

# **HIGH AND LOW PRESTIGE LANGUAGE VARIANCES**

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# PRESTIGE IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

- level of regard normally accorded a specific language or dialect within a speech community, relative to other languages or dialects.
- Prestige varieties are generally considered to be **the most correct or otherwise superior varieties**. The prestige variety, in many cases, is the standard form of the language though there are exceptions.
- **"ON PURELY LINGUISTIC GROUNDS, ALL LANGUAGES—AND ALL DIALECTS—HAVE EQUAL MERIT"**

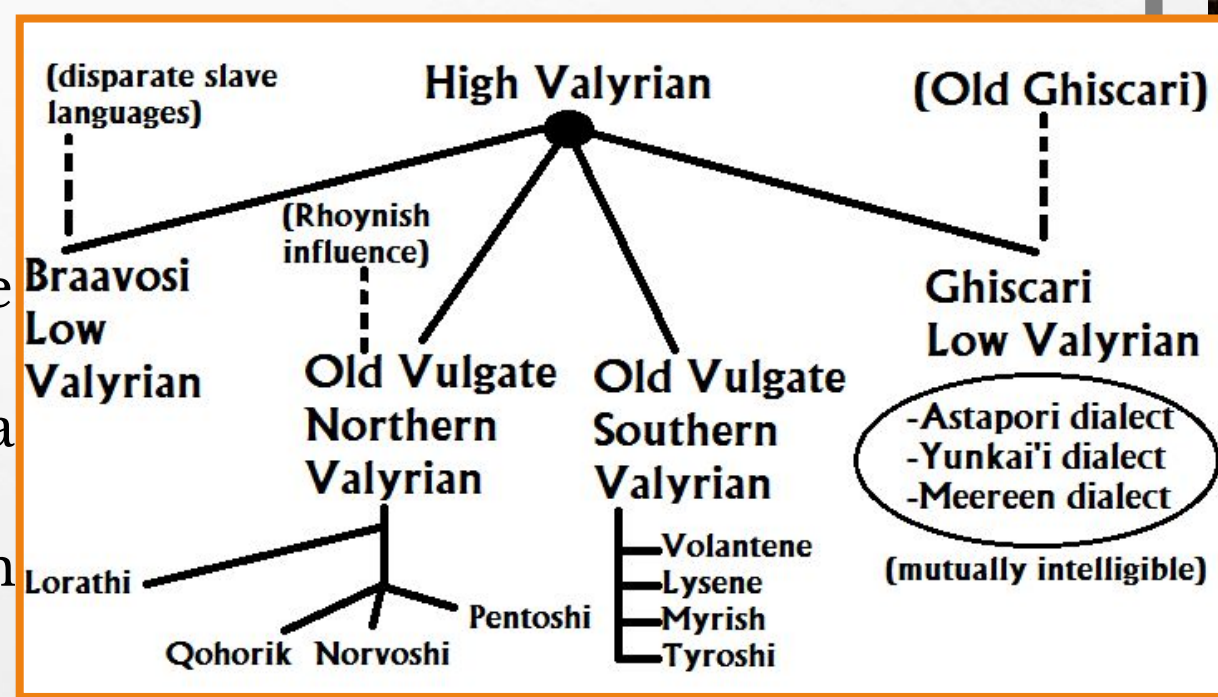
# DIGLOSSIA

- A situation in which two distinct varieties of a language are spoken within the same speech community
- *Bilingual diglossia* is a type of diglossia in which one language variety is used for writing and another for speech
- “People who are known to be bidialectal do actually control the two dialects, using one of them in special circumstances, such as when visiting a speaker with a similar 'home' background, and using the other for daily social and business affairs.”  
(Chambers and Trudgill, *Dialectology* (1980))
- The term ***diglossia*** (from the Greek for "speaking two languages") was first used in English by linguist Charles Ferguson in 1959.



# 'H' AND 'L'

- 'H' - written language VS 'L' - spoken language
- 'H' in formal situations VS 'L' in informal situations
- 'L' may have phonemes absent from the 'H' and vice versa
- 'L' variants are **not** simplifications or "corruptions" of 'H'
- Usually there are no native speakers of 'H'
- 'H': older state of the language (Latin/European languages); unrelated language; distinct but closely related dialect (Mandarin)
- Each has certain spheres of social interaction where it is the only socially acceptable dialect



# PRESTIGE AND STANDARD

- Prestige varieties - regarded mostly highly within a society.
- Standard language - the form promoted by authorities and considered most correct. Standard is often the prestige variety.
- **ARABIC** - Egyptian Arabic is widely used in mass media, while Literary Arabic is a more prestigious form.
- Prestige varieties do not exhibit features which prove them superior. They are the language varieties of the **prestigious social classes**.
- Relation between language and social status:
- 1958, J. Gumperz – speech patterns between 31 castes in Khalapur, India. Discovered phonological, lexical, vocabulary differences. Lower groups imitate patterns of higher groups.

• 1966, W. Labov – pronunciation of 'r' in 3 stores in New York City. High-class store

# PRESTIGE VARIETIES

- Modern Standard Arabic
- Mandarin
- Standard Dutch
- Received Pronunciation/General Australian English/Cultivated South African English
- US – no single prestige dialect (General American)
- Modern Standard Hindi
- Modern Standard Urdu







**THAT'S ALL!**  
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**

