

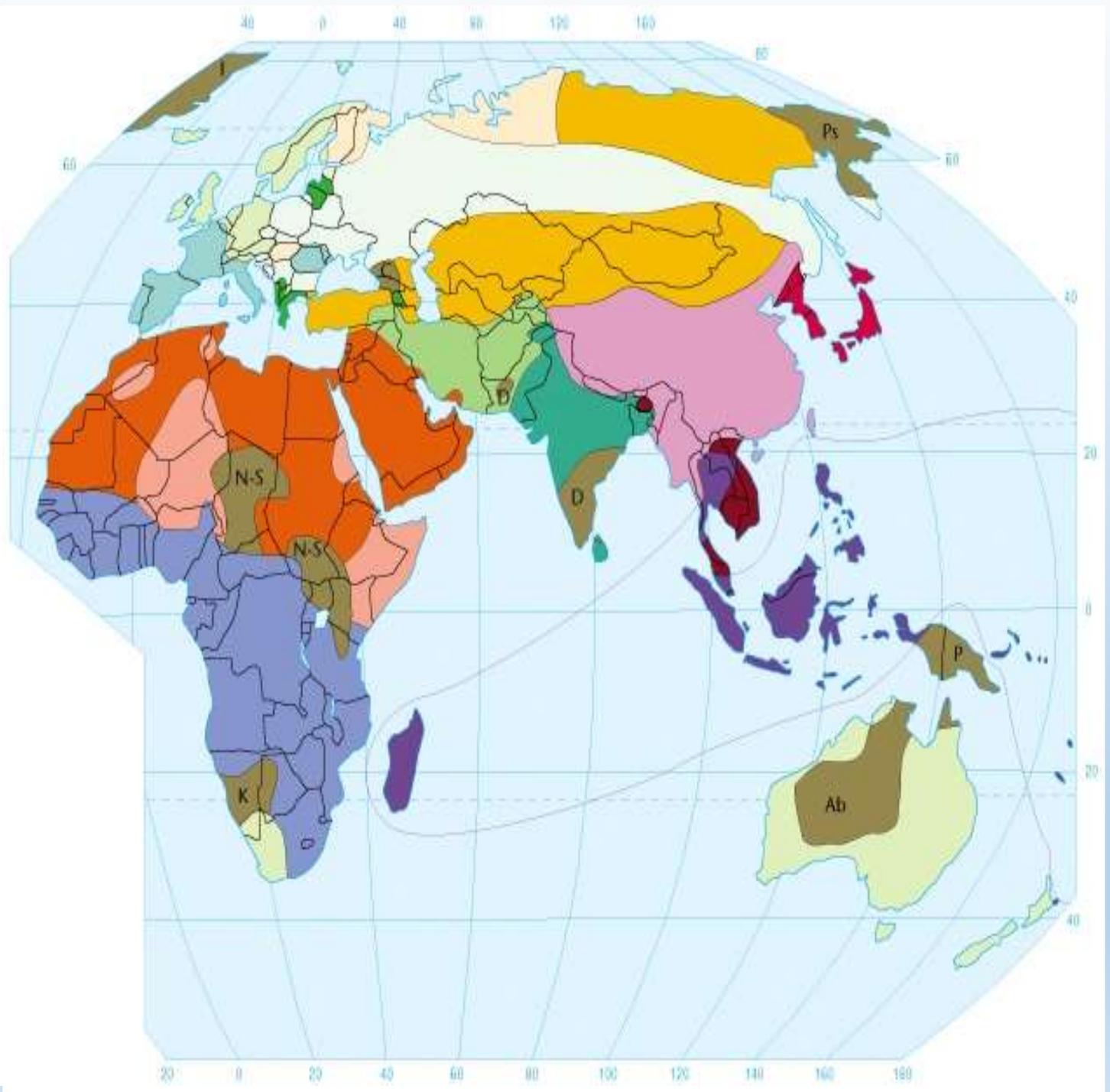
Indo-European Family

- Slavic
- Germanic
- Romance
- Iranic
- Indic
- Other Indo-European

Afro-Asiatic Family

- Semitic
- Hamitic
- Altaic family
- Niger-Congo family
- Austronesian family
- Uralic family
- Sino-Tibetan family
- Austro-Asiatic family
- Japanese and Korean
- Other families

- I = Inuktitut
- A = Amerindian
- C = Caucasian
- N-S = Nilo-Saharan
- K = Khoisan
- Ps = Paleosiberian
- D = Dravidian
- P = Papuan
- Ab = Aborigine



Searching for the aboriginal tongue

- Using some conventional techniques, linguists seek to find out the more elusive prehistoric tongues
- In 1903 the pioneering Danish linguist Holger Pedersen proposed "Nostratian," a proto-language for the proto-languages of the Indo-European, Uralic, Afro-Asiatic and Eskimo-Aleut language families.
- *Nostratic—ancestral* speech of the Middle East 12,000 to 20,000 years ago
 - Ancestral to nine modern language families (Afro-Asiatic, Kartvelian, Indo-European, Uralic, Dravidian, Altaic, Eskimo-Aleut etc.
 - A 500-word dictionary has been compiled
- Contemporary with Nostratic were other ancient tongues including Dene-Caucasian(=kaukasia).

Nostratic

- Nostratic is a proposed language family that includes many of the indigenous language families.
- This includes languages of Eurasia, including the Indo-European, Uralic and Altaic as well as Kartvelian languages.
- It also includes the Afroasiatic languages native to Northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, and the Dravidian languages of the Indian Subcontinent .
- The exact composition and structure of the family varies among proponents.

Searching for the aboriginal tongue

- Dene-Caucasian reputedly gave rise to Sino-Tibetan, Basque, and one form of early Native-American called Na-Dene
- Scholars are attempting to find the original linguistic source area from which all modern languages have derived
- It is believed the original language arose in Africa perhaps 2,50,000 years ago and diffused from there to the rest of part of the world.
- Whatever may be the antiquity, the search for aboriginal tongue has helped us to see the way languages may connect structurally and these connections also highlights the way human mind perceives and patterns things in predictable manner.
- Had this not been the case, any kind of attempt to find out the universals that do exist in languages mayn't have been possible at all.

Philological study of languages; search for similarities

Philologists in 19th century were comparing languages due to their own interests and they were doing it with great rigor.

The demand of the time was to find out ‘family’ for different languages.

It was also desired to discover that a variety of languages spoken in different parts of the world were actually member of the same family or ONE ancient language.

All these attempts were greatly strengthened by the claim made by a British government official in India, Sir William Jones about Sanskrit in 1786.

The claim reads as :

- *‘The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure;*
- *More perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more delicately refined than either,*
- *yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident.*

This observation by William Jones about Sanskrit brought a revolution in the field of 'Philology' at that time.

They opined that a number of languages from very different geographical areas must have some common ancestor.

It was clear, however, that this common ancestor could not be described from any existing records.

They had to hypothesize on the basis of similar features existing in records of languages that were believed to be the off-spring of this ancestor.

During this golden era of 'Philology' in 19th Century, a great term came in existence i.e. 'Proto'.

This term roughly meant 'the original/beginning form of a language.

This term came into use to describe that common ancestor which could have been the mother of all the languages of the world.

It also incorporated the notion that this was the original form (Proto) of a language that was the source of modern languages.

The modern languages for which the ancestor (Proto) has to be found majorly came from Indian subcontinent (Indo) and from Europe (European).

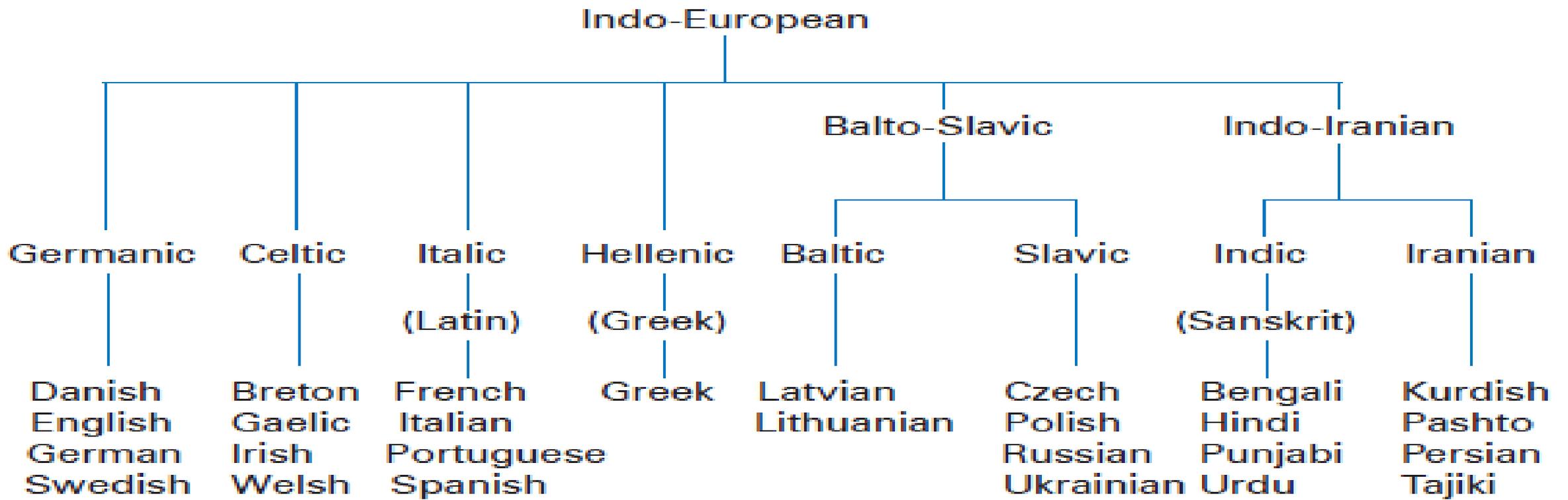
This incessant drive of the ‘Philologists’ made it possible to evolve the great term in the 19th Century ‘Proto-Indo-European’.

Once this PIE is established as a “great-great grandmother” scholars set out to identify the branches of the Indo-European family tree, tracing the lineage of many modern languages.

It is true that Indo-European language family is the largest LF with the largest population and distribution in the world, but it isn’t the only one.

There are about thirty such language families containing more than 7,000 different individual languages. We will come back to this point again.

The family tree diagram in the next slide is a small and fleeting view of Indo-European languages in their family branches.



According to Ethnologue , there are about 6,912 languages in the world.

Many of these languages are in danger of extinction while a few are expanding.

In terms of number of speakers, Chinese has the most native speakers (about 1.4 billion), while English (about 350 million native speaker) is more widely used in different parts of the world (1.8 billion).

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND UNITY IN INDIA:

India is a vast country and the linguistic diversity in India is unique because despite its diversity, it shows a great unity as well, which puzzles the world. There are five language families in India, and they are known as Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Andamanese-Nicobari language family.

Some of the languages that are included in **Indo-Aryan** family are Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Marathi, Meitei, Nepali, Oriya, Eastern Panjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Urdu.

Some of the languages that are included in **Dravidian languages** are Tamil, Malayalam, Kodava, Tulu, Kannada, Telugu, Kolami, Kurukh, Brahui, Gondi etc.

Some major languages that belong to **Tibeto-Burman** are Bodo, Garo, Kokborok, Dimasa, Mech, Rava, Kachari, Sutiya, Saraniya, Sonowal.

Some of the prominent languages such as Munda, Mon-Khmer, Ho, Bhumij, Santhali, Kharia, Mundari, Sadari belong to the **Austro-Asiatic family of language** in India.

The languages from Andaman and Nicobar islands have been grouped together by some scholars and they have urged for considering them as the fifth language family of India.

However, this is yet to be formalized and accepted by others. Nevertheless, it is alright to accept Andamanese and Nicobari as a separate language family on the basis of the distinctness of their languages and their structures.

These five language families of India have their own linguistic peculiarities. The linguistic features of languages belonging to Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic are far more complex and many of these features match with other Asian and East-Asian languages.

The most salient property of all the languages of India is their hundreds of varieties or dialects. They sometimes show a gradual succession in terms of geographic spread and one can easily connect and reconnect sisterhood and motherhood of these languages and their varieties(dialects).

The varieties (dialects) of languages belonging to Indo-Aryan language family is much more homogeneous than the languages from other four language families in India.

Role of language in Society

Language and society are interlocked to each other because a society moves with its language.

When communication takes place in a context, it is only then the meaning is generated, and a society moves with the pace of the language.

A language defines the linguistic behavior of a group of people in a given society. In Hudson (1980) words, “the study of language in relation to society explains the linguistic features of the social groups”.

So, the role of language in a society is like life (breathing process) for a human body. In fact, the language and the society are like two sides of a coin. The language is, in fact, a like a mirror for its society.

Language is the vehicle that carries our knowledge and transforms the ideas into reality in the world.

According to Cropper, ‘language is described as organized system of symbols that is used to express and receive meanings’ (Cropper, 2003).

Role of language in Society

Unique to Homo sapiens, language appears inseparable to human nature and a feature of human intelligence. This is why, the acquisition, comprehension, or expression of spoken or written language is possible by human.

This is the reason why Philosophers, Psychologists, Counselors, social workers, medical practitioners, scientists, researchers, administrators, CEO's and clerical workers all perform their task through the power of the language.

The power of the language, enabled through the words is classically called "phonetic competence", reflects a social pressure for vocal imitation, learning, and other forms of social interaction and transmission.

I would mention a quote from Nelson Mandela where he inadvertently emphasizes the importance of the role of a language in any society.

He says, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head, but if you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart".

You need a very kind heart and a brilliant mind to understand the underlying and hidden meaning beneath the words in Mandela's quote. It takes years to understand to speak to people to their heart and not to their mind.

CONCEPTS OF LANGUAGE AND DIALECT

It is interesting to discuss the concept of language and dialect. It is interesting as in some cases, it is just too easy to define what is a language and what is not a language.

For example, if you are in China and you are from Shanghai, despite the fact that you don't understand the language of a person who is from Pekin/Beijing, you always say that you both speak Chinese.

This case of Chinese scenario explains more of a national identity than an issue of language and dialect.

Gumperz (1982a, p. 20) says that there may be 'sociohistorical factors play a crucial role in determining boundaries'. Thus, Hindi and Urdu in India, Serbian and Croatian in Yugoslavia, Fanti and Twi in West Africa, Bokmål and Nynorsk in Norway, Kechwa and Aimara in Peru, to name just a few, are recognized as discrete languages both by the people of the place and in law, yet they are almost identical at the level of grammar.

It is a famous saying in India that after every 15 K.M., the language and water of the area keep changing. Therefore, it is interesting to discuss the concept of language and dialect in Indian social context.

It is interesting also because in some cases, it is just too easy to define what is a language and what is not a language.

However, in other cases, it becomes very difficult to explain or tell what is a language and what is not a language. Let us see two examples in this context:

A friend from Patna, (capital of Bihar) is talking to his friend from Muzaffarpur (a city in East Champaran), they talk to each other in Hindi.

Although, person from Patna speaks Magahi at home and person from Muzaffarpur speaks Bhojpuri to communicate to the local people of his area.

So, this case is simple as Hindi is a language and other two forms of speech are the dialects of Hindi.

But if you come from Rajasthan and you speak either Marwari, Mewati, Bagri, Shekhawati or any other forms of speech from Rajasthan, you don't speak a language !!!!!

This is so as no form of speech from Rajasthan is recognized as a language and apparently Hindi is imposed on the speakers of various speech-forms in Rajasthan.

These speech-forms are called the dialects of Hindi, despite the fact that a Hindi speaker does not understand any of the speech-forms prevalent in Rajasthan.

So, the issue of language and dialect is not easy to handle as it does not remain a topic to discuss in linguistics but it rather becomes a tool in the hands of the politicians who misuse these issues to benefit their own selfish interests.

So, in terms of mapping the language and dialects with regard to their geographic distributions, one has to use the linguistic tools and mark the areas together or separate on the basis of mutual-intelligibility **ONLY**.

SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS MEMBERSHIP

The notion of speech community and its relationship/membership to its speakers is a very important and a challenging topic, nevertheless, an interesting topic to discuss. There are several definitions that have been given by different scholars in order to define the term ‘speech community’. Let us see some of them;

The simplest definition of ‘speech community’ is given by John Lyons (1970:326) as follows, **‘speech community: all the people who use a given language (or dialect)’**.

In other words, all the people who use a given language or a dialect belong to the same speech community.

This is a very simple definition of speech community and according to it, speech communities may overlap especially in a context where there are bilingual individuals.

This also means that they (speech communities) need not have any social or cultural unity.

One of the hidden meanings of this definition also hints that it is possible to delimit speech communities in this sense only to the extent that it is possible to demit the boundaries of languages and dialects.

SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS MEMBERSHIP

Charles Hockett (1958: 8) has also given a definition for speech community that may sound a bit more complex compared to Lyon's definition for it.

He says **'each language defines a speech community: the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via a common language'**.

In this definition of Hockett, the central criterion of communication within the community is added, so that if two communities accidentally speak the same language but had no contact with each other at all, they wouldn't constitute two different speech communities.

This is a very simple definition of speech-community and this may not define the complex situations of languages spoken by the people and their belonging to the community in India and elsewhere. Bhojpuri in Mauritius and Bihar can't constitute the same comm.

Many speakers of different community migrate to different places and pick up the manageable stock of speech of the area in India, but they never get the membership of the speech community of that language.

This is clear case of people living in Mumbai or in Bangaluru, where people come from different parts of the country and settle down in these places and they may also speak a bit of the language but they are not and can't be called the member of speech community of Kannada.

SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS MEMBERSHIP

Leonard Bloomfield (1933: 42) has also given a definition for the speech community. His definition of speech community seems to shift the emphasis entirely from shared language to communication.

He says, **‘a speech community is a group of people who interact by means of speech(verbal/non-verbal)’**. Bloomfield’s definition leaves the possibility open that some people interact by means of one language and others by means of something else.

This definition has inclusiveness of ‘differently abled people’ (people who are unable to speak), and this, in fact, is the biggest achievement of Bloomfield and his definition for speech community.

John Gumperz (1968) says, **‘the speech community: any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language use’**.

This definition of Gumperz does not say that there should be just one language for one speech community. The effect of putting emphasis on communication and interaction is that different speech communities will tend not to overlap much, in contrast with the earlier definitions where overlap automatically results from bilingualism.

SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS MEMBERSHIP

William Labov (1972:120) has given a definition which is relatively recent and it puts emphasis on shared attitudes to language, rather than on the shared linguistic behavior.

The definition is as follows; *the speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage.*

At the end, Robert Le Page (1968). He states that, ‘each individual creates the systems for his verbal behavior so that they shall resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time s/he may wish to be identified, to the extent that;

a. s/he can identify the groups b. s/he has both opportunity and ability to observe and analyze their behavioral systems c. her/his motivation is sufficiently strong to impel her/him to choose, and to adapt her/his behavior accordingly, d. s/he is still able to adapt her/his behavior.

This is how the speech community and its membership is determined by Anthropologists, Sociologists and Linguists. It may look a very simple process but in reality, it is a complex procedure and it differs from one context to another and one country to another.