

Caste and class system:

In Max Weber's phraseology, caste and class are both status groups. While castes are perceived as hereditary groups with a fixed ritual status, social classes are defined in terms of the relations of production. A social class is a category of people who have a similar socio-economic status in relation to other classes in the society. The individuals and families which are classified as part of the same social class have similar life chances, prestige, style of life, attitudes etc.

In the caste system, status of a caste is determined not by the economic and the political privileges but by the ritualistic legitimation of authority. In the class system, ritual norms have no importance at all but power and wealth alone determine one's status (Dumont, 1958).

Class system differs in many respects from other forms of stratification—slavery, estate and caste system. In earlier textbooks such as written by Maclver, Davis and Bottomore, it was observed that caste and class are polar opposites. They are antithetical to each other. While 'class' represents a 'democratic society' having equality of opportunity, 'caste' is obverse of it.

Following are the main differences between class and caste systems:

1. Castes are found in Indian sub-continent only, especially in India, while classes are found almost everywhere. Classes are especially the characteristic of industrial societies of Europe and America. According to Dumont and Leach, caste is a unique phenomenon found only in India.
2. Classes depend mainly on economic differences between groupings of individuals—inequalities in possession and control of material resources—whereas in caste system non-economic factors such as influence of religion [theory of karma, rebirth and ritual (purity-pollution)] are most important.
3. Unlike castes or other types of strata, classes are not established by legal or religious provisions; membership is not based on inherited position as specified either legally or by custom. On the other hand, the membership is inherited in the caste system.
4. Class system is typically more fluid than the caste system or the other types of stratification and the boundaries between classes are never clear-cut. Caste system is static whereas the class system is dynamic.

5. In the class system, there are no formal restrictions on inter-dining and inter-marriage between people from different classes as is found in the caste system. Endogamy is the essence of caste system which is perpetuating it.

6. Social classes are based on the principle of achievement, i.e., on one's own efforts, not simply given at birth as is common in the caste system and other types of stratification system. As such social mobility (movement upwards and downwards) is much more common in the class structure than in the caste system or in other types. In the caste system, individual mobility from one caste to another is impossible.

This is why, castes are known as closed classes (D.N. Majumdar). It is a closed system of stratification in which almost all sons end up in precisely the same stratum their fathers occupied. The system of stratification in which there is high rate of upward mobility, such as that in the Britain and United States is known as open class system. The view that castes are closed classes is not accepted by M.N. Srinivas (1962) and Andre Beteille (1965).

7. In the caste system and in other types of stratification system, inequalities are expressed primarily in personal relationships of duty or obligation—between lower- and higher-caste individuals, between serf and lord, between slave and master. On the other hand, the nature of class system is impersonal. Class system operates mainly through large-scale connections of an impersonal kind.

8. Caste system is characterised by 'cumulative inequality' but class system is characterised by 'dispersed inequality.'

9. Caste system is an organic system but class has a segmentary character where various segments are motivated by competition (Leach, 1960).

10. Caste works as an active political force in a village (Beteille, 1966) but class does not work so.

Written and unwritten languages, speech:

The majority of the languages of the world have never been written, but the vast majority of the world's population learn to read and write. This implies that virtually everywhere the division of communicative labour between the oral and written modes corresponds to specific sociolinguistic arrangements that assign different functions to different languages. One way of looking at these arrangements is by considering languages as resources. Two dimensions for systematizing linguistic resources are stipulated here: (1) the reference group, and (2) a language's functional potential. As

regards the first dimension, the question is 'Whose resources?', whereas the second asks: 'What kind of resources?' The reference group is identified in terms of size and group-defining features, ranging in descending order from the all-encompassing to the minimal unit: world, nation state, ethnicity, organization, family and individual. The functional dimension is subdivided into various kinds of resources: intellectual, cultural, emotional – symbolic, social and economic.

To the human mind, **symbols** are cultural representations of reality. Every culture has its own set of symbols associated with different experiences and perceptions. Thus, as a representation, a symbol's meaning is neither instinctive nor automatic. The culture's members must interpret and over time reinterpret the symbol.

Symbols occur in different forms: verbal or nonverbal, written or unwritten. They can be anything that conveys a meaning, such as words on the page, drawings, pictures, and gestures. Clothing, homes, cars, and other consumer items are symbols that imply a certain level of social status.

Perhaps the most powerful of all human symbols is **language**—a system of verbal and sometimes written representations that are culturally specific and convey meaning about the world. In the 1930s, **Edward Sapir** and **Benjamin Lee Whorf** proposed that languages influence perceptions. While this Sapir-Whorf hypothesis—also called the **linguistic relativity hypothesis**—is controversial, it legitimately suggests that a person will more likely perceive differences when he or she possesses words or concepts to describe the differences.

Language is an important source of continuity and identity in a culture. Some groups, such as the French-speaking residents of Quebec in Canada, refuse to speak English, which is Canada's primary language, for fear of losing their cultural identity although both English and French are Canada's official languages. In the United States, immigrants provide much resistance to making English the official national language.

Differences between written language and speech

Written and spoken language differs in many ways. However some forms of writing are closer to speech than others, and vice versa. Below are some of the ways in which these two forms of language differ:

- Writing is usually permanent and written texts cannot usually be changed once they have been printed/written out.

Speech is usually transient, unless recorded, and speakers can correct themselves and change their utterances as they go along.

- A written text can communicate across time and space for as long as the particular language and writing system is still understood.

Speech is usually used for immediate interactions.

- Written language tends to be more complex and intricate than speech with longer sentences and many subordinate clauses. The punctuation and layout of written texts also have no spoken equivalent. However some forms of written language, such as instant messages and email, are closer to spoken language.

Spoken language tends to be full of repetitions, incomplete sentences, corrections and interruptions, with the exception of formal speeches and other scripted forms of speech, such as news reports and scripts for plays and films.

- Writers receive no immediate feedback from their readers, except in computer-based communication. Therefore they cannot rely on context to clarify things so there is more need to explain things clearly and unambiguously than in speech, except in written correspondence between people who know one another well.

Speech is usually a dynamic interaction between two or more people. Context and shared knowledge play a major role, so it is possible to leave much unsaid or indirectly implied.

- Writers can make use of punctuation, headings, layout, colours and other graphical effects in their written texts. Such things are not available in speech

Speech can use timing, tone, volume, and timbre to add emotional context.

- Written material can be read repeatedly and closely analysed, and notes can be made on the writing surface. Only recorded speech can be used in this way.
- Some grammatical constructions are only used in writing, as are some kinds of vocabulary, such as some complex chemical and legal terms.

Some types of vocabulary are used only or mainly in speech. These include slang expressions, and tags like *y'know*, *like*, etc.

Language and Dialect:

A 'code' is a linguistic system used for communication. Languages and dialects are codes. Linguists tend to define a language as the standardized code used in spoken and written form, whereas dialects are spoken vernacular codes without a standardized written system. Despite the different

varieties of English spoken throughout the English-speaking world, there is a standardized written form of the language that can be understood by all who are literate in the language.

Language is an abstract system of symbols and meanings governed by grammatical rules. There are two main aspects of language: spoken (oral) language and written language. Orality is the primary aspect of a language since the function of writing and reading follows speaking and listening.

Although language is governed by a set of rules, it is not static. The language evolves and changes and every moment. New words, new sentence structures, etc. are constantly introduced to the language. With the passage of time, they become a part of the language. Similarly, some words become archaic and go out of use or change their meaning. It is mainly the speakers of the language that are directly responsible for these changes. Language is a fascinating subject, and it can be studied under various categories such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

There are a lot of languages in the world. In 2015, SIL Ethnologue cataloged 7,102 living human languages. English, Mandarin, French, Spanish, Arabic, Hindi, and German are some of the most spoken languages in the world. These languages have also different varieties known as dialects.

Dialects can be defined as different varieties of the same language that have evolved over time and in different geographical locations. For example, Italian, French and Spanish were once dialects of Latin, but over centuries have evolved into their own languages and in turn, have spawned their own dialects, some of which have become languages.

Dialect is a version of a language spoken in a particular geographical area or by a particular group of people. This could also be explained as a social or regional variety of a language distinguished by grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary; this is especially a way of speaking that differs from the standard variety of the language. For example, Cantonese and Mandarin are sometimes classified as dialects of Chinese.

Dialects can be classified into **two categories**:

A **standard dialect** is a dialect that is approved and supported by institutions.

Non-standard dialects are those that are not supported by institutions.

For example, some dialects of English include American English, Indian English, and Australian English, etc. There are sub-dialects within these dialects as well.

Although **there is no globally accepted standard to distinguish the difference between language and a dialect of a language**, there are several ways to identify the difference.

One of the most common ways of identifying the difference is their **mutual intelligibility**. If two speakers of two varieties can understand each other, then it is accepted that the two varieties are two dialects; if not, they are considered to be two different languages.

Difference Between Language and Dialect:

Definitions

Language is the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.

Dialect is a particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group.

Categories

Language can be categorized into two main parts: spoken language and written language.

Dialects can be categorized into two main parts: standard dialects and non-standard dialects.

Mutually Intelligibility

Languages of the same language family are often not mutually intelligible.

Dialects of the same language are often mutually intelligible.

Phonemes and Morphemes:

Phoneme is any of the perceptually distinct units of sound in a specified language that distinguish one word from another, for example p, b, d, and t in the English words pad, pat, bad, and bat.

Morpheme is the smallest grammatical unit in a language. In other words, it is the smallest meaningful unit of a language. We have various forms of morphemes; from free morphemes to bound morphemes to zero morphemes. Free morphemes like dog, cat, bound morphemes like -ing and -s endings, and zero morpheme in sheep (plural).

Difference between morpheme and phoneme is very important in linguistics. A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of a language. A phoneme, on the other hand, is the smallest unit of

speech. The significant difference between the two is that while a morpheme carries a meaning a phoneme does not. It is merely a sound unit. It is only a combination of phonemes that can create a morpheme or word, which conveys a meaning.

Phonemes:

Phonemes are **the basic units of speech of a language**. Phonemes are put together to create morphemes and words. The main difference between a morpheme and phoneme is that while a morpheme carries a meaning, a phoneme itself does not carry any meaning. It is merely a unit of speech. For example, if we take the word 'run' it is a morpheme that means it conveys a meaning. But this is made up of three phonemes, which are /r/ /u/ /n/.

The difference in meaning between two words can be because of a single phoneme. For example, take the words, cat and cut. It is a single phoneme that brings about the change in the two words, 'a' and 'u'. When the phoneme 'a' is replaced with 'u' in the word 'cat', it becomes 'cut', a completely different word. There are both vowel phonemes and also consonant phonemes. If we take the words, tab and lab, it is the change in the consonant phoneme 't' and 'l' that lead to a difference in meaning. In language education, the awareness of teachers to different phoneme when assisting young children to speak is vital as it provides the children not only to pronounce the words in the correct manner but also to understand the difference in sounds.

Morphemes:

Morphemes are the **smallest meaningful elements of a language**. This signifies that morphemes cannot be segmented into smaller parts as it will discard the meaning. For example, if we take words such book, pencil, cup, eraser, box, none of these can be segmented further. Mainly there are **two types of morphemes**. They are,

- **Free morphemes**
- **Bound morphemes**

A free morpheme has the ability to stand on its own without the support of another form. However, in the case of bound morphemes, they cannot stand on their own and need the support of another form. For example, if we take suffixes and prefixes such as 'ly', 'ness', 'dis', 're', they cannot stand alone. They need to be connected with another form to convey a meaning. If we take a word like 'discouraged', even though it appears as a single word, it consists of three morphemes. They are 'dis', 'courage', 'ed'.

Difference between Morphemes and Phonemes

- Morphemes are the smallest meaningful elements of a language.
- Phonemes are the basic units of speech of a language that are used to create morphemes and words.
- The main difference between a morpheme and phoneme is that while a morpheme carries a concrete meaning, a phoneme itself does not carry any meaning.