



DIGLOSSIA: PHENOMENON AND LANGUAGE THEORY

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Abstract:

Diglossia is usage varieties of one language that coexist with their respective roles. In their development, the usage roles of high variety (H) and low variety (L) are found not only in one language, but also in multi languages, also called double diglossia. The double diglossia can be in the form of double overlapping diglossia, double nested diglossia, or linear polyglossia.

Keywords: diglossia, high variety (H), low variety (L), double overlapping diglossia, double nested diglossia, linear polyglossia

1. Introduction

It cannot be denied that the study of language will always develop as human civilization goes by. In accordance with their nature, humans interact with others because they want to show their existence. They form a community group. Open societies will experience language contact with other communities in communicating. One of the effects of language contact is called diglossia.

2. The Emergence of Discussion on Diglossia

The discussion of diglossia was first raised by Karl Krumbacher in his book *Das Problem der neugriechischen Schriftsprache* in 1902. Then it was continued in 1930 by Marçais, a French linguist, in his book *La Diglossie arabe* (Paulston & Tucker, 2003: 343). The term became famous

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in linguistic studies after being used by Charles Ferguson in 1958 in a symposium on urbanization and standard languages. Some other linguists discussing it include Fishman and Fasold. The three experts' opinions will be discussed further below.

3. Some Experts' Views on Diglossia

3.1 Diglossia According to Ferguson

Diglossia, according to Ferguson, refers to a condition in a society where two varieties of one language exist side by side and each has a certain role. For more details, according to him, the meaning is:

“Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but it is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.”(Ferguson in Wardhaugh: 89)

From this definition, several things can be highlighted:

- a. Diglossia is a relatively stable linguistic situation, where in addition to a number of major varieties of one language, there is also another variety.
- b. The major varieties, among others, can be a standard dialect, or a regional standard.
- c. The major varieties have characteristics:
 - 1) Already (very) codified
 - 2) More complex grammar
 - 3) A very extensive and respected written literary mode
 - 4) Learned through formal education
 - 5) Used mainly in written and oral formal language
 - 6) Not used (by any stratum) in daily conversation

3.2 Different Features about Diglossia

In relation to diglossia, it turns out that there are 9 features presented by Ferguson (Fasold, 1987: p.p.34-38). They are:

a. Function

One of important features of diglossia is a matter of function. In a diglossian society, there are two variations in one language. These variations are called the high variety (H) and low variety (L). There are a few countries that use two varieties in one language. Examples:

	Country	H Variety	L Variety
1.	Countries that use Arabic	Classical Arabic: Al-Fusha	Arabic variety used by the Arabs: Ad dariji
2.	Greece	Pure Greek: Kathareuoussa	oral Greek: Dhimotiki
3.	Central Europe (Italy, France, Spain)	Latin	Languages in daily speaking

Meanwhile, the functional distribution of H and L varieties means that in certain situations only the proper H variety is suitable for use, and in other situations, the L variety can be used. If either dialect is used in inappropriate situations, their speakers sometimes can be pointed out, mocked, scorned, or ridiculed by others.

In the following chart the uses of H and L varieties in everyday occasions are listed:

Situation	Use
1. Sermon in church or in mosque	H
2. Talk in parliament, political speech	H
3. Lecture in University	H
4. News broadcast	H
5. Editorial in newspaper	H
6. Poem	H
7. Order to worker, servant and artisan	L
8. Personal letter	L
9. Conversation with family and colleague	L
10. Radio drama	L
11. Political cartoon comment	L
12. Folk literature	L

(Source: Ferguson in Fasold 1987 with modification)

b. Prestige

In a diglossian society, there is a subjective assumption stating that the H dialect is more prestigious, superior, and more respected, while the L dialect is considered inferior and sometimes its existence is even rejected by some people. This can be seen in most educated Arabians and Haitians who suggest that the L variety does not need to be used even though they use it in daily conversation. In Indonesia, it can also be seen from the phenomenon that the standard Indonesian variety is considered more prestigious than non-standard Indonesian.

c. Literary heritage

Folk literature and poetry use the L variety although many society members assume that only literature and poems with the H variety are actually the literary works of a nation.

d. Acquisition

In terms of acquisition both H and L varieties can be traced as follows: the H variety can be acquired by studying it in formal education, while the L variety can be obtained by socializing with family, friends, and the like. In its application, the H variety is not always used and and it

is always controlled by grammar rules and principles when it is learned. Meanwhile, the L variety is used regularly and continuously in daily interactions.

e. Standardization

As a variety that is considered prestigious, the H variety is usually standardized through formal codification. It can take the forms of dictionaries, grammars, pronunciation guidebooks, and rule books for using correct and proper language. Meanwhile, the L variety is rarely noticed. If there is any codification, it is usually made by researchers from other speech communities in different languages.

f. Stability

In diglossian communities, the existence of language varieties has been maintained for a significant amount of time. This leads to stable H and L varieties. With the development of language, the L variety's borrowing lexical elements from the H variety is common, but using the L variety's lexical elements in the H variety is less common because the variety is usually used when forced.

g. Grammar

According to Ferguson, similar language forms create H and L varieties in diglossia although there are grammatical differences. Two examples would be German and French.

- Standard German has four noun cases and two indicative simple tenses while Swiss German has three noun cases and one indicative simple tense.
- French nouns indicate agreement in number and type (gender) while Creole-Haitian nouns do not.

h. Lexicon

In terms of vocabulary, most of the H and L varieties are the same. However, there are H variety verbs that do not have pairs in the L variety, or vice versa.

Variety Origin	Meaning	H Variety	L Variety
Greek	house	ikos	spiti
	water	idhor	nero
Arab	what	ma	eh
	nose	anfun	manakhir
Indonesia	money	uang	duit
	bad	buruk	jelek

i. Phonology

In phonology, the sound systems of H and L varieties are single systems, but the phonology of the H variety is a basic system, while that of the L variety is a subsystem. The H variety phonology is closer to the general forms underlying it in languages as a whole. The L variety phonology is further from the basic forms.

3.3 Diglossia According to Fishman

Based on Ferguson's concept of diglossia, Fishman developed and modified it more broadly. According to him, diglossia applies not only to the existence of differences in H and L varieties of one language, but also to non-allied languages or two different languages. In this case, Fishman emphasizes functions sorting of both languages or the concerning varieties.

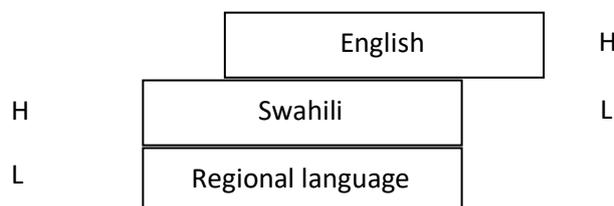
3.4 Diglossia According to Fasold

Along with Fishman, Fasold developed the concept of diglossia into a broad diglossia. In the concept, differences are found between two languages or two dialects. Because the community inside is also multilingual, Fasold calls it double diglossia. The forms of double diglossia can be double overlapping diglossia, double nested diglossia, and linear polyglossia (Fasold, 1987: p.p. 41-51).

a. Double overlapping diglossia

Double overlapping diglossia is a situation of multiple degrees and functions of language. An example that can be seen here is the linguistic situation in Tanzania. In Tanzania, people are multilingual, and there are various kinds of languages used in their daily lives. They know English, Swahili, and a number of other regional languages.

In fact, regional languages are learned as mother tongues, and are used in inter-family communication or between speakers who speak the same mother tongue. Swahili is studied in elementary school, and it is used as the language of instruction in teaching and the learning process, as well as a means of communication between schoolmates who do not share the same mother tongue. In this case, based on the way of obtaining and using it, the local language is an L variety, but its status is an H variety. When children enter higher education, they must take English as a subject and use it as the language of instruction in formal situations. That is why English is classified into an H variety when compared to Swahili, an L variety used in informal situations. In a lower level, the Swahili becomes the H variety when compared to the regional language which becomes an L variety. When described, the position of the language is as follows:



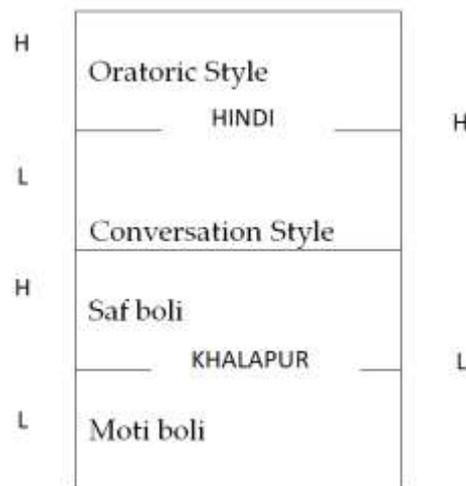
(Source: Fasold, 1987: 45)

b. Double nested diglossia

Double nested diglossia is a situation in a multilingual society, where there are two languages which are distinguished between the H variety and L variety. In this case, each of the H and L varieties have varieties or dialects which are also given a status as H varieties and L varieties. The situation in Khalapur, India, is that there are two languages, namely Hindi and Khalapur. Khalapur is studied at home and used by everyone in the village for their daily local

relationships. Meanwhile, Hindi is learned at school or through residents living in the city, or through outside contact. Thus, Khalapur is a diglossian society with Hindi as an H variety, and Khalapur an L variety. However, both Hindi and Khalapur also have H and L varieties. Khalapur has two varieties, namely Moti boli (rude language) used in informal relations and Saf boli (delicate language) having tendency towards Hindi (in contrast to Khalapur-Hindi). So, Moti boli is an L variety, and Saf boli is an H variety in Khalapur.

The Hindi used in Khalapur also has two varieties, namely varieties that are used in ordinary conversations/conversational styles (L variety) and varieties used in formal lecture/oratoric style (H variety). From the above understanding it can be described as follows:



(Source: Fasold, 1987: 48)

c. Linear polyglossia

Linear polyglossia is structuring the language repertoire in a society. One example that can be presented here is the languages of English-speaking Malaysian Chinese residents in Malaysia. Formal Malaysian English is H1 language and standard Malaysian is H2 language. Is Chinese a Dummy High in status? DH (significant language in high-variation society, but not used in it for all purposes.) Informal Malaysian English occupies intermediate 1 (M1) language status and dominant Chinese becomes intermediate 2 (M2). Next, native Chinese occupies a low language level 1 (L1), and other Chinese languages become low languages 2 (L2), whereas Bazaar Malayan language occupies the lowest (L). The following is a chart that will clarify the above discussion.

Formal Malaysian English	H1
Malaysian	H2
Mandarin	DH
Informal Malaysian English	M1
Dominant Chinese	M2
Native Chinese	L1
Other Chinese languages	L2Ln
Informal Bazaar Malayan	L-

(Source: Fasold, 1987: 50 with modification)

4. Closing

Discussions about diglossia will not be enough to reach a conclusion on the topic in a certain period of time. In accordance with the current development, diglossia which highlights the differences in the H and L varieties occurs not only in communities of one language, but also at the broader level of multilingual communities. The theories of diglossia that have been conveyed by prior understanding will continue to develop in accordance with the development of language.

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