Nativity and Language

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Abstract:

The central issue taken up by this paper is the close relation between the concepts of 'Nativity' and 'Language Variety' (dialect). It is speculated, here, that 'Nativity', i.e. the internalized linguistic knowledge, is a property of a dialect, rather than the standard form of a language. This assumption leads to the investigation of universal dialectal properties such as accent, idiolect, style, register, etc. within the intricate relation existing between language and society. The end result of this paper supports the speculation that the broad term 'language' subsumes different native dialects, unified by a written and spoken standard form. The fact that the official standard spoken form reflects dialect variations is an evidence in support of the claim that nativity belongs to dialects.
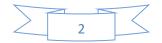
Introduction:

Nativity is often claimed to be a characteristic of the standard language. But since language is arbitrary, flexible, versatile, creative and adaptable, it is predictable that speech communities develop linguistic varieties, i.e. dialects. A dialect X is born of, hence a daughter of, a mother dialect Y, which, in turn, is a daughter of a proto-mother dialect W. This family relation is expressed by the following formula:

(i) **(...W... → ...Y... → ... X ...)**

Dots indicate sisterhood and arrows indicate daughterhood. English, Arabic and other languages are our sources for practical demonstration. Varieties may also exist within dialects; that is to say a dialect may develop sub-varieties.

This paper comprises an introduction, eight sections and a conclusion. These sections are organized as follows: Section one introduces the wave theory as a model to show how speech varieties (dialects) surge in time and space. This theory claims that factors (ex/in)ternal to language such as society, region, etc trigger dialectal waves. It stresses how, rather than why, varieties evolve. Section two emphasizes the abstract innate nature of nativity, based on linguistic notions such as competence, productivity, intuition, etc. Section three is concerned with 'language community'. Different definitions of 'Language community', reflecting various linguistic attitudes, are provided. Section four considers the terms 'Language' and 'Dialect'. Section five introduces the term 'variety' to express regional and occupational contexts such as religious English, social classes used within a dialect. This implies that 'dialect' is a general term and 'variety' is a specific term, i.e. varieties are subsumed under dialects. Section six sheds light on the intersection between the concepts of 'Style' and 'Register'. It concludes that they are characteristics of the individual. It is devoted to dialect, its sub-varieties and idiolect. Libyan and Egyptian Arabic dialects exemplify sub-varieties. Section seven deals with the, seemingly, universal phenomenon of 'Standardization', i.e. one variety of a language is selected as a standard form. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is a standardized classical form, rather than a selected social dialectal form .Section seven extends standardization to English, Arabic and Chinese as illustrations.

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Section eight generalizes the linguistic characteristics and functions shared by the standard forms in languages.

1. Wave Theory:

According to wave theory, changes spread more or less rapidly from a particular center in various directions favorable to them. They are accepted or resisted. Dialects, too, spread from a particular central language community. A dialect of a language community may remain in isolation for a great length of time, leading to mutual unintelligibility with other dialects, speaking the same language. This occurred in Chinese and is currently occurring with the Arabic dialects. Pressure may be exerted on a language, so that one regionally, religiously, socially or even arbitrarily prestigious dialect expands at the expense of other dialects, which may recede or disappear. From the linguistic point of view, however, the study of dialect varieties establishes that, regardless of external factors, certain dialects spread more rapidly than others, and some are inherently resistant to change. The reasons for this phenomenon are difficult to analyze, but linguistic change between generations and social classes is clearly observable.

2. Competence, Nativity and Intuition:

In his reaction against American structuralism, Chomsky, N. (1981) introduced his internalized knowledge of language (competence), the innate ideas a speaker endowed with at birth. This inborn linguistic capability is opposed to 'performance', the actual articulation of these potentials. Competence is echoed by the sub-conscious faculty to speak language creatively. The creative property of a language is a part of the speaker's nativity. In parallel with Chomsky (ibid), the Swiss linguist Saussure, F. (1916) posited his social competence, which he termed "langue" as opposed to "parole", which is identical to Chomsky's 'performance'. This internalized knowledge of a dialect qualifies its speakers as natives. Different attitudes adopted in modern linguistic literature to explain and define nativity. Appeal to intuition is avoided in formal linguistics, and a speaker's intuition is described as a fire on a wooden stove. Semantics, therefore, is, sometimes, deemed to belong to semiotics, rather than linguistics.

3. Language Community:

The term 'Language Variety' is used in the sense that the general term "Music" is manifested in many different ways. Differences between dialects are related to the different linguistic items each dialect includes, i.e. different dialects of one and the same language or different varieties of one and the same dialect may show different phonology (accent), morphology (lexis), syntax (structure), style and/or register variations.

The advantage of the general term "language" is to subsume concepts such as dialect, variety, register, style and even idiolect. It allows us to ask on what basis we can discriminate these notions. For example, why do we identify some dialects as different languages, whereas others are different dialects of the same language? On one hand, Chinese includes mutually incomprehensible dialects, which might be classified as separate spoken languages, although speakers of these various dialects share a standard official spoken and written form, i.e. Mandarin. Arabic subsumes different dialects, some of which are unintelligible. Enforced by

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national pride and religious faith, all the various Arabic dialects share the MSA form, i.e. *fushah* (standard). On the other hand, Crystal, D. (1980) points out that Scandinavian language communities are independent despite their mutual comprehensibility and the close cultural and geographic relationship of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The criterion to identify each dialect or variety is determined by its relation to the society, i.e. speech community in which it is used. The term 'Speech community' is defined by different linguists. The followings are selected definitions:

1. Bloomfield, L. (1933) defines speech community as a group of people who interact by means of speech. This definition puts emphasis on 'contact' more than 'shared language'. This attitude seems to be motivated by his belief that, regardless of size, speech communities have their own languages. He (ibid) adds that more than one American Indian tribe of only a few hundred speakers spoke a language of its own.

2. Hockett, Ch. (1958) defines speech community in a more complex way. He claims that a speech community is the whole set of people who communicate with each other directly or indirectly through a common language. This definition is based on the contact of communities as implied by the verb "communicate". If two or more communities spoke the same language, but had no contact with each other at all, they would be regarded as different speech communities.

3. Gumperz, J. (1968) posits that a linguistic community is a social group, which may be monolingual or multilingual, held together by social interaction and separated from the surrounding areas. Gumperz, (ibid) includes the possibility, ignored by Bloomfield, that some groups interact by means of one language and other groups by means of another. Accordingly, he claims that a speech community is any human group characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs, and set off from similar communities by significant differences in language use.

4. Lyons, J. (1970) defines speech community as all the people who use a given language or dialect. This definition puts no social or cultural restrictions, i.e. speech communities need not have any social or cultural unity.

5. Labov, W. (1972) defines speech community with emphasis on shared attitudes to language, rather than on common linguistic behavior. He (ibid) identifies speech community not by any marked agreement in the use of language elements but by participation in a set of shared norms. He (ibid) stresses the speech community as a group of people who feel themselves to be a community, rather than a group, which only the outsider could know about. In this sense, speech community is subjectively, rather than objectively, defined.

6. A final approach, advocated by some sociolinguists, avoids the term 'Speech Community' altogether, and stresses that groups in society have distinctive speech and social characteristics. Emphasis is placed on individual contribution to the verbal behavior of his group. By analogy, the individual speaker is important in sociolinguistics in much the same way as the individual cell is important in biology. This individual-based attitude is reminiscent of Saussure's claim that individuals may contribute to language change but they

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have no control over it. Stressing the individual's role in language, is in harmony with Chomsky's view of 'competence' as a property of the individual.

4. Language and Dialects :

In sociolinguistics, the term 'language' refers to the actual act of speaking in a given situation. It, also, refers to the underlying knowledge the individual uses in a given time and space. Crystal (ibid) identifies this internalized knowledge as 'Dialect'. It could, therefore, be claimed that nativity reflects dialect, rather than language, competence. He (ibid) claims that a dialect is, mainly, regional or social distinctive variety of a language. He (ibid), also posits that any language with a vast number of speakers will eventually develop dialects, particularly if there are regional or social barriers isolating groups of the speech community. Crystal, (ibid:110) defines dialect as:

'A regionally or socially distinctive variety of a language, identified by particular set of words and grammatical structures'

For him, a dialect is a subdivision of a language. Motivated by regional or social factors, (ex/in)ternal to language, speakers of a language develop various native dialects.

In an attempt to address the complex relation between the general term 'language' and the specific term 'dialect', it is usually claimed that people speak different languages when they do not understand each other. But this mutual unintelligibility is also demonstrated by different spoken dialects of one and the same language. Hence the terms 'language' and 'Dialect' are coordinates.
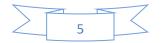
Dialects are the major internal varieties of languages. Every speaker acquires a particular dialect of his language, which is largely determined by the region of his birth and early life. Each language may be analyzed as dialect continuum in which closer dialects exhibit more common similarities than those which are, regionally or socially, distant. Local and social differences are more clearly marked at the phonetic and phonological levels than in lexical, morphological or syntactic patterns

5. Variety:

Some sociolinguists and stylists posit that 'Variety' is governed by situation. Other attitudes classify 'Variety' as dialect, register or field. A further group categorize 'Variety' as a special type of language used within a dialect. The notion of 'variety' is extendable to sub-varieties within a dialect. Crystal (ibid:372) defines the term 'variety' as follows:

'For some sociolinguists, 'variety' is given a more restricted definition, as one kind of situationally distinctive language – a specialized type of language used within a dialect'

The Libyan Arabic dialect, for instance, displays eastern and western varieties. Due to geographical neighborhood, speakers of Egyptian Arabic dialect find the eastern Libyan variety far more comprehensible than the western one. By the same token, Egyptian Arabic dialect displays, at least, two southern and northern varieties. Due to density and constant

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contact, these two Egyptian varieties are quite intelligible within the Egyptian dialect. Dialects which differ quite markedly in their phonological inventory may show more or less complete correspondence in lexis and other linguistic levels. Northern Egyptian and eastern Libyan varieties of Arabic, which are, geographically, closely located, exhibit more differences in their phonological inventories, and a close correspondence in their lexis and syntactic structure.

Regardless of their phonetic position in the same set of lexemes in both dialects, the Egyptian consonants **/ʔ/** (glottal stop), **/g/** (voiced velar plosive), **/s/** (voiceless alveolar fricative) and **/z/** (voiced alveolar fricative) are, in vast contexts, realized in the Libyan Arabic dialect as **/g/** (voiced velar plosive), **/ʒ/** (voiced palato-alveolar fricative), **/Ɵ/** (voiceless dental fricative) and **/Ə/** (voiced dental fricative) respectively, as shown by the following data:

Free variants in Libyan and Egyptian Arabic dialects:

	Egyptian vocabulary	Libyan equivalents	Meaning
(i)	/ʔƏri:b/	/gƏri:b/	Near
(ii)	/gi:l/	/ʒi:l/	Generation
(iii)	/t/saʕlab/	/Ɵaʕlab/	Fox
(iv)	/d/zi:b/	/Əi:b/	Wolf
(v)	/fæt/	/fɛt/	Passed

The free variants /t/s/ in (iii) and/d/z/ in (iv) belong to the southern (t/d), and the northern (s/z) Egyptian varieties. The Egyptian Arabic vowels **/æ/,** is realized everywhere in Libyan Arabic as /ɛ/, as shown in (v). Within a dialect, we find personal variations. The term 'idiolect' is introduced to describe the individual usage of his dialect and his personal habits of pronunciation. Accordingly, no two speakers, even within one and the same speech community, have the same language, possibly, because no two speakers have the same experience of language. These personal traits are obviously noticeable when a speaker of a language speaks a foreign language. Two main aspects of idiolect concern the linguist, Register and Style.
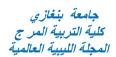
6. Register and Stylistics:

1. Register:

The term covers variations conditioned by social context: for example, a lecturer in a lecture room, a lower in a court room as opposed to a any informal domestic environment. Crystal, (ibid: 301) defines Register context as follows:

''In stylistics and sociolinguistics, the term refers to a variety of language defined according to its use in social situations, e.g. a register of scientific, religious, formal English.''.

Referring to language user, variations are termed as 'local' or 'social' varieties (dialects). There are, however, also variations according to language use. The kind of language we use is determined by certain factors such as: (i) what we are talking about, (ii)

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the way a language is put into use, and (iii) other needs imposed by the immediate situation of an utterance. The study of such varieties has been developed in the literature under the title of Registers. As far back as mid fifties, the concept of Register was propounded and developed. It was posited that the linguistic behavior of a given individual is by no means consistent. An individual speaks (or writes) differently and use a number of distinct registers according to different social situations. A given language is said to have register distinction at a certain point, only if there are linguistic and situational differences. Each language, therefore, has its own register system which may, or may not, cover the same range of possible situations as other languages.

All idiolects are selected from a potential range of style and register in a given speech community, and it is this selection which, in addition to personal habits of pronunciation, marks the speech of the individual in a dialect-speaking community. Halliday, M. (1978) classifies register on the basis of three principal situational dimensions:

1. Field dimension is concerned with the purpose of communication. 'field' refers to 'why' and 'about what' a communication takes place. For example, we often use register to emphasis, influence, impress, praise, supplicate, insult, condemn or encourage people.

2. Mode dimension refers to the means by which communication takes place, printed text, tape recordings, broadcasting, public speaking, etc.

3. Tenor dimension depends on the relations between participants. Tenor is about 'to whom': how the speaker defines how he sees the person with whom he is communicating. For instance, in writing one letter, a person might start: 'I am writing to inform you ……', but in another he might write: 'I just wanted to let you know that ……'. Such examples can be endless and suggest that the variations, due to register differences, may be comparable to differences in a dialect. The two examples of letter-openings differ in tenor, one being impersonal (formal relations) and the other is personal (informal relation). Their field (purpose) and mode (written) are identical.

Regardless of the different attitudes held by different linguists regarding register, the lines of demarcation between register classification are not always clear. Dimensions may, and sometimes do, overlap. 'Cannot' as opposed to 'can't' is an example of mode and formality marker. The same may apply to the use of the tenor passive forms as more formal and/or scientific than their everyday field active counterparts. The number and range of registers possessed by a native speaker is largely determined by his personal experience.

2. Style:

Style is categorized in sociolinguistics as a variation with reference to the attitude between a speaker and a listener, grading from most formal, e.g. in giving a speech, preaching, recitation, lecturing, etc. to the most spontaneous speech as in familiar discourse and every day form. According to Crystal, (ibid), stylistics studies the situational distinctive uses of language including the choices made by individual and social groups in their use of language. Stylistics is an area of study difficult to define with any precision.

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Structural linguistics, which developed in the thirties was largely uninterested in stylistics. The main exception was the interest displayed in stylistic questions, mainly at the phonological level by the Prague School advocates. The American structuralists and British linguists during this period were preoccupied with the investigation of the unrecorded Indo-American and other Non-Indo-European languages. Poetry was the first and major focus of stylistic attention. Transformational-generative grammarians concepts of deviance, marked-ness, acceptability, grammaticality and ambiguity gave rise to a great deal of interest in the language of poetry. The notion and view of style as deviation from a norm has been the central subject matter within stylistic linguistics. The problem of norms within a language community has been of much interest in Britain, where the Firthan notion of 'context of situation' has shifted the attention of the British linguists to the social view of language.

7. Standarization:

(i) Standards:

A standard form is established to bridge different dialects of a language. English Received Pronunciation (RP) and MSA, Chinese (Mandarin), etc. are examples of standard forms, written and spoken, used for media, education, academic and other official purposes. This is why the various spoken varieties of a language are characterized as spoken dialects. Unlike dialects, a standard form is not acquired as a native mother tongue. Therefore, it is curious and unusual when native speakers of a dialect converse in the standard spoken form, though it is quite normal to write in the standard written form. This dialectal phenomenon is known in the literature as "diglossia" (Ferguson 1959). I conjecture, therefore, that dialects are acquired as mother tongues (nature) whereas standard languages are learnt individually (nurture). In an attempt to define 'standardization', Crystal, (ibid: 329) states:

"A term used in sociolinguistics to refer to a prestige variety of language used within a speech community. 'Standard languages, dialects, varieties' cut across regional differences, providing a unified means of communication, and thus institutionalized norm which can be used in the mass-media , in teaching the language to foreigners, and so on. Linguistic forms or dialects which do not conform to this norm are then referred to as sub-standard or (with a less pejorative prefix) non-standard though neither term is intended to suggest that other dialect forms 'lack standard' in any linguistic sense. The natural development of a standard language in a speech community(or an attempt by a community to impose one dialect as a standard) is known as 'standardization'.

(ii) Social Dialects:

Besides dialectology, whose main concern is the regional distribution of dialects. Socially determined distributions of dialects have been recognized as far back as the eighteenth century, Gauchat, L. (1899), noted in his study on Swiss languages the existence of a barrier between the upper class, who spoke French, and the local people, who spoke Patios. He (ibid) reported variation between different age groups in his study of Charmey dialect in Switzerland. Hence, education and age pressurize social conditions on dialects.

Although relatively simple communities vary from those highly complex ones, it has been found that stylistic and dialectal variations increase as the economic base of a society expands. The rural speaker has much less stylistic and register possibilities than his urban counterpart. Members of a rural speech community tend to be, mainly, conservative, and in remote regions, what Saussure, (ibid) considers 'l'esprit de clocher', or parochialism (narrow and limited mindedness), the most powerful cultural force. The desert settlements of the Arabian 'Badu', 'Bedouins', provide precise example of such rural communities. According to Saussure, (ibid), the more mixed society, the weaker parochial influences, and the stronger 'La force d'intercourse' (pressures of inter-communication).

Labov (ibid), in his study of New York City dialect, sets up a series of empirically defined norms grading in style from the highest degree of formality, as in reading. to the degree of informality as in conversation. He shows that stylistic variations correlate with social factors.

To provide illustrative examples, the RP English accent is socially standardized. MSA, is considered by the various Arabic dialects as a model of purity, perfectiveness and correctness. It is intended to bridge the various Arabic colloquial forms. The view that a language expands into dialects, may lead to the conclusion that standard forms are not everyday dialectal forms, and hence no native speakers of standard forms.
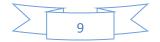
Crystal, (ibid: 110) defines the standard form of a language as follows:

"One dialect may predominate as the official or standard form of the language, and this is the variety which may come to be written down."

Generally speaking, standardization is normally achieved in grammar, lexis and in written language. A spoken standard is usually, if not always, different from the native dialects. In contrast to MSA, where dialects interfere, classical Arabic phonetic inventory is highly respected and pronounced without regional or social dialect interference. This dialectal interference is clearly articulated by TV news announcers in the different Arab countries.
The Arab world and Britain have considerable range of regional and social dialects. Unlike English, Arabic has two levels of standardization:

1. The pure, sacred and most formal language of the Holy Quran, represents the almost perfect dialect of *quraysh*, in which the holy Quran was revealed in the seventh century. Some of the classical Arabic varieties existed then were incomprehensible. *quraysh*, was and still is considered by Muslims as the perfect form of classical Arabic, because it was the mother tongue of the prophet Mohammed (POH). Whenever the Holy Quran is recited, dialectal peculiarities are not allowed, and the strict normative rules of recitation are respected. Perfect pronunciation is indicated by diacritics marked on the letters such as germination, case and mood markers, etc. (see Rakas 2009).

2. The language of the media, which intermediates between the two extremes of classical and colloquial varieties. In Libyan Arabic, and presumably other Arabic dialects, phonetic transference often occurs when Quran is recited, for example, the (uvular plosive) /q/ replaces the (voiced velar plosive) /g/, the neutralized (voiced alveo-velar plosive) /d/ and (voiced

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dento-velar fricative) /ɚ/, are kept distinct, initial clusters are syllabified, e. g. */tgsi:m/* is pronounced */taqsi:m/* (split), /*kljawm*/ is pronounced */kullajawmin/* everyday), etc. weak forms are recovered and stress is enforced. From this we may establish three levels of Arabic language use:

1. Classical
2, Standard
3. Colloquial dialects.

The first and second versions are termed *'al-fusha* (eloquent forms) and the third one is called *'al-'ammiya or 'ad-ddarja*. (vernacular). The question whether the second (standard) form is a classicalized standard or standardized classical is for beyond the limit of this paper. The RP English variety, I speculate, corresponds to the standard, rather than the classical form, in the sense that both are free from such obligations as those rigid normative rules stipulated centuries ago to govern the languages once and for all.

8**. Common Characteristics and Functions of Standards:**

1. All standards share the property termed 'flexible stability', which means that modification can and do occur in line with cultural changes within the language community. For example, in Poland, the capital was moved from Cracow to Warsaw during the medieval period and as a result, the dialect of Cracow began to lose the prestige of standardization, which it had enjoyed.
2. Standards provide a range of styles and registers, which allows communicative possibilities ranging from conversational to scientific needs.
3. Standards unify, in a single form of language, the different dialectal variations of a community.
4. Standards act as model for speakers of dialectal varieties, which in turn, reinforce the unifying function.
5. Although it is not scientifically justified, it is often claimed that a standard form provides a model of formality and correctness for the speech community. Hence, it is respected as a perfect, high esteemed official form used in educational and academic circles.
6. Standardization of a given variety depends upon:
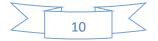(i) the properties of the variety in question.
(ii) the social and cultural function of the selected variety in the speech community.
(iii) The attitudes of the people to it.

Conclusion:

It is assumed in this study that language diversity into different dialects is bound to happen, due to: (i) the internal properties of human languages, such as arbitrariness, versatility, flexibility, adaptability, etc., (ii) the large number of a language speakers, and (iii) factors external to language, i.e. regional, social, etc. issues.

The fact that the notions of 'language' and 'dialect' are closely related, emphasis the credibility of a 'dialect' as a native form. As a result of the dialectal diversities of a language, speakers of these different dialects communicate through a written and spoken standard form, which when spoken, reflects the different dialectal accents, lexis, etc. Dialects' characteristics

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such as style, register, accent, idiolect, etc. are implemented in dialects in different ways. Dialects may show phonological diversities, i.e. accent, syllable structure, stress pattern and morpho-syntactic variations such as vocabulary, phrase and sentence structures.

Different definitions of the term 'speech Community' are given. These various definitions are based on different grounds. Different factors, (in/ex)ternal) to language, such as society, region, religion, community, etc. are claimed to initiate dialect diversity. Style and register belong to individual, rather than speech community.

It is speculated, above, that nativity is the speaker's internalized knowledge (competence) of his dialect. Unintelligibility among dialects of one and the same language consolidates the claim that nativity belongs to dialects, rather than standard languages. The Chinese six incomprehensible dialects and the unintelligibility of some current Arabic dialects are additional instances in support of this claim. It is, too, stressed that a dialect may develop varieties. The Libyan eastern and western varieties and the Egyptian southern and northern varieties are good illustrations.

Linguistic significance and independency of dialects is supported by the fact that dialect differences are articulated in the spoken standard form; that is whenever the standard form is spoken, the native dialect interferes. The fact that the MSA, when spoken in formal and official settings, noticeably, reflects the features of the different current Arabic dialects, is a living proof.

All (socio)linguistic characteristics and functions shared by standard forms in languages are considered and generalizations are posited.

Finally, the question whether a STANDARD form of a language is a selected dialect (RP accent), or a standardized classical form (MSA), is proposed for further research.

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