THE PHENOMENON OF DIGLOSSIA IN MODERN LINGUISTICS

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Abstract: *This article examines the phenomenon of diglossia as one of the central topics of modern sociolinguistics. Diglossia refers to the coexistence of two varieties of the same language within one community, where each variety performs distinct social and communicative functions. The research explores the historical origins of the concept, its theoretical foundations, and its transformation in the context of globalization and digital communication. Special attention is given to the role of diglossia in shaping linguistic identity, educational policy, and cultural continuity. The novelty of this research lies in analyzing how modern technologies, migration, and multilingual practices have blurred the traditional boundaries between "high" and "low" varieties. The article concludes that diglossia remains an essential analytical framework for understanding linguistic diversity and communication patterns in contemporary society.*

Keywords: *diglossia; high variety; low variety; linguistic identity; multilingualism; sociolinguistics; language policy; code-switching.*

I. Introduction. In the field of modern linguistics, the phenomenon of diglossia plays a key role in explaining how languages function within complex social environments. When two varieties of the same language coexist in one community, their use becomes socially distributed according to formality, prestige, and cultural expectations. The high (H) variety is usually associated with formal communication, education, state institutions, and standard written norms, while the low (L) variety is used in everyday conversation, folk traditions, and informal interactions.

The concept introduced by Ferguson in 1959 has expanded significantly, especially in the context of globalization, technological development, and increased multilingualism.

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Today, researchers observe that diglossia is not a static distribution of functions but a dynamic system in which speakers constantly shift between varieties depending on communicative needs. This makes diglossia a highly relevant topic for analyzing identity formation, social hierarchy, educational challenges, and cultural preservation. The actuality of the study lies in understanding how diglossia adapts to new communicative environments, particularly social media and digital writing practices.

II. Theoretical Background. Diglossia has traditionally been defined as a linguistic situation where two functionally distinct varieties of the same language coexist within a single speech community. Ferguson emphasized that the H variety is used in formal domains such as education, religion, literature, and politics, while the L variety is employed in everyday communication. However, later scholars expanded this definition to include more fluid, complex language practices influenced by social change.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, diglossia reflects cultural and political structures. The H variety often carries symbolic power, representing tradition, literacy, and social authority. The L variety, meanwhile, embodies local identity, emotional expression, and oral storytelling traditions. These varieties form a complementary relationship rather than a competitive one.

Modern linguistic theories highlight that diglossia intersects with bilingualism, code-switching, translanguaging, and language contact. Digital communication has given the L variety new visibility in written form, particularly in Arabic, Haitian Creole, Swiss German, and various post-Soviet languages. Such changes indicate that diglossia is undergoing transformation as communities adapt their linguistic behavior to new platforms and global influences.

III. Analytical Perspectives on Diglossic Communication. Understanding diglossia in modern linguistics requires a multifaceted approach that considers social, psychological, and communicative dimensions. The functional distribution between H and L varieties shapes how speakers perceive correctness, prestige, and identity. In many communities, early childhood language development takes place through the L variety, while formal education introduces the H variety. This creates cognitive tension for learners, who must navigate differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

Researchers note that diglossic speakers often employ code-switching as a communicative strategy. Switching between varieties helps them express emotions, signal group identity, or adapt to changing social contexts. In digital communication, this switching becomes even more rapid and creative. Platforms like social media encourage informal writing styles, allowing the L variety to expand into domains previously reserved for the H variety.

Moreover, diglossia is closely connected to language ideology. Communities may view the H variety as "correct" and the L variety as "uneducated," leading to linguistic insecurity or discrimination. Modern linguistic anthropology argues that both varieties carry cultural value and serve essential communicative purposes. The shift toward recognizing the L

variety in education, media, and literature reflects a growing understanding of linguistic diversity as a cultural asset.

IV. Practical Impact and Sociocultural Outcomes. The practical implications of diglossia are especially visible in education and public communication. In many countries, children grow up speaking only the L variety but receive schooling exclusively in the H variety. This mismatch can lead to difficulties in literacy acquisition, reduced motivation, and lower academic performance. Studies show that students learn more effectively when the L variety is used as a bridge to the H variety, especially in early education.

In media and public life, the influence of digital communication has diversified linguistic practices. Informal writing styles, memes, and online discussions have normalized the presence of L varieties in written form. This contributes to the democratization of communication and supports cultural authenticity. At the same time, it challenges governments, educators, and publishers to develop new strategies for teaching standard language norms without devaluing local speech habits. Diglossia also plays a significant role in preserving cultural heritage. Oral traditions, folk narratives, humor, and community identity are often carried by the L variety. Meanwhile, the H variety maintains classical literature, institutional memory, and official identity. Together, they form a linguistic ecosystem that reflects both continuity and change.

V. Challenges and Future Perspectives. Despite ongoing progress, several challenges remain in understanding and managing diglossic environments. Many communities struggle with rigid language ideologies that undervalue the L variety and limit its use in schools or official communication. Teachers may lack training in handling diglossic diversity, leading to overly prescriptive language instruction.

Another challenge is the rapid evolution of digital language practices. As informal varieties gain prominence online, concerns arise about declining literacy in the H variety or reduced adherence to standard norms. Balancing linguistic innovation with educational standards requires careful language planning.

Future perspectives include developing bilingual/bi-varietal education programs, creating learning materials for both varieties, and conducting further research on online diglossia. Scholars also emphasize the importance of embracing linguistic diversity as a cultural resource rather than a deficit.

VI. Conclusion. In conclusion, diglossia remains a vital concept in modern linguistics due to its deep influence on communication, education, identity, and cultural continuity. The coexistence of high and low varieties creates a rich linguistic environment that reflects social hierarchies and cultural values. As globalization, migration, and digital technologies reshape language use, diglossia becomes more dynamic and multifaceted. Understanding these transformations enables linguists, educators, and policymakers to develop more inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches to language teaching and planning. Ultimately, diglossia represents not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a window into the social and cultural life of communities around the world.

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