1 Introduction

This book is about learning a new dialect, and how it is different from learning a new language. In this introductory chapter, I start by describing the contexts where this kind of learning occurs and some of the questions the book aims to answer. As I have tried to make the content accessible not just to linguists, I have also included some basic information for readers without a strong background in linguistics. This is about differentiating dialects, describing speech sounds and studying variation in language. The final section presents a brief outline of the book.

1.1 Second language acquisition and second dialect acquisition

The study of second language acquisition (often abbreviated as SLA) examines how people who already speak a first language (L1) subsequently acquire a second or additional language (L2). This book focuses on a special type of SLA – when the relationship between the L1 and the L2 is close enough for them to be considered by their speakers to be varieties of the same language, or different dialects, rather than different languages. In this situation, the term "second dialect acquisition" (SDA) can be used. The study of SDA examines how people who already speak one dialect (D1) acquire a different dialect (D2) of what they or their community perceive to be the same language.

Of course it is notoriously difficult to distinguish language and dialect. One criterion often used is mutual intelligibility: speakers of two different dialects of the same language can understand each other but speakers of two different languages cannot. However, mutual intelligibility itself is not absolute, and depends on factors such as attitudes, beliefs and goodwill (e.g. see Lippi-Green 1994). There is also the well-known situation where Danish and Norwegian are considered separate languages, although they are mutually intelligible to a great extent, whereas Cantonese and Mandarin are considered dialects of Chinese, even though their spoken forms are not mutually intelligible at all.

Another complication is that many people think of a language as the variety that is codified in dictionaries and grammars, and normally used in published expository writing and taught in schools – i.e. the standard variety. And they

think of a dialect as a variety that is not codified, not normally used in writing and not taught in the schools – i.e. an unstandardised (or non-standard) variety. Thus, standard English, French, Spanish, Mandarin, etc. are considered languages whereas Cockney, Provençal, Cantonese and African American English are considered dialects. Furthermore, many people think of a language, but not a dialect, as being associated with a particular country. This view is reflected in the well-known saying: "A language is a dialect with an army and navy" (attributed to the Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich). On the other hand, when talking about the different national standard varieties – such as American, British and Australian English – people often refer to these as different dialects of English.

In sociolinguistics, the term "dialect" refers to varieties of the same language that differ from each other in vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, and that are associated with particular geographic regions or social groups. In this book, I use this definition with the added proviso that the determination of two varieties belonging to the same language depends on the common perception of the speakers of these varieties (as already mentioned), and not on a technical decision made by linguists. That said, however, it is still generally the case that first and second dialects as defined here are more similar to each other than first and second languages, and therefore more mutually intelligible.

This similarity has led to the popular consensus that SDA is easier than SLA. But as Escure (1997: 7) points out, this consensus is "[i]n spite of the paucity of research on dialect acquisition, or perhaps because of it". With regard to the acquisition of standard varieties, she continues (p. 7):

> This attitude is obviously reflected in the educational establishment: a standard variety is never taught in a formal, organized manner and, in contrast to foreign language learning, is not supported by any language manual or the "bidialectal" equivalent of bilingual programs.

This is because of the assumption that it is easier for a speaker of African American English, for example, to learn standard American English than to learn French. Escure also observes (1997: 7): "On the other hand, there is apparently no clear opinion concerning the relative learnability of non-standard dialects by standard speakers."

While there actually have been some formal bidialectal programs and some research on dialect acquisition (both described later in this book), Escure's points remain generally true. Very little research has been done on SDA, and what has been done is not widely known. And none of the research has tried to test the widespread assumption that SDA is easier than SLA. This book aims to fill some of the gaps in these areas.

Some other questions considered in this book arise from my own experiences. I was born in the USA (in Chicago) but have lived in Australia

for more than twenty years. I'm an Australian citizen, my wife and kids are Australian, I barrack for Australia in the Olympics (even over the USA), and I've developed an Australian outlook and sense of humour (at least I hope so!). Nevertheless, when I'm introduced to someone new, as soon as I open my mouth I get the question "What part of the States are you from?" But when I go back to see my family in Chicago, people tell me I've developed a British accent. So I haven't been able to acquire Australian English but my original way of talking has changed recognisably.[1]

Before coming to Australia, I lived among the South Asian Indian population of Fiji and learned Fiji Hindi (the local dialect of Hindi). When I spoke Fiji Hindi over the phone, people often told me that they couldn't tell I was not a Fiji Indian. Later I went to India, and learned standard Hindi, but when I returned to Fiji, I found it difficult to speak in Fiji Hindi – standard Hindi kept coming out. I also lived in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and learned Tok Pisin, the local dialect of Melanesian Pidgin. Then I lived in Vanuatu and learned Bislama, the dialect of Melanesian Pidgin spoken there. Again, when I went back to PNG, I found it hard to switch back to Tok Pisin. But although I had trouble switching between dialects, I had no problem switching between languages. For example, later at the University of New England in Australia, I had a Fiji Indian friend who had lived in Vanuatu, and when we talked, we both switched easily between English and Fiji Hindi and Bislama.

I also lived for several years in Hawai'i, but never tried to speak the local variety people call "Pidgin" because I got the feeling that it is used only by those born and bred in the islands. While in Hawai'i, I observed that speakers of this local variety often had problems with the standard English used in the schools. The same was true in PNG and Vanuatu, and also with Indigenous people in Australia who speak a variety known as Aboriginal English.

These experiences have raised many interesting questions about the acquisition and retention of dialects as opposed to languages, the ability to switch between dialects, the "ownership" of particular varieties of speech and the formal education of speakers of unstandardised dialects. These questions, among others, are considered in this book.

1.2 Contexts for SDA

SDA is concerned mainly with three broad types of dialects: national, regional and social. A national dialect is a way of speaking a language that is characteristic of a particular country. National dialects include varieties such as Canadian, American and Australian English, European and Brazilian Portuguese, and Moroccan and Egyptian Arabic. Often similar national dialects are combined and given a broader geographic label, such as North American English (covering Canada and the USA).

It must be remembered that national dialects are not homogeneous varieties spoken in the same way by all their speakers. For example, British English covers the varieties spoken in England, Scotland and Wales, some of which are very different from each other. What is important is the particular shared features among the ways a language is spoken in one country that contrast with those from another country. For example, the word *tomato* is pronounced "toe-mah-toe" in British English but "toe-may-toe" in North American English.

However, as already mentioned, many people think of a national dialect as the set of varieties closest to what is considered the "standard". This is actually an abstracted and idealised version of the language as it was originally spoken by the upper middle classes of one dominant region of the country. Varieties close to this standard are believed to be "neutral" or "mainstream" (i.e. not evocative of any minority from a particular geographical area or social group). Thus, such varieties are considered most suitable for public speaking and radio and television broadcasting, and the fact that they are most often heard in these contexts reinforces the view that they are standard. Examples are standard French, Received Pronunciation (or RP) of British English, and standard German (or "High" German). Standard varieties are also often labelled as "general" – e.g. General American English – to distinguish them from varieties which are associated with particular regional or social groups.

In some countries, the spoken standard has become the basis for formal written communication, and further "standardised" by dictionaries, grammars and style guides. This is the case in the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia, Portugal, Brazil and most other countries. In some countries, however, the written standard is based on a variety very different from what is spoken colloquially by most of the population. Such a situation is referred to as "diglossia" (Ferguson 1959) – i.e. strict functional differentiation of two varieties of the same language in different domains. The colloquial variety is learned at home and used in informal contexts such as conversation with family and friends. The standard or literary variety is learned in school and used in formal domains such as expository writing. In such contexts, the majority of the population is bidialectal to some extent in both varieties, and the colloquial dialect is not socially stigmatised. An example is found in Egypt with Egyptian Colloquial Arabic and Classical Arabic (Haeri 2003).

With regard to English, an important subtype of national dialect is what are often called "New Englishes" or "World Englishes" – for example, Singapore English, Indian (South Asian) English, Philippine English, Nigerian English and Fiji English (see, for example, Kirkpatrick 2007; Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008; Schneider 2007). They arose in British or American colonies where English was the language of the education system and learned as a second language by a large proportion of the population. In these countries, new varieties of English emerged, influenced by the indigenous first languages of their speakers. Thus, they are also referred to as "indigenised varieties" of

English, the term I adopt here. Each of these indigenised varieties, still learned mainly as a second language, continues to function as an important lingua franca and educational language after the country's independence (and thus, yet another name for them: "post-colonial varieties"). In some of these countries, a local spoken and written standard has emerged, but in others, one of the more established national standards is used, usually British or American English.

As opposed to a national dialect, a regional dialect is spoken in one particular area of a country. In the USA, regional dialects include Appalachian, New Jersey and Southern English, and in Britain, Cockney, Liverpool English and "Geordie" (Newcastle English). Regional dialects in Norway include those spoken in the Stril and Setesdal regions, and in Germany, in Saxony, Swabia and Bavaria.

In contrast to a regional dialect, a social dialect is a variety of a language spoken by a particular group based on social characteristics other than geography. SDA is most relevant to speakers of social dialects that are based on ethnicity (often called ethnic dialects), such as African American English, Australian Aboriginal English, Native American (or Indian) English and Chicano Spanish. Both regional and social dialects are often stigmatised by speakers of dialects that are closer to the national standards.

As in SLA, the study of SDA can be divided into two broad contexts: naturalistic and educational. Naturalistic SDA refers to learning a new dialect (the D2) without any formal teaching. This most often occurs when people who speak a particular regional dialect migrate to another part of the same country where a different regional dialect is spoken – for example, speakers of various American dialects moving to Philadelphia (Payne 1976, 1980) and speakers of rural Norwegian dialects moving to Bergen (Kerswill 1994). In some cases, the D2 is an unstandardised local regional dialect learned by children who have been brought up speaking a variety close to the standard at home – for example, speakers of standard Belgian Dutch in an East-Flanders village (Rys 2007). In other cases, the D2 is a more prestigious standard dialect learned naturalistically by adult migrants – for example, Brazilian Portuguese as spoken in the capital Brasília learned by rural-dialect-speaking migrants (Bortoni-Ricardo 1985). Naturalistic SDA also occurs when people migrate to another country where a different national dialect is spoken – for example, speakers of Canadian English to England (Chambers 1992; Tagliamonte and Molfenter 2007) and speakers of American English to Australia (Foreman 2003). These examples and others are described in detail in Chapter 2.

One important aspect of SDA in naturalistic contexts that distinguishes it from SLA is that it can be unintentional. Since migrants to a new dialect area can continue to speak in their original dialect (D1) and still be able to communicate, they may not try to learn the dialect of their new home (D2). Nevertheless they may unconsciously "pick up" or acquire some features of the D2 and use them in their speech. This then is the result of "linguistic

ambience" (Markham 1997: 50) rather than any intention to acquire the D2, but it is still considered as SDA in this book.

In educational contexts, described in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8, the D2 is learned in formal training. In classroom SDA, the D2 is nearly always the standard dialect – the target language of the education system – and the students are generally children who come to school speaking a dialect markedly different from the standard – a regional or ethnic dialect, or the colloquial variety in a diglossic situation. In dialect coaching and accent modification, the students are normally adults who want to learn how to speak a new dialect for performances in films or the theatre, or who want to change their dialect for some reason, such as improving their job prospects. Instruction is generally one-on-one or in small groups.

In educational contexts, the term "SDA" is also applied to a specific situation involving varieties that are not normally considered to be dialects of the same language. This is where the D1 is an expanded pidgin or creole language and the D2 is the standard form of its lexifier (the language which provided the bulk of its vocabulary) – for example with Hawai'i Creole as the D1 and standard American English as the D2, or Haitian Creole (D1) and standard French (D2). (For definitions of pidgins and creoles, see Siegel 2008.) While most linguists (myself included) would say that such creoles and their lexifiers are separate languages, a large proportion of their speakers view them as different varieties of the same language – the creole often thought to be a degenerate or "broken" version of the standardised form of the lexifier (see Sebba 1993: 47).

Furthermore, there is the factor of the "creole continuum" – a range of different ways of speaking the creole, from what is called the "basilect" (furthest from the lexifier) to the "acrolect" (closest to the lexifier), with intermediate varieties, the "mesolects". This is illustrated below for Jamaican Creole (adopted from Alleyne 1980).

acrolect: *he is eating his dinner.*
mesolect 1: *(h)im is eating (h)im dinner.*
mesolect 2: *(h)im eating (h)im dinner.*
mesolect 3: *im a eat im dinner.*
basilect: *im a nyam im dinner.*

In this example, the acrolect differs from the standard form of the lexifier only in pronunciation, and thus this way of speaking the creole makes it seem more like a different dialect than a different language.

Creole speakers usually control a particular range of the continuum and use varieties more towards the basilectal end with their friends and family and towards the acrolectal end in more formal situations. Variation according to context also occurs in all the types of dialects I have been describing (though not to as great an extent as in creoles). There is not just one way of speaking any dialect; rather, people vary their speech in different situations.

1.3 Dialectal differences

The linguistic differences between dialects of a language can be described under four headings: (1) vocabulary, (2) grammar, (3) pragmatics, and (4) pronunciation. I describe each of these below.

1.3.1 Vocabulary

While different dialects usually share most of their vocabulary (or "lexicon"), they sometimes have completely different lexical items (i.e. words) for the same things. Table 1.1 below shows some examples in American and Australian English (which is closer to British English).

Similarly, the same words can have different meanings in different dialects. Examples in Australian Aboriginal English that differ from both mainstream Australian English and other dialects are *jar* 'to scold', *deadly* 'great, fantastic' and *granny* 'a grandchild as well as grandparent'.

1.3.2 Grammar

Grammatical differences have to do with the way words are formed (morphology) and the way words are put together to make phrases and sentences (syntax).

Morphological differences In American English, all regular verbs add *-ed* to indicate past tense – for example: *looked*, *trained*, *started*. But for some verbs, British and Australian English add *-t* instead of *-ed* – for example: *learnt*, *spoilt*, *leapt* and *dreamt* as opposed to *learned*, *spoiled*, *leaped* and *dreamed*. In another example, American English has the participle *gotten*, but this is not found in British or Australian English:

American: *They've gotten a new car.*
Australian: *They've got a new car.*

African American English has the marker *be* which occurs before verbs, adjectives and adverbs to indicate a habitual state or action. This is not found in other dialects (which instead use adverbs such as *usually* or *always*) – for example (Green 2002: 48):

African American: *Your phone bill be high . . .*
Other dialects: *Your phone bill is usually high . . .*
African American: *She be telling people she eight.*
Other dialects: *She's always telling people she's eight.*

Table 1.1 *Examples of American and Australian English lexical items*

American English	Australian English
gas	petrol
trunk (of a car)	boot
hood (of a car)	bonnet
cookie	biscuit
trailer	caravan
sidewalk	footpath
sweater	jumper
candy	lollies
suspenders	braces

Syntactic differences One syntactic difference has to do with agreement. In Australian English it is common to use the plural form of the verb for a group, whereas in American English the singular form is usually used – for example:

Australian: *The band are getting ready to go on stage.*
American: *The band is getting ready to go on stage.*

In American English, questions with the verb *have* are most commonly formed with *do* but not in Australian English – for example:

American: *Do you have the money?*
Australian: *Have you got the money?*

In some social dialects, the verb 'to be' is often not found where it occurs in other dialects – for instance, *she eight* in the above example of African American English, and the following in Australian Aboriginal English (Kaldor and Malcolm 1991: 74):

Australian Aboriginal: *His name Peter.*
General Australian: *His name is Peter.*

But in some cases, Australian English and other national dialects omit a word where others do not:

Australian: *Her mother is in hospital.*
American: *Her mother is in the hospital.*

1.3.3 Pragmatics

Pragmatics has to do with the ways we use language – the particular words and phrases chosen for a particular purpose. It is closely connected to issues

such as politeness. For example, there are many different things you could say to get someone to open a window:

Open the window.
Could you open the window?
Please open the window.
Would you mind terribly opening up the window.
Whew, it's hot in here.

Which words you choose depend on the person you're talking to and how well you know them.

Some pragmatic differences between Australian English and American English also have to do with the choice of words. One example is the use of the word *toilet*. In Australia, it's normal to ask "Where's the toilet?" But in America, this would seem abrupt or rude, and most people would ask "Where's the restroom?" or "Where's the bathroom?" Also, in America, people commonly use terms of address such as *sir* and *ma'am* to people they don't know. But these terms are rare in Australia, and you're more likely to hear what seem like more intimate terms, such as *mate* or even *love* (and American *buddy,* which has suddenly become widely used).

Other kinds of pragmatic differences have to do with interactive styles or modes of discourse. For example, speakers of African American English have several ways of interacting with each other that are not used in other dialects. In one of these, referred to as "call and response", the speaker's statements ("calls") are punctuated by expressions from the listeners ("responses") (Smitherman 1977: 104). These responses often have the function of affirming what the speaker has said or urging the speaker on. Another African American English mode of discourse is "signifying". This is defined by Smitherman (1977: 118) as "the verbal art of insult in which a speaker humorously puts down, talks about, needles – that is, signifies on – the listener". This is often done to make a point, or just for fun.

1.3.4 Pronunciation

When people talk about the differences between national or regional dialects, they most often refer to the different ways of pronouncing words, or what is usually referred to as "accent". This may be in individual words, such as *tomato*, as described earlier. There also may be systematic differences between dialects. For example, in most American dialects, the letter *r* is pronounced wherever it occurs in writing. But in most British dialects, the letter *r* is only pronounced when it is followed by a vowel – so that, for example, *bar* and *bah* are pronounced the same, as are *court* and *caught*. The term "rhotic" refers to sounds represented by the letter *r*. So the dialects

in which *r* is always pronounced are referred to as rhotic dialects, and those in which it is not pronounced unless followed by a vowel as non-rhotic (or sometimes "R-less") dialects. Some dialects in America, such as those spoken by some people in Boston and New York City, are non-rhotic as well, just as some dialects in Britain, such as Scottish English, are rhotic.

Pronunciation differences may sometimes occur with other consonants – for example, in British Cockney, the *th* sound (as in *thin*) is sometimes pronounced as *f*, so that *think* is pronounced *fink*. But much more commonly, differences in accent have to do with the pronunciation of vowels. For example, in American English, the *a* sound in words such as *ask*, *pass*, *fast* and *laugh* is pronounced as the *a* in *pat*. But in Australian English, it is pronounced similar to the *a* in *father*. (Vowel sounds are described in detail in Section 1.4 below.)

These differences in pronunciation depend on particular "segments" of sound – vowels, consonants and their combinations. However, other pronunciation differences are not confined to a segment and may extend over more than one segment. These are called "suprasegmental" features. Examples are stress and pitch. Some words in American and Australian English differ according to which syllable is stressed (or accented). For example, in American English, *defence* (or *defense*) can be pronounced *DEE-fence*, whereas in Australia it is *de-FENCE*. Another example is *cliché*: American *cli-SHAY* versus Australian *CLI-shay*.

Pitch has to do with the voice level – e.g. high or low – when speaking. The term "intonation" refers to the pitch pattern over a sentence or utterance. American English and Hawai'i Creole differ in the intonation used for yes–no questions (questions for which the answer is either *yes* or *no*). In most varieties of American English, the pattern is rising, starting with an intermediate pitch and finishing with a high pitch. In Hawai'i Creole, the pattern is falling, starting with high pitch and dropping to low pitch in the final syllable. This is illustrated in the following examples in which the line above the question indicates the intonation pattern:

American English:

Are you the life-guard?

Hawai'i Creole:

Eh, you da life-guard?