nos or sin (thin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɛtʃ/ phoneme</td>
<td>/ɛtʃ/ for /ɛtʃ/ in all positions</td>
<td>den (then); ladder (lather)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʃ/ phoneme</td>
<td>/ʃ/ for /ʃ/ in all positions</td>
<td>cheap (chip)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forms of to be</td>
<td>Absent in present</td>
<td>He go to hungry (He is getting hungry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>progressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>Absent as subjects</td>
<td>Carol left yesterday. I think he is coming back tomorrow. Carol left yesterday. I think she is coming back tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of sentences when</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subject obvious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>preceding sentence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person (-s)</td>
<td>Absent in third-person</td>
<td>He talks fast (He talks fast)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>verb agreements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past (-ed)</td>
<td>Absent in past-tense</td>
<td>He walked fast yesterday. He walked fast yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inflections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go with to</td>
<td>Future markings</td>
<td>He go to see the game tomorrow (He is going to see the game tomorrow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No for don't</td>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>No do that (Don’t do that)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The for possessive</td>
<td>With body parts</td>
<td>I hurt the finger (I hurt my finger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>I think he come soon (I think he is coming soon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present tense</td>
<td>environments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>markings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locative adverbs</td>
<td>Placed over verb</td>
<td>I think he putting down the rifle (I think he is putting the rifle down).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other Dimensions of Cultural Influences on Communication

Culture affects communication in its use as well as its function. For example, culture may have an impact on the conversational and discourse rules used by an individual speaker. These rules cover a myriad of topics:

- How to open or close a conversation
- Turn-taking during conversations
- Interruptions
- Silence as a communicative device
### Table 4.4  Phonological Patterns of Interferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substitutions:</th>
<th>Mandarin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s/n, Z/n, l/n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusions:</td>
<td>t/n and l/n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omissions:</td>
<td>final consonants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/r/ in blends: below/low, good/round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximations:</td>
<td>t/n, l/n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting in lengthening</td>
<td>nasal/stl, h/ca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of vowels:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substitutions:</th>
<th>Cantonese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s/n, s/n, l/n, w/n, x/n, y/n, n/n, n/n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omissions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions:</td>
<td>/r/ /n blends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowels:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substitutions:</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>s/n, x/n, b/p, z/kz, d/n, t/n/k/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omissions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowels:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Appropriate topics of conversation
- Humor and when to use it
- Nonverbal modes to accompany conversation
- Laughter as a communicative device
- Appropriate amount of speech to be used by participants
- Logical ordering of events during discourse

Narratives, the act of translating experiences into stories, are a major dimension of discourse that seem to be culture-specific. Many investigators (Heath, 1982; Michaelis, 1981; Michaels & Collins, 1984) have suggested that children vary with respect to their story-telling strategies as they do in the surface structure features of their language. These strategies are probably related to differences in conceptualization, social interaction, and problem solving.

Tannen (1981, 1982) claims that communicative strategies vary along a cultural continuum anchored by oral strategies at one end and written strategies at the other. Oral-based cultures are thought to place value on oral narratives and
Table 4.5 Characteristics of Two Indian Languages (Hindi and Kannada)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonology</th>
<th>Differences from English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vowel length is phonetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voiced (bilabial) and velar aspirated stops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g, b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental and Retruded Consonants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retroflex: T (t); T* (<em>); D (d); D</em> (d*); N (n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentals: l, l*, d, d*, r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voiceless and Voiced Palatal Affricates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c*, j*, n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilabial Fricative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jw/ pronounced as /jw/ when followed by a back vowel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morphology</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender nouns</td>
<td>masculine, feminine, neuter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouns marked for case endings</td>
<td>nominative, accusative, dative, ergative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb tense, number and gender</td>
<td>suffix attached to right of verb root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliaries follow rather than precede verb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word order is Subject-Object-Verb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free movement of the verb is possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject-Verb agreement is not obligatory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No definite or indefinite articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of numbers instead of a, an, e.g., &quot;one book&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions follow the noun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

poetry, while literate-based cultures are thought to value writing and speech (Bennett, 1983; Hymes, 1981; Scollon & Scollon, 1979, 1981; Sherzer, 1983). Of course, all individuals have a certain degree of control over both ends of this presumed continuum; however, it appears that some cultures have a greater propensity for extending further into one end or the other than other cultural groups. For example, Heath (1982) and Michaels (1981) claim that lower-class and working-class children are more likely to come to school with less mastery of the literate style of communication than middle-class children. Because schools prefer the literate style, these children are often falsely perceived as having language difficulties because they do not structure their stories in a manner prescriptively perceived as normal.

In general, topic-centered narratives are characterized by (a) linear presentation of tightly structured discourse on a single topic or series of closely related topics with no major shifts in perspective; (b) temporal orientation or thematic focus; (c) a high degree of thematic coherence and a clear thematic progression that begins with temporal grounding, a statement of focus, introduction of key agents, and some indication of spatial grounding; and (d) an
orientation that is followed by elaboration on the topic and finishes with a punch line resolution. The stories assume little shared knowledge between speakers and listeners and therefore require precise detail. They involve more telling than sharing. The topic-centered style appears to be the one most commonly used by middle-class children, possibly of all racial groups, probably because of extensive exposure to storybooks during early childhood.

Topic-associated stories tend to be a series of associated segments implicitly linked to a topic, event, or theme, but with no explicit theme or point. They typically begin with background statements, then shift across segments, with the shifts being marked by pitch and tempo indicators. Various segments are implicitly linked to a topical event or theme, although temporal orientation, location, and focus of segments often shift from one segment to the other. The links among the various segments are left for listener inference since there is a presented shared knowledge between speakers and listeners. Because of this presumption, these stories tend to contain less detail than topic-centered narratives. At the same time, they focus on a number of themes results in longer presentations.

Topic-associated stories are thought to be used more often by working-class children, particularly working-class African-American children. They also seem to be perfectly acceptable, understandable, and frequently used by persons who come from oral cultures, regardless of racial background. Smitherman and Van Dijk (1988) have thoroughly discussed the problem of discrimination that occurs as a result of discourse differences.

Other cultural influences of communication relate to health factors and familial practices. Since communication is a learned behavior that has a biological root, it depends on the integrity of the environment as well as the mechanisms of cognition, perception, and expression. For example, status media in a major health problem among Native Americans, perhaps so prevalent that it is sometimes believed by members of the population to be a normal part of childhood development. For this and other reasons, communication disorders among Native Americans have been estimated to be 15 percent higher than the general population (Stewart, 1983).

Harris (1985) reports that among Native Americans, familial practices and attitudes may affect a child's willingness to speak, average length of utterance, response time, initiation of conversation, and turn-taking behavior. Gulliver (1975) noted that expectations of Navajo mothers regarding language behavior differ significantly from those of Caucasian mothers. For example, whereas Caucasian mothers perceive active physical behavior and speech as self-disciplined, exciting to observe, and advantageous to the child's development, Navajo mothers view the same behavior as discourteous, restless, self-centered, and undisciplined. The use of silence is another cultural communicative practice among Native Americans that differs from general American communication behavior. Westby (unpublished) cites studies comparing the type and amount of verbal interaction between mothers and infants in several cultural groups. It was noted that the amount of vocalization of Navajo


LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES AND COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

The question now is "How does a knowledge of language differences contribute to the practice of speech-language pathology?" Some possible answers to this question are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Attitudes

Perhaps the most important recent contribution of sociolinguistics to the field of communication disorders has to do with attitudes toward language variation. The literature clearly suggests that speech-language pathologists must view language variety as a normal phenomenon and not necessarily as an indication of a communication problem. This is a crucial prerequisite for providing clinical services that fit the language codes and expectations of clients, their parents, and their communities. ASHA's 1983 position paper on social dialects considers knowledge of the effects of attitudes on language behavior to be an essential competence for differentiating between communication differences and communication disorders.

Definitions

Another important recent contribution of sociolinguistics to professional practice in communication disorders has to do with defining disordered communication. A sociocultural perspective toward communication disorders argues that all communication—normal or disordered—can be defined, studied, or discussed only in a cultural context. Since disordered communication is defined as a deviation from the norm, that norm has to be culturally based. In a large African American community, for example, the standards against which individual communication behaviors are evaluated most obviously include rules of African American communication to be valid. Of course, some African American persons communicate according to the rules of some other community.
usually the broader community that is economically, politically, or socially dominant.

There is also some evidence that societies have different values for defining minimally proficient (or normal) communication and, more importantly, what to do about conditions of abnormal communication. In some societies, for example, mild deviations in communication behavior may hardly be considered cause for alarm in the context of other priorities. Indeed, they might even be considered "cute."

The point here is that societies may have different criteria for determining when a difference makes a difference and what to do if one exists. Some feel that little or nothing should be done about a communication disorder except to keep it hidden from the public because these disorders are perceived as acts of gods or demons. Unfortunately, there has been little research reported on what different societies, especially in Third World countries, consider disordered communication and what they think should be done about it. In the absence of data, the resourceful speech-language pathologist can, nonetheless, use imaginative interviewing techniques to determine definitions of communication disorders from clients, parents, family, or other members of the home community.

Testing and Diagnosis

Because there are varying communication rules among different cultural groups, one's examination and diagnosis of a person with a communication disorder is much more likely to be effective if one uses instruments, interpersonal interaction, testing, and interpretation of findings that are consistent with the communication rules of the group from which the person comes. For this reason, effective testing and diagnostic work are directly related to sensitivity and use of culturally relevant materials and clinical orientations.

Taylor and Payne (1983) have suggested that professionals seek answers to themselves to a series of questions before administering any assessment instrument. Among the questions are:

- Do I know the specific purpose for which this test was designed?
- Has the test been validated for this purpose?
- Do I have specific information about the group on whom the test was standardized (sociocultural, sex, age, etc.)?
- Are the characteristics of the student being tested comparable to those in the standardization sample?
- Does the test manual or research literature (of my own experience) indicate any differences in test performance across cultural groups?
- Do tests weigh too account differences in values or adaptive behaviors?
• Does the test use vocabulary that is cultural, regional, colloquial, or no choice?
• Does the test rely heavily on receptive and expressive Standard English language to measure abilities other than language?
• Am I aware of what the test demands of (or assumes about) the students in terms of: (a) reading level of questions or directions, (b) the style of problem solving, (c) test-taking behavior, and (d) format?
• Has an item-by-item analysis been made of the test from the framework of the linguistic and communicative features of the group for which it is to be used?

Speech-language pathologists rely heavily on standardized tests to determine the evidence or absence of communication disorders. Most tests currently used in speech-language pathology are based on Northern Midland Standard English. For this reason, many of these tests, when administered and scored according to the prescribed norms, yield results that unduly penalize speakers of nonstandard dialects. They give the inaccurate impression of communication disorder when, in fact, no pathology exists.

An excellent example of the cultural bias in communication tests may be found in many tests of auditory perception. This process is believed to be a prerequisite for the normal decoding of auditory messages. For example, a task of auditory discrimination might require a child to indicate whether the following two nonsense syllables sound alike or different: "d" /d/ and "d" /p/. The expected answer for a Standard English listener, of course, is "different." We know, however, that people tend to perceive incoming sounds according to the phonological rules of their native language. Thus, if the /p/ phoneme does not exist in a particular speaker's phonological system, but the /d/ does exist, she may report the word pair as "same" instead of "different." This problem is particularly apparent when speakers of nonstandard English dialects are tested for their auditory discrimination abilities in Standard English. In many cases, more errors than normal are recorded; therefore, the speech-language pathologist might inaccurately conclude that a child is 1 to 2 years delayed in auditory perceptual function when, in fact, there is no delay. Several researchers (for example, Seymourt & Seymourt, 1977) have shown that, when cultural and sociolinguistic factors are taken into account in designing and administering language tasks, there are no statistically significant differences among cultural groups.

O. L. Taylor (1978, 1983) is among those authors who have discussed in some detail sociolinguistic dimensions in standardized tests. Drawing on his work with researchers in several related disciplines, he has discussed seven distinct sources of possible bias in tests:

1. Social situational basis—violation of a situation/context rule for the test taker
2. Value bias—mismatch between values assumed in test items and the values of the test taker.
3. Phonological bias—mismatch between phonological rules assumed in a test item and the phonological rules of the test taker.
4. Grammatical bias—mismatch between grammatical rules assumed in a test item and the grammatical rules of the test taker.
5. Vocabulary bias—mismatch between words and their use between test maker and test taker (may include underlying cognitive mismatches).
6. Pragmatic bias—mismatch between rules of communication interaction between test maker and test taker.
7. Directions/format bias—confusions or misunderstandings created for test taker by the use of unfamiliar or ambiguous directions and/or test formats.

In addition to the preceding types of biases in standardized tests, Taylor and Lee (1987) suggest two additional sources of likely bias in standardized tests: communicative style and cognitive style. With respect to communicative style, they claim that test takers who favor lengthy social greetings before getting to substantive points may be incorrectly viewed as exhibiting avoidance behaviors by testers who expect a rapid approach to the main purpose of communication. Likewise, test takers whose cultures value silence and contemplation may be viewed as lacking verbal skills by testers who expect verbosity.

Taylor and Lee also note that standardized tests tend to be based on the erroneous assumption that all individuals evidence ability through the use of similar cognitive style. Cognitive style is the manner in which individuals perceive, organize, and process experiences. Most tests presume that test takers prefer an analytical, object-oriented (field-independent) cognitive style (Goldstein & Blackman, 1978); yet research has shown that there are at least nine different preferred cognitive styles used by various cultural groups. Many individuals of African and Hispanic descent are reported to prefer, for example, a relational, socially oriented, field-dependent learning style in comparison to the aforementioned field-independent style, which is reportedly preferred by most European and Asian groups.

Test bias may also come from other culturally based differences in communicative style, in areas such asverbosity, the statement of obvious information, and preferred narrative style. Knowledge of sources of test bias can assist clinicians in interpreting test data, modifying existing tests, and constructing new scoring norms. Of course, the ultimate solution to this problem is the construction of criterion-referenced tests that assess a test taker’s communication skills from the vantage point of the speech community.

The use of culturally and linguistically discriminatory assessment instruments is specifically prohibited by federal mandates such as the Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) (1975), the Bilingual Education Act of 1976 (P.L. 95-541), and Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.
In addition, several legal decisions have declared illegal the use of culturally and linguistically discriminatory assessment procedures for determining the presence of disabling conditions; see, for example, *Huaina v. California State Board of Education* in 1973, *Matee T. v. Halladay in Mississippi* in 1977, and *Larry P. v. Riles in California* in 1979.

In interpreting assessment data and diagnosing communication disorders, there is some evidence that, since different cultural communities define communication pathology differently, the speech language pathologist must use this information. Let us take the case of stuttering to illustrate this point.

Leith and Mills (1975) note a sharp difference in stuttering patterns between African Americans and Caucasians. Caucasians, they report, show a strong tendency for what they call “Type I” stuttering, which is characterized by overt (audible) repetitions and prolongations with a moderate number of overt secondary characteristics, such as word phrase repetitions and accelerated speaking rates. African Americans, in contrast, show a strong tendency for “Type II” stuttering, which is characterized by more covert (nonaudible) prolongations and repetitions and a large number of relatively severe secondary characteristics, including total avoidance of speech. African American stutterers, like all Type II stutterers, often appear to have either a mild handicap or no handicap whatsoever, although they appear tense and anxious; that is, the Type II stutterer works hard to appear not to stutter.

Leith and Mills (1975) argue that African Americans engage in Type II stuttering far more than whites because, as pointed out by sociolinguists such as Mitchell (1969) and Kochman (1970), the African American culture in the United States places a high premium on oral proficiency and on being under control. Indeed, a substantial part of the working-class male self-concept is built around proficiency in oral skills such as ritual insults, rapping, and verbal routines with women and around being “cool,” so as to always appear in control and never ruffled. Obviously, stuttering runs counter to these social values; therefore, the African American stutterer would naturally do everything possible to mask stuttering and the way it makes him feel.

A related problem deals with the child who appears to have delayed language development. The speech language pathologist must determine whether the child has a true language disorder/learning disability or has mastered the rules for a nonstandard dialect and is simply missing some rules for Standard English. Familiarity with the child’s native speech community is the first step in the assessment process. Seymour and Miller-Jones (1981) have presented an excellent framework for assessing African American children who do not speak Standard English, Erickson and Omark (1981) have provided a thorough framework for bilingual speakers, Harris (1985) presents an overview of Native American children, Cheng (1995) addresses assessment issues for Asian students. Kayser (1995a) provides recommended procedures for speech and language assessment for Spanish–English speaking students. Vaughn-Cooke (1993) has made a number of suggestions for improving language assessment in multicultural populations in general.
Clinical Management

The speech-language pathologist can also apply sociocultural principles of language and communication in the delivery of therapy and education. This area is only beginning to receive attention by researchers in communication disorders. Significant changes in traditional approaches, however, have begun to appear.

First, the interpersonal dimension is a vital component of any type of effective clinical management of a communication disorder. For this reason, differences in the verbal and nonverbal rules used by the speech-language pathologist and the client can cause unintended episodes of insult, discomfort, or hypersensitivity, which could adversely affect the interpersonal dynamics needed for effective clinical work (Adler, 1973; Taylor, 1978).

Second, knowledge of developmental patterns of a particular language or dialect can help the professional define differences between developmental variations and pathologic deviations, the appropriate time to begin speech or language therapy for pathologic features, and the course of therapy once it has started.

Seymour and Seymour (1977) have developed one of the few models for providing therapy to speech or language disorders that take language variation into account. Using African American English as their point of departure, the Seymours argue that, since many of the features of Standard English and African American English Vernacular in the United States overlap, therapy goals should fit with educational goals and social expectations. Therefore, their model is constructed so that particular linguistic features of both African American English Vernacular and Standard English are modified. The model recognizes the possibility of pathologic deviations from both vernacular and Standard English and the fact that true linguistic competency in the culture probably requires people to be proficient in both systems.

Kayser (1995b) presents some challenges to identification and treatment of language disorders in Hispanic populations. Recall that semilingualism may result from the acquisition process of two languages. Kayser posits that the effect of second language acquisition can often become mistaken as a language disorder. Identification of true language disorders may be difficult since bilingual individuals often do not have the same lexical or comprehensive proficiency in both languages. Thus, less development of the second language (English) may not be reflective of true language capacity. This fact points out the importance of language testing in the individual’s dominant language and the need for more bilingual professionals.

Another challenge in identifying language disorders presented by Kayser is the difficulty of establishing norms of language development for children developing bilingualism. Since no two children will be identical in their language proficiency and, of course, language impairments are idiosyncratic, large group studies cannot represent the uniqueness of the individual child.
There are also unique challenges with regard to Asian populations, not the least of which is the fact of wide diversity among nationalities and cultures.

With regard to terminology, reference to Asians comprises a broad spectrum of peoples, languages, and dialects. "Asian" generally denotes peoples of East Asian and Indo-Chinese descent, specifically Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Lao, Cambodian, and Burmese. However, the term accurately includes persons from the Indian subcontinent, the Philippines and the Pacific Islands. Cheng and Chang (1995) attribute many of the issues of identification and management of language disorders to this diversity. Cultural differences also present challenges to professionals. According to Cheng, Asians are often stereotyped as smart and hard-working, thus exceptionalities are often not addressed by professionals. In addition, issues of cultural ambivalence and degree of acculturation add to the challenges attributed to diversity. Finally, there are issues related to inadequate education policies to address bilingualism and cultural difference that also affect the quality of services provided to Asian students.

N. Miller (1984) has also presented a thorough discussion of the diagnosis and management of language disorders in Hispanic American bilingual populations. Quinn (1985) and Reyes (1985) present methods and considerations for early intervention and treatment of neurogenic disorders in these same populations.

Language Education

In some professional settings, the speech-language pathologist needs to instruct speakers of nonstandard dialects in Standard English. This is in addition to the usual professional responsibility of providing therapy for people with communication disorders. In these instances, the speech-language pathologist must keep in mind that teaching a second dialect is not the same as correcting a disorder. In teaching a second dialect, the goal is to establish a parallel linguistic form to stand alongside an already existing, legitimate linguistic form for use in certain situations. In correcting a disorder, the goal is to eradicate unacceptable linguistic forms in favor of those that are considered "normal."

It is obvious that a disorder may exist within any dialect.

ASHA's 1983 position on social dialects permits clinicians to provide instruction in Standard English on an elective basis only. To offer such instruction, however, ASHA asserts that the professional must be sensitive and competent in at least three areas: (a) linguistic features of the dialect, (b) linguistic contrastive analysis procedures, and (c) the effects of attitudes toward dialects.

Feigenbaum (1970) is one of the major writers on the subject of second dialects instruction. Using principles from English as a Second Language (ESL), Feigenbaum has outlined an "audiolingual" or "pattern practice" approach to teaching Standard English as a second dialect. The components of the program involve the following steps.
1. Presentation of explicit examples of the two dialects, highlighting distinguishing characteristics
2. Discrimination drills between the two dialects, requiring the learner to determine sameness and difference between pairs of utterances
3. Identification drills that require the learner to properly categorize utterances as being from one dialect or the other
4. Translation drills requiring the learner to translate utterances presented in one dialect into the opposite dialect, that is, standard to nonstandard and nonstandard to standard
5. Response drills in which the learners respond, in quasi-spontaneous situations, to a stimulus presented in one dialect with a response consistent with that dialect or, eventually, with a response inconsistent with that dialect

Building on principles of second language teaching and oral communication classroom techniques, Taylor (1986a) has suggested that there are eight steps through which learners must be taken if they are to acquire competence in using a particular linguistic structure of Standard English in the appropriate situations and with the correct meanings. These steps are

1. Positive attitude toward existing dialect
2. Awareness of difference between existing dialect and Standard English
3. Recognition, labeling, and contrasting of specific features of the existing dialect and Standard English
4. Recognition of different meanings coded by parallel structural forms in the two dialects
5. Recognition of situations in which the existing dialect or Standard English is appropriate
6. Production of targeted features of Standard English in connected speech from a model provided by the instructor
7. Production of targeted features of Standard English in connected speech in controlled situations, for example, role playing
8. Production of targeted features of Standard English in connected speech in spontaneous situations

Taylor’s program, which has been successfully field tested in several California school districts, requires instruction to focus on language structure, language use, and language as a facilitator of cognition. It emphasizes practical applications in a variety of situations and looks across the entire school curriculum, particularly in reading and writing.

Unfortunately, the decision of whether to teach English as a second language or Standard English as a second dialect is not always clear-cut. It is one thing to determine, for instance, that a child from a Chinese family does not have the r/l phoneme in his phonology or that a Chicano child does not have
the /t/, but it is quite another matter to determine what, if anything, should be done about these dialects educationally, who should do it, and when it should be done.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is considering the role of speech-language pathologists in providing ESL services to children in the schools who are determined to have a communication disorder in conjunction with limited English proficiency. While it is considered within the scope of practice, it is essential that speech-language pathologists have the appropriate sensitivities and competencies to make valid identifications as well as the technical skills to provide competent management services.

Outside the school setting, speech-language pathologists are often called upon to conduct accent modification as elective therapy for bilingual English proficient adults. Skills to provide this service are generally acquired outside the regular academic program. However, several training courses, workbooks, computer programs, and other resources are available. Extensive information is available from TESOL, (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), 1600 Cameron St., Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Some professionals and community leaders feel that dialects should be perceived as culturally adequate and that children should be left alone to use the language of their home speech communities (the no-intervention view). Others, while respecting and preserving community dialects, feel that all children should also master Standard English, at least as a tool, so that they can use it in those situations when it is either expected or required (the bilingual view). A few even hold the counterproductive view that dialects have little value and should, therefore, be eradicated and replaced with Standard English (the eradication view). This rather controversial issue is not likely to be resolved in the near future. The speech-language pathologist who deals with children from any multicultural group must be sensitive to these questions and provide services to individuals in the context of the family or community expectations, the state of the art in educational linguistics, sociolinguistics, and the law.

The issue of teaching Standard English to speakers of nonstandard dialects of English, notably African American English Vernacular, has taken on legal ramifications. In 1977, a group of parents in Ann Arbor, Michigan, filed a suit in Federal Court on behalf of seven African American preschool and elementary children, charging that teachers in a local school had failed to adequately take into account the children's home dialects in teaching of language arts.

Among their charges, the parents claimed that the teachers were not sufficiently knowledgeable about these dialects and, as a result, did not fully appreciate their intrinsic worth and usefulness in the educational environment. In several cases, children of the plaintiffs had been inappropriately enrolled in speech programs to "correct" their home dialects. The judge in the case concurred with the parents and ordered the Ann Arbor School Board to develop an educational plan that, among other things, would educate the teachers in the students' dialects and how knowledge and value of the dialects can be used constructively in the language arts curriculum.
The Ann Arbor case raised many of the issues pertaining to dialects and education into perspective. First, the fact that the parents sued to have the school to teach Standard English while preserving the home dialect corroborates data from several studies on parents’ language attitudes and aspirations. Second, the arguments on behalf of the plaintiffs clearly support the bidialectal posture toward language education for nonstandard English-speaking children. Through the trial, the plaintiffs’ parents reiterated their belief that their right to equal protection of the laws, guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, requires schools to teach students Standard English but not at the expense of eradicating or showing disrespect toward home and community languages and dialects. Third, the plaintiffs’ lawyers attacked the inappropriate placements in speech therapy of students who demonstrated only differences, not disorders, in language and communication. Fourth, the judge’s ruling in this case suggests that professionals who offer language instruction to nonstandard speakers must be properly trained in the area of language variables and in applying that training to language arts education. Training of this type may be obtained in disciplines such as sociolinguistics and bilingual education. Of course, speech-language pathologists who assume this role should remember that their function is that of a teacher and not of a therapist. First and foremost, the language professional must keep in mind that different does not mean disordered.

**SUMMARY**

To avoid misdiagnoses of communication disorders, speech-language pathologists must develop skills to distinguish communication differences from disorders. A knowledge of the principles and foundations of sociolinguistics is essential. Language differences are related to social factors including ethnicity, social class, education, occupation, geographic region, gender, social situation, peer group association, and first language.

Dialects are subvarieties of a language. Standard English is the dialect that has become the language of education and that is spoken by the middle-class, educated population. Other major dialects include African American English, Southern English, Southern White Nonstandard English and Appalachian English. Other varieties increasingly heard within the United States include English that is influenced by Spanish and Asian languages.

Test bias must be considered as a possibility in distinguishing language differences from disorders. Types of test bias include situational bias, value bias, phonological bias, grammatical bias, pragmatic bias, and directions/format bias. In addition to adjusting test instruments for bias, the speech-language pathologist should consider the definition of a communication disorder from the perspective of the client’s culture. For bilingual populations, the effect of first language influences on the acquisition of English must be considered.

Implications for clinical management include decisions of whether to enroll clients in therapy, the appropriate time to begin therapy, selecting materials
to target a therapy and use of the family and/or significant others. Instruction in Standard English as a second dialect and Foreign Accent Modification are educational issues whose foundations derive from English as a second language instruction. Debate continues surrounding whether social dialects should be preserved, modified, or eradicated.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the differences between a communication disorder and a communication difference. Select one cultural group and identify the clinical issues for assessment and treatment.
2. Define African American English Vernacular. Briefly discuss its origin and the issues surrounding its use.
3. Discuss the major factors that influence language behavior and acquisition. Which of these factors do you feel could have some impact on language differences? Defend your answer.
4. List at least five phonological features of African American English Vernacular, Southern English.

PROJECTS

1. Select any standard Case history form. Identify questions and possible answers by various cultural groups that may differ from typical expectations.

SELECTED READINGS


Southern White Nonstandard English, and Appalachian English. Identify specific points of overlap within your lists.

2. Select any standardized articulation or language test and identify possible sources of test bias for A) speakers of African American English, B) Hispanic American English, C) Asian American English.


