









Notion of Linguistic Variability and its Dimensions in the Hierarchy of Language Systems

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Abstract

The problem of variability has been the subject of research by domestic and foreign scientists in various linguistic fields and a number of interdisciplinary sciences since the middle of the 20th century. The aim of research is to show the difference between the terms of variant, invariant, variation or variability in the language system. The definitions of these terms given by domestic and foreign scholars are analyzed in this study using a comparative method. The concept of variability is not strictly linguistic. It is applicable when considering the structure and functioning of various spheres of activity. The phenomena of linguistic changes permeate the entire system of language and its implementation in speech. In any language, modifications of particulars constantly occur while preserving the main (general, invariant) ones. Because of these assumptions, the given article seeks to demonstrate the differences between the terms variant, invariant, variability, also for awareness of linguistic variability may result in developing positive attitude towards in communication.

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Keywords: Variability, Variation, Variant, Invariant, Linguistics.

Introduction

Language as a functional system is always in a state of continuous movement, which results in varieties and variations. Linguistic variation is one of the most complex, multifaceted and diverse problems in modern linguistics. It is that natural process which characterizes the growth of a language. In any language, variations or modifications constantly occur while preserving the main (general, invariant). According to the theory of "language drift" proposed by Sapir (2001), language moves in time and space along its own way. The individual variations of speech move in a certain direction, predetermined by the "drift" of the language: Sapir (2001) adds that "language drift has its own direction ... only those individual variations that move in a certain

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direction are fixed in it, just as only certain movements of the waves in the bay correspond to the ebb and flow of the tide. The drift of language is accomplished through the uncontrolled selection by speakers of those individual deviations that correspond to some predetermined direction" (Sapir, 2001).

When considering the issue of variation, it is very important to determine the literary norm. Researchers even argue that if the phenomenon of variation did not exist, there would be no need to talk about the process. If we investigate the process of variation from the view of literary norm of the language, first of all we should define what is variant and doublet in linguistics. Most linguists use these terms as synonyms, but there is a difference between them. Kazakh scholars like R. Syzdykova who agrees that the above mentioned terms are synonyms, but they say that it should be distinguished from each other (Syzdykova, 2007). van Belle (2008) traces the difference between the terms of variation and variability and uncertainty. Reformatsky A.A., Shansky N.M., Rogozhnikova, Korolenko I.A. gave the explanation of these terms separately, but in Kazakh language it is used together, as phonetic doublets and phonetic variants (Dorofeev, 2016). Doublets (alternatively etymological twins or twinlings) are words in a given language that share the same etymological root. When we speak about the norms of the language, if the question as "what is a literary norm?" arises, there will be problem to define the variant or the doublet. That is another question to discuss.

Despite the fact that the concept of variation is increasingly penetrating the research process in linguistics, many issues related to it are still insufficiently studied. There is the need to study the concept of variants and invariants. It is necessary to study the impact of the Prague School and a number of other linguistic schools which seemed to have firmly entered phonology, and other areas of linguistics. The very content of these concepts in relation to language needs to be clarified. Further research also requires the ontological status of linguistic variants and invariants, in particular, their relationship to language and speech and the place of variants and invariants in the level hierarchy of language systems. However, despite the fact that many scientific articles and studies have been published on the issue of variability, we can say that there is no consensus among scientists. The investigation of the terms of variability, the factors which influence on this process, the differences of the terms between variant and invariant, and defining the types of variants are considered therefore, as attempts to fill this research gap to consider variability as a general property inherent in the very "structure" of the language system, as a way of existence and functioning of all units of language without exception, revealing specific features within each level. In the course of the presentation, an attempt is made to clarify the content of the concepts of "variant" and "invariant" in relation to units of different levels of the language system.

Literature Review

Evolution of Variability

The study of the relationship between a specific language and its varieties (variants) first began in the 12th century in a scientific world. In the 17th century, the phenomenon of varieties was of much interest for modern linguists. The linguists noted that language, in addition to dialects, has some varieties associated with age, status and property of various regions. From the 18th century, written grammars became increasingly concerned with issues related to normativity and linguistic purism, aspects often related to the desire to have a language and society which were morally, socially, and ethnically pure (O'Neill, 2025). Hence, therefore, the language of villagers, commoners, townspeople, noble lords and courtiers, a learned historian, an old man, a preacher, a woman or a man and small children differed from one another. The common language embraces all these varieties, subordinating them to its power, might and originality.

Researchers until the nineteenth century focused on these changes as mere language changes but at the turn of the 20th century, these changes came to be discussed more theoretically under the domain of historical linguistics. The theory of variability was first proposed by representatives of the Prague School and Baudouin de Courtenay in the 1920s (Labov, 1969; Weinreich, Labov, & Herzog, 1968). Several linguists and theoreticians, at both national and international levels, including de Saussure, Bloomfield, Mathesius, Trubetskoy, and Jakobson have started distinguishing variability as a process, a phenomenon accompanying the development of language. While other linguists like Labov, Sapir, and Wolfram, in more recent times, argue that variability is a property of language that serves as a condition for this process, while it also resulted in the creation of different variants of the language (Trubetskoy, 2000). Lately, with the turn of the 21st century, linguists (Bezrukaya, 2009; Syzdykova, 2007) observe that variability had reached its maturity stage. Kaliev (2005) finds variability evolved into a phenomenon that includes "...types and changes of a language that are determined by its use in different situations and its social and territorial nature. It can be revealed by different linguistic units called variants or invariants. Each lexical unit, while maintaining its semantic unity, appears in many variants (Kaliev, 2005). The existence of territorial, social, stylistic, functional, and national forms of language on a large scale is also a manifestation of variability".

In the 21st century, the dictionary of the Russian Language, Ozhegov (2015) defines the meaning of "variability" as "... the diversity, variety of speech, determined by different situations of use, as well as differences in the social and territorial characteristics of the speakers" Variability in socio-linguistic terms is explained in the following way: "Variability *Latin origin- variantis*, it is the fundamental and universal property of linguistic units that ensure the functioning and communicative needs of language" (Abasilov, 2016). Variability, hence,

despite the closeness of the terms under consideration, “can be used to denote the property of mobility of language units, whereas the term variant has a broader meaning. It serves to denote variants of the language system” (Bezrukaya, 2009). Another development in recent years is that variability has been described in terms of intercultural communication. Since variability is inherent to any level of language, in order to identify its specificity in various links of the language system, it is studied from the perspective of variation of language means at the level of phonetics, vocabulary and grammar, which helps to resolve pressing problems of phonology, syntax, semantics, and develops a new methodology in studying the interaction of social and strictly linguistic processes in language.

Meaning and Definition of Variability

It should be noted that there is no generally accepted unified terminology for the concept of “variability”. A dictionary of Russian Language provides the following definition: variability comes from Latin *variantis* which means changing. It is the idea of different ways of expressing some linguistic entity as its modification, variety or as a deviation from some norm; or a term characterizing the mode of existence and functioning of language units and the language system as a whole (Ozhegov, 2015). Variability in a broad sense means any changeability, modification. With this understanding, there is no need to contrast a variant with an invariant. In a narrow sense, variability is defined as “a characteristic of the mode of existence and functioning of language units in synchrony.” Variability is a comparison of variants (both in synchrony and diachrony), the use of which is noted in speech (literariness – non-literariness; old – new; correct – incorrect, etc.) While analyzing the terms variant and invariant we tried to give our own definition of the term “variability”. So, variability is a process of development and change of a language, which exists in all language levels, affected by internal and external factors, performing important social functions. It allows us to distinguish spatial and social groups of speakers, differentiate speech depending on the conditions and purposes of communication (functional styles). According to the above-mentioned definition and the types of variants, we can trace the changes in the language and it will give us the opportunity to study the variability process in all levels of the language, especially grammar and morphology.

Variability is also defined as one of the fundamental properties of language functioning (Vinogradov et al., 2014). It is an obligatory feature of language, determined by language, and imposed by it (Stepanov, 2021). Firsova (2000) finds a wide variability (both formal and semantic) in terminological apparatus reflecting this concept. Therefore, the terms like “variance”, “variation”, “variant” are very often used as equivalents of the term “variability”. There have been some attempts to differentiate them terminologically, but not all of them have yielded positive results. Variability is defined by scientists in different ways: “partial variability”, “ability to modify”, “process of modification”, and like. These undertakings do not have any significant results. The indicated terms continue to be used in parallel, and a wide variety of interpretations are attributed to them (Firsova, 2000). Some authors (Solntsev, 1984; Stepanov, 2021) use the first two terms “variance” and “variation” synonymously; others (Bezrukaya, 2009) use them differentiated. Solntsev argues that the concept of variability (variance) is used in linguistics in two ways (Solntsev, 1984). Firstly, as a characteristic of any linguistic variability, modification, which can be the result of evolution, the use of different linguistic means to designate similar or the same phenomena, or the result of other reasons. Secondly, the concept of variability is used as a characteristic of the mode of existence and functioning of language units in synchrony. On the contrary, Travkin argues that the term “variation” should be used to designate the phenomenon or concept itself, and “variability” – to the results of this process (Bezrukaya, 2009).

With a broad application of the term “variability”, there are also national-state variants of a language, often termed as variability of a dialect and supra-dialectal language. It is about the variability of sociolects, about age-related speech variability or variability of male and female speech, and even about pragmatic variability (Stepanov, 2021). However, there are also concepts in which variant relations are reduced to doublets (Firsova, 2000). The problem of variability in linguistics arises in all its glory in the following cases: (i) when studying the “mechanism”, “structure” of language, which can be called variant-invariant; (ii) when studying the functioning of language and the transition from language to speech; (iii) when studying intra-linguistic factors of change and development of language (variation and transformation of variants into new entities); (iv) when there is a need to explain the different appearance of “the same units” or their forms, to explain various kinds of alternations under the influence of different factors; (v) in the sociolinguistic study of variation of the norm and the use of different manifestations of the same units for stylistic, expressive and norm-forming purposes (Solntsev, 1984).

Variability and Other Linguistic Units

Variability and the related linguistic units like variant, invariant, variation, and their derivatives are not originally linguistic. These are interdisciplinary terms, which are often used to characterize the structure, existence, and functioning of objects belonging to different spheres of reality. Some authors, particularly in environmental studies, make a technical distinction between the terms “variation,” “variability”, and “uncertainty.” Van Belle describes *variability* and *uncertainty* as two different categories of *variation*, involving different sources and kinds of randomness. As he uses the terms, *variability* refers to natural variation in some quantity whereas *uncertainty* refers to the degree of precision with which a quantity is measured. In linguistics these terms need to be clarified. A contemporary linguist, Syzdykova (2007), notes that “...variability/variation is a property inherent

in the language system as a whole, in other words, all linguistic units – linguistic entities – are variants.”

In order to understand linguistic units, it is important to first find out the difference between variant and invariant. A variant refers to a concrete concept, and an invariant refers to the abstract world that represents that concept. Regarding the definition of the term "variant" and "invariant", one can see that in different sources they are interpreted differently, and in some dictionaries they are completely absent (Abasilov, 2016). However, Kaliyev & Bolganbayev (2006), also suggest that different pronunciations of the same phoneme are interpreted as variants, while the phoneme itself is an invariant, where basic meaning does not change. Although the meaning of the terms variant in linguistics is consistent with the general concept of "comparative series of similar linguistic units (units)", but there are also some specific features. Additionally, there are variants also that are usually classified as synonyms (Dubrovina, 2015). Shvedova argues: "It is unlikely that there will be two researchers who understand these terms in the same way". If we study the variation process from the point of norms of the language, here appears another term as *doublet*, which is used as the synonym of the word *variant*. At present, these terms have become firmly established in linguistics, although they are used mainly in works devoted to units of language and their functioning.

In Komlev's (2000) "Dictionary of Foreign Words" an explanation is given only for the word "variable", which comes from the French word "variables". This word has the meaning "prone to variation, capable of having variants, changeable, unstable" (Komlev, 2000). An analysis of specialized literature shows that the study of variability is carried out from various sides. For example, from the standpoint of general linguistics: the question is raised about the concepts of "ontology of variability", "variant", "invariant", "types and kinds of variability", "variability factors", "variability boundaries", etc. Variability is also considered from the point of view of speech culture (normativity/non-normativity), history of language (evolutionary development of language units), functional stylistics and stylistics (implementation of parallel means of expression in various communicative spheres and differentiation in terms of expressive possibilities), from the side of sociolinguistics: stratification and territorial implementation of variants, in other terminology – their diastate and diatopic implementation.

Variability and Its Dimensions

Variability has come to be interpreted very broadly in a more interdisciplinary way. There are modifications in phonological and morphological planes of language. For instance, Trubetskoy (2000), in his work on theoretical elucidation entitled "Fundamentals of Phonology" studies the phenomena of variability at the phonological level, and comes to the conclusion that any phoneme can be realized in a number of sounds. All sounds in which the same phoneme is realized, are called its variants. Having given a definition of a phonetic variant, he also indicates the conditions under which two sounds should be considered either as the realization of two different phonemes, or as two variants of one phoneme. While variation occurs in both phonology and morphosyntax, phonological variation also includes phonetic variation motivated by articulatory or perceptual factors. While learning in both domains is subject to cognitive biases, phonological learning may also be biased by physical factors, which may enhance learnability of phonetically motivated alternations (Do, Havenhill, & Sze, 2023). For example, there are many variants of the phoneme – *m-* (in English -*t-*). In Kazakh language this phoneme can sound hard like – *am-* (horse) and soft -*em-* (meat). Here the phoneme – *m-* (in English -*t-*) is invariant, and its use as hard or soft is variant. Earlier the notions variant and invariant appeared in phonology.

Variability has another dimension in grammar and lexicology of a language. For instance, phonology has its invariant in phoneme, variant in allophone; in lexicology, the invariant is lexeme, variant is lex; in morphology, the invariant is morpheme, variant is allomorph or morph. Thus, variability/variation is a natural phenomenon inherent in a language system. Variability exists in all levels of the language. Though patterns of variation and change in different linguistic domains show fundamental differences, variation is inherent to all levels of linguistic structure (Do et al., 2023). Trubetskoy (2000) asserts that while teaching a variant, there are applications in the development of this problem at different levels of language, primarily at the lexical level. In this regard, the Kazakh linguistics should focus on the development of linguistic diversity.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design to study the influence of social factors on the choice of language variants. As recommended by Labov (1969) social stratification of English language gives a powerful impetus to linguistic variability. The given descriptive approach used in the article in describing the variants gives us an opportunity to show the existence of variants in all levels of the language. When we speak about this approach, we note that some variants or invariants are now common and frequently used, that some types are rare, or are not recommended by reference book compilers, authors of articles on speech culture, and language teachers, or that a particular form is found only in informal style.

Sampling and Data Collection

The study was conducted through carefully selected secondary data of sociolinguistics type, comprising research

studies, language corpora and literary discourses, to understand the theoretical underpinnings. This documentation search and related discourses made it easier to understand language variability and language variants.

Data Analysis

As per the recommendations of Labov (1969) the frequency of linguistic variants was analyzed separately for each group of subjects, for their stylistic context. Conclusions were drawn about the dependence of the use of variants on the social and stylistic context. It was evident that analysis of the structure of language from this position in synchrony and diachrony is an important task of both general and specific linguistics, as well as applied linguistics, including a detailed study of individual languages and their comparison.

Results

This study carried out documentation research to find out the answer to several questions related to variants, their classifications, and reasons of language variability. It was also important to understand what factors cause variability to integrate into language. Modern linguists claim that the possibility of variation is inherent in the very nature of language. Indeed, the process of variation can be considered natural in language, since it characterizes linguistic units of various levels at different stages of language development and is a constant feature of its development. To shed light on the problem of variability in language, one should take into account both the general features of the language and the specific cultural and historical conditions in which linguistic variation occurs (Stepanov, 2021). Recently, the focus of linguists has been on the features of language and speech determined by social status, gender, ethnicity, and place of residence. An individual's speech is a kind of marker of his social status and education.

The findings of the study reveal that variation process exists in all levels of a language, whether it is lexical, grammatical and lexico-phonetical. In studying variation in phonology, researchers distinguish free variations from what we might call lexical variation. In free variation, each word has more than one pronunciation (Zuraw, 2010). The lexical variants, among the original Kazakh words, are formed from the same root with two different suffixes and have the same meaning form a series of variants. An example of lexical variant is in the expression *namyshyl-namyskor-namyskoi*, where the root *namys* is the suffix to mean *shyl/kor/koi* (in Eng. *honorable*). The grammatical variants are too few to form variants. The lexico-phonetical or phonetic-spelling variants mostly deal with the borrowings. While comparing the types of variants there are many different classifications, example of which are presented in Table 1 (Sarybaev, 2000).

Table 1: Classification of Variants (Doublets).

Literary Variants	Literary-Ordinary Variants	Literary-Dialectal Variants	Spelling Variants	Dialectal Variants
Examples <i>разы/риза/ырза,</i> <i>жалғыз/жаңғыз;руқсат/лұқ</i> <i>сам</i> <i>түгелдеу/түгендеу</i> <i>razy/riza/irza,- grateful,</i> <i>zhalygz, zhaldiz/ zhangyz,-</i> <i>alone</i> <i>tugeldeu/tugendeu- count,</i> <i>inventory</i>	Examples <i>Біреуі/біреуісi/</i> <i>Мәселен/мысалы</i> <i>Жиыrmасыншы/</i> <i>Жиыrmанышы</i> <i>Bireui/bireusi,-one</i> <i>Maselen/ mysaly- for</i> <i>example</i> <i>Zhyirmasynshy/zhiirman</i> <i>shy- the twentieth</i>	Examples a) Variant series with undetermined literary equivalent <i>қияр/бадірен/</i> <i>бодырақ-</i> <i>kiar/badiren/bodir</i> <i>ak- cucumber</i> Here the word <i>қияр</i> – is a literary word; the rest are dialects; b) Variant series with determined literary equivalent: e.g. <i>әтеу/қораз –</i> <i>atesh/koraz- cock</i> Here it is difficult say which of these words are literary, which one is dialect. Both of them are used in literature.	Examples <i>Қабылан/қабл</i> <i>ан;</i> <i>Ғылыми/ғылм</i> <i>Ең дала/иен</i> <i>[Kabylan/kabla</i> <i>n;-leopard</i> <i>Gylmy/ gylmy-</i> <i>scientific;</i> <i>En dala/ien</i>	Examples <i>Ілмек/шөтк</i> <i>е/ ырғақ;</i> <i>Аша/айыр/</i> <i>ақа</i> <i>Аброй/әбүйір</i> <i>[Ilmek/</i> <i>shotke/ irgak</i> <i>-Hook/brush/;</i> <i>Asha/ayr/</i> <i>aka- pitchfork</i> <i>Abryo/abuyir</i> <i>-honor</i>

Source: Sarybaev (2000).

As you can see from Table 1, only literary-dialectal variant has its subtypes. There are many types of variants, we notice that if one component of the variant is a literary word, the rest can be dialects. That's why we divided variants into these types. Interestingly, grammatical variants are divided into morphological and syntactic variants. It is not always possible to predict the future normalization of variants. After all, variant words are a category that changes in accordance with the general laws of the language. It is possible that a

large part of a word that formed a variant series in one era may fall out of use in another era or become an independent word. In particular, our experience of using words shows the stylistic and semantic differentiation of variants. They can be: a) used in various stylistic branches of the literary language; b) used consistently (and gradually differentiated) by obeying the internal laws of the language. In addition to the stylistic layers of the language, there is also a constant need for new concepts, terms, and names with the development of the writing tradition and the increase in the social function of the language.

The documentation search introduced several aspects of the concept of variability. A seminal work by [Vagana, Bondarenko, & Chernova \(2012\)](#) notes that when considering the issue of variability, one should pay attention to such concepts as acrolect, mesolect, basilect. An acrolect is an oral language in its spoken and written form, which is freely spoken and written by educated people. The acrolect variant is also called "prestigious", less subject to variation. A mesolect is a colloquial or everyday form of speech, characteristic of the middle class, who prefer a regional variety of the language. A basilect is characterized as a language variety that is most subject to variation, the bearer of which is a part of the population with a low level of education. This shows that the nature of variability in different social types of language is different, and their relationship in different national communities may be different. These discrepancies create prerequisites for the differentiation of a single language and at the same time provide an opportunity to more accurately determine the special nature of variability.

[Stepanov \(2021\)](#) is of a similar opinion, noting the presence of internal and external factors. In his opinion, internal foundations, immanent in their essence, differ from external ones in their "non-linguistic nature", since the categories of functions (for example, socio-stylistic), space (as well as time), and the structure of society are taken into account in connection with the use and distribution of variants created within the system. In addition, the variability of language, social in nature, existing in time, functioning in territorial and social space, can be realized only in the presence of these factors. [Stepanov \(2021\)](#) further adds that "the difficulty of studying linguistic variation is due to the complexities of the process of linguistic change, which in itself is a derivative of a number of different factors acting more or less independently of each other."

[Vinogradov et al. \(2014\)](#) establish three types of factors of variation in language: internal (systemic-structural, pressure of the system), external in relation to the language system, but internal in relation to the language as a whole (development of civilization, termination or establishment of contacts between groups of native speakers, etc.), external in relation to the language system, but internal in relation to the language and its functioning – logical and psychological factors associated with the general patterns of human communication and thinking. In many cases, these factors are decisive and predetermine the variation of linguistic means. They can be objective, independent of human desire (for example, the slippage of meaning in everyday speech), and subjective, reflecting the conscious intentions and desires of the speaker (for example, in poetic speech)

Likewise, according to [Gorbachevich \(2009\)](#), variability is caused by the unification of heterogeneous elements, the causes of which are numerous and multifaceted. The author divides them into two large groups: external and internal. He attributes the influence of territorial dialects, borrowing of the same word from different languages, and the influence of an intermediary language on this process to external ones. Internal factors include the action of the analogy factor (paradigmatic and syntagmatic), the non-equivalence of form and content, which arises as a result of the uneven development of these categories; the diversity of structural potentials of the language system and its restructuring in the process of language development; the tendency towards economy (linear, material or mental).

[Firsova \(2000\)](#), in turn, identifies intra- and extralinguistic factors that predetermine the generation of variants and influence their development; having a direct or indirect impact on the state of morphological and syntactic variability. Intralinguistic factors include the following: 1) the ability of formally different units in the process of functioning to convey in the same syntactic position the same relevant feature of denotative meaning; 2) a certain dependence on the text (on the functional style and substyle); 3) the phenomenon of attraction of grammatical forms. The main extralinguistic factors are the following: 1) temporal (historical); 2) territorial (spatial) and geographical; 3) the influence of the substrate and the influence of language export; 4) social and socio-historical ([Firsova, 2000](#)).

[Ivleva \(1984\)](#) attributes the living conditions of people and the use of vocabulary by native speakers to extralinguistic factors both in synchrony and diachrony, and the structural and semantic features of the lexical units themselves, their interaction in language and speech, and borrowing processes to intra-linguistic factors. [Semenyuk \(1989\)](#) points to the following diachronic reasons for the variation of grammatical forms: 1) when the method of formal expression of categorical grammatical meaning changes, the old method of expression does not always disappear; 2) when a certain word passes from one grammatical subclass to another, the grammatical indicators of both subclasses are preserved.

Variability or variation, therefore, takes place in all levels of the language. [İnci-Kavak & Kavak \(2021\)](#) state that: "...As an Altaic language, Turkish has two significant features: the first one is that it has a rich morphological system and the other is that it allows ellipsis and alternations in the word order. Speakers can omit subject or object in Turkish and the verbs are typically positioned at the end of the sentences. Due to its

highly agglutinating nature, Turkish exhibits not only case but also possession and plurality. Additionally, verbs can mark tense, modality, negation, subject agreement and voice morphemes". The same situation in Kazakh language. For example: *suaru/sugaru* (cyapy/cyrapy) where morph has changed.

To summarize the above, it should be noted that all studies distinguish two types of factors and causes of linguistic variability: extra-linguistic (external) and intra-linguistic (properly linguistic, internal), but due to the extreme versatility, complexity, and theoretical uncertainty of such a property of language as variability, they act not separately from each other, but in a complex. When we say about variability, the following terms as variant and invariant are closely connected with it. It is evident that variant words in a language have both similarities and significant differences. The following features can be noted regarding the types of variants in our language: (1) Grammatical variants are fewer in number compared to phonetic variants. (2) It is more difficult to distinguish the boundaries of phonetic variants. This is because it is observed that the sound variants of a word are formed not only due to dialects, the influence of another language, but also due to spelling, colloquial speech, and even the speech characteristics of individual people (3) The semantic individualization of phonetic variants prevails compared to other types. Therefore, many of them are used in our language simultaneously. (4) Personal variants of a word are also found in root forms, affixes, and in compound words and phrases. (5) Among the variants of a word, it is observed that the unification of the phonetic form, especially in terms of the norms of the literary language, is very difficult and takes a long time.

Discussion

The research presented in this paper is inspired by several views and opinions of both foreign and domestic scientists. Variability, like constancy, is an essential property of the structure of language, determined by its very nature and purpose: without it, language could not exist and develop. Variability manifests itself at all levels of language and in their units, depending on the specifics of the problem under consideration. Variability plays a great role in the life of language. It performs important social functions, allowing us to distinguish spatial and social groups of speakers, differentiate speech depending on the conditions and purposes of communication (functional styles), and make speech more precise and expressive. Variability is one of the distinctive features of language among other sign systems. The more deeply we understand the patterns of functioning and development of language, the more we become convinced that variability of the language system, its means and relationships in the processes of its interaction with the environment is its everyday and organic state. Even in a truly monolingual country (and such are very rare), the communicative situation can be quite complex, with various varieties of the given language taking part in it. Here, researchers distinguish between a broad and a narrow interpretation. The problem of variability of the language system and the problem of variation in the language system are connected with a number of other fundamental problems of linguistics, which have attracted the attention of researchers throughout the development of linguistic science. The exceptional flexibility and variability of the language system, which ensures the possibility of transmitting even the most subtle shades of meaning in communication, nevertheless does not violate the stability of the language system, which at every moment of its historical existence, constantly changing, remains identical to itself. Thus, in the theory of linguistics there appear such oppositions as variability vs. variance, variability vs. norm, variability vs. constancy, variability vs. stability.

The results of research by linguists in the area of pronunciation variability, suggest that, both intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic factors must be taken into account. At each stage of the development of a language and its national variants, the most stable innovations that are outside the norm but do not contradict the laws of language development may in the near future become the subject of general usage and move into the category of normative and codified. One cannot ignore the social and economic differentiation of society, which laid the foundation for the American school of sociolinguistics. A typical example of sociolinguistic variation is the results of a study conducted by Labov (1969), which showed that when studying a language, the variability of language is also influenced by social factors. Studying the pronunciation of [r] after vowels in words like 'park' by different groups of New Yorkers, is a sign of higher social status, according to Labov (1969). In another example, Labov (1969) pointed out the variation in pronunciation of English (*th*) in words like 'three' and 'thing'. As his study showed, representatives of the lower classes used the [t] variant in informal speech in more than 90% of cases, while representatives of the middle class used it in less than 30% of cases, and representatives of the upper class used it in less than 15% of cases. Thus, the frequency of use of the [t] variant reflected the social ranking of classes in the socioeconomic hierarchy. However, as the style became more formal and speech more prepared, the percentage of use of the [t] variant decreased and practically disappeared in reading. The conclusion that linguistic variation is not free, but is conditioned by the social and stylistic context, was of paramount importance.

The higher the social status of the speaker, the more often he uses such words and phrases in his speech, which are a kind of invitation to discussion and indicate the speaker's confidence in his rightness. On the contrary, the lower the social status of the speaker, the more often he uses final phrases in his speech such as you know, isn't that right, don't you think, etc. According to the authors, by using such phrases, the speaker seeks confirmation of his rightness and the addressee's agreement with him, thus expressing a certain

uncertainty. In order to object, the addressee will need to interrupt the speaker. Despite the differences, both types of phrases have the same function, namely, establishing and maintaining a conversation and testify to the sociolinguistic stratification of speakers: the higher the social status, the more confidently the speaker expresses his thoughts. The above results of quantitative sociolinguistic studies of language variation show that the influence of social factors cannot be overestimated. Social status, including such an indicator as education, as well as such factors as gender and ethnicity (influence of other languages), age and a number of others play a decisive role in choosing one or another option.

These studies are consistent with a few studies. For instance, Kolyaseva (2022) also found that co-existence of functionally similar items and changes that they undergo are often interpreted in terms of competition, in language change studies. Likewise, Zanfardini & de Jonge (2023) also found this argument relevant that linguistic forms of the words have a unique and invariable meaning and their contribution to communication is constant. An analysis of specialized literature shows that the study of variability is carried out from various sides. For example, from the standpoint of general linguistics: the question is raised about the concepts of "ontology of variability", "variant", "invariant", "types and kinds of variability", "variability factors", "variability boundaries", etc. Variability is also considered from the point of view of speech culture (normativity/non-normativity), history of language (evolutionary development of language units), functional stylistics and stylistics (implementation of parallel means of expression in various communicative spheres and differentiation in terms of expressive possibilities), from the side of sociolinguistics: stratification and territorial implementation of variants, in other terminology – their diastate and diatopic implementation. In recent years, variability has been described in the aspect of intercultural communication. Since variability is inherent to any level of language, in order to identify its specificity in various links of the language system, it is studied from the perspective of variation of language means at the level of phonetics, vocabulary and grammar, which helps to resolve pressing problems of phonology, syntax, semantics, and develops a new methodology in studying the interaction of social and strictly linguistic processes in language. It should be noted that there is no generally accepted unified terminology for the concept of "variability".

Conclusion

There are many sources and types of variability. Variability in language is closely connected with the paradigmatic structure of the language system, with the unification of language units into various paradigms, or classes. In this case, the instance turns out to be one of the special cases of paradigmatic, forming the most basic, fundamental paradigms of the language. So, there should be clear difference between the terms, such as variant, invariant, variation and variability. Linguistic variation refers to the differences in language usage among speakers based on factors such as geography, social class, ethnicity, and context. These variations can manifest in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, highlighting how language evolves and adapts in different environments and communities. As for the language variability, there is no unique definition or consensus about it. We know that this term means the ability of a language in the process of evolution to create competing means of expression at all levels (phonetic, morphemic, lexical, syntactic, stylistic) under the influence of internal laws of language development or external causes.

The ability of a language in the process of evolution to create competing means of expression at all levels of its structure including phonetic, morphemic, lexical, syntactic and stylistic: all under the influence of internal and external laws of language development. Sociolinguistics studies external causes, extralinguistic factors include territorial isolation, social stratification of native speakers, and differences in spheres of human activity and situations. Variability is a fundamental property of a language system (as well as any other semiotic system) and all units of language, which is characterized using the concepts of "variant" (a changeable part of a system or structure), "invariant" (a stable, unchangeable part of a language system or structure), and "variation" (a process of change). An invariant may not be found in all cases. For example, the ending of English verbs in the past indefinite tense is represented by the following phonetic variants: /-t/, /-d/, /-ed/, while the invariant form is not established. The idea of variability of a language is determined by the communicative orientation of the language process, its meaningfulness and semantic integrity. It is necessary to distinguish variants as literary-linguistic and literary dialectical, literary and oral doublets, oral and written variants, graphical doublets, orthographical variants. The variability process is a large theme which needs to be investigated thoroughly. Thus, as is evident from the above, despite significant achievements in the study of variability, its conceptual apparatus requires further clarification.

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