

THE NOTION OF NORM AND VARIATION IN LANGUAGE

Ismoilova Sevinch

The 2nd year student at Navoi State University

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Abstract: Language is not completely fixed or unchanging. People use language differently depending on their social background, region, education, and communication style. This article examines the concepts of language norms and language variation and explains their role in communication and language development. The study uses a comparative-descriptive methodology supported by examples from oral and written language. The findings show that language norms help maintain standard communication, while variation reflects cultural diversity and social identity. The article also discusses the relationship between standard language and non-standard forms in modern society.

Keywords: language norm; language change; sociolinguistics; standard language; dialect; communication; language diversity

Introduction

Language is one of the most important means of human communication. However, people do not always use language in the same way. Pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar can vary depending on region, age, education, and social background. These differences are called language variation. At the same time, each language has adopted rules and standards known as language norms. Language norms help maintain clear and effective communication, especially in education and formal communication. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, language functions as a social system shared by members of society (Saussure, 1916). Modern linguistics studies both norm and variation, because they are closely related.

Methodology

This study uses a comparative and observational methodology. Unlike purely theoretical studies, this study also includes examples from real communication. Data were collected from:

- academic books and linguistic articles
- oral and written English examples
- observation of everyday communication

The research process included:

1. identifying language norms in grammar and vocabulary
2. observing language change in spoken and informal communication
3. comparing how norms and changes affect communication

A learner-centered approach was used to connect linguistic theory with practical language use.

Results

The study found that language norms are important in maintaining mutual understanding in society. Standard grammar and vocabulary are especially necessary in education, the media, and academic writing. However, language variation is also widespread. Regional dialects, slang, and informal expressions are examples of variation. Social factors such as age and culture strongly influence people's use of language. William Labov believes that language variation is systemic and socially significant (Labov, 1972). Research has shown that younger speakers often use informal expressions, especially in online communication.

Discussion

The relationship between norms and variation is complex. Language norms provide stability and help people communicate effectively. Without norms, communication can be difficult and confusing. At the same time, language variation should not be considered wrong. Variants reflect cultural identity and social belonging. As Holmes (2013) points out, linguistic diversity is a natural feature of society. Modern technology and globalization have also increased language variation through social media and digital communication. As a result, languages in modern society are evolving and changing rapidly.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both language norms and language variation play important roles in linguistic communication. Language norms create stability and clarity, while variation reflects social and cultural diversity. The study suggests that variation is a natural part of living languages and should be studied alongside standard forms. Understanding both concepts can help linguists, teachers, and learners better understand how language works in real life.

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