

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FIRST SEMESTER EXAMINATION
DECEMBER 2012

COURSE NAME : PRINCIPLES OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

COURSE CODE : ENG 403

DURATION : TWO (2) HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS :

1. This paper consists of four questions; you are required to answer any TWO.
2. All questions are worth 30 marks
3. Proper use of language and linguistic conventions are a requirement

THIS PAPER IS NOT TO BE OPENED UNTIL THE INVIGILATOR HAS GRANTED PERMISSION TO DO SO.

Question 1

With close reference to the extract from Coulmas (2010: 17) on the relationship between language and dialects, what are some of the conclusions that can be drawn about the nature of dialects? [30]

After a while I began to feel the lack of someone to talk with, so I stopped a man who looked like a farmer and asked him the way. Probably there was something of the samurai manner in my speech and, without realizing it, I may have sounded commanding. The farmer replied very politely and left me with a respectful bow.

‘Well, this is interesting,’ I thought. I looked at myself and saw that I was carrying but an umbrella; I was plainly dressed too. I thought I would try again, and when another wayfarer came up, I stopped him with an awful, commanding voice.

‘I say, there! What is the name of the hamlet I see yonder? How many houses are there? Whose is the large residence with the tiled roof? Is the owner a farmer or a merchant? And what is his name?’

Thus with the undisguised manner of the samurai, I put all sorts of nonsensical questions on the stranger. The poor fellow shivered at the roadside and haltingly answered, ‘In great awe I shall endeavour to speak to your honour.....’

It was so amusing; I tried again when another passer-by came along, this time taking the opposite attitude.

‘*Moshi, moshi,*’ I began. ‘But may I ask you something, please?.....’

I used the style of an Osaka merchant, and began the same nonsensical questions. I knew all the dialects of Osaka, having been born there and lived there as a student. Probably the man thought I was a merchant on the way to collect money; he eyed me haughtily and walked on his way without giving me much of an answer.

So I proceeded, accosting everyone who came along. Without any allowance for their appearance, I spoke alternately, now in samurai fashion, now merchant like. In every instance, for about seven miles on my way, I saw that people would respond according to the manner they were addressed – with awe or with indifference.

Finally I became disgusted. I would not have cared if they were polite or arrogant so long as they behaved consistently. But here it showed that they were merely showing the lead of the person speaking to them. It was quite unnatural that the petty officials of the province should grow domineering. The government had been called oppressive and despotic, but it was not the fault of the government. People themselves invited oppression. What should I do about it? I certainly could not leave them as they were. Could I teach them? That could not be done easily or quickly.

Question 2

In certain speech communities, there exists a diglossic situation whereby two languages function distinctly.

- a) Define diglossia, giving examples where necessary. [5]
- b) Clearly distinguish between diglossia and a language. [5]
- c) With the aid of examples, discuss at least five areas in which varieties in a diglossic situation differ. [20]

Question 3

With the use of elaborate examples, discuss the four steps involved in the standardization of a language or dialect. How can this lead to problems within a linguistic community? [30]

Question 4

Drawing on examples from any African country, discuss how language policies have been responsible for the factors noted as important in a language planning process, showing the extent to which an understanding of each can be useful in the planning situation.

[30]