Speech Community:

Eckert (2000) notes that "because sociolinguists' treatment of language focuses on its heterogeneity, they seek a unit of analysis at a level of social aggregation at which it can be said that heterogeneity is organized" (p. 30) Some scholars defined Speech Community in terms of purely structural criteria. Lyons (1970), for instance, defined speech community as "all the people who use a given language (or dialect)" (p. 326). A rather more complex definition was introduced by Hockett (1958, p. 8): "Each language defines a speech community: the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language". Along the same line of thought, Hockett agrees with Lyons, noting that speakers in any speech community share and communicate in one variety, be it a language or dialect.

However, speech community is not a purely linguistic notion, and it is easy to state many counter-examples. Troike (2003) notes that Speakers of Cantonese and Mandarin, notwithstanding the low degree of mutual comprehensibility, consider themselves as members of one speech community. Speakers of Spanish in Spain and Argentina, despite the high degree of mutual intelligibility, do not believe that they belong to one common speech community. Members in any speech community, it must be noted, share not only a common variety, but also similar social norms, speaking patterns, perceptions and attitudes towards their dialectal and cultural norms. Thus, in order to characterize a 'speech community', one must account for the sociocultural and attitudinal factors in addition to linguistic factors.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many scholars revised and elaborated the notion of speech community. Like Lyons, Gumperz (1968) stressed that a 'shared body' of speech features must be used by all speakers. However, he believed that a speech community may involve more than one language variety. Labov's (1966) groundwork on New York speech was highly influential in that it shifted the focus from 'linguistic criteria' to shared *'social evaluations'* in the community:

The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage. (p. 120-121)

Labov (1966) states that all speakers in the community, regardless of their social backgrounds, share the same attitudes towards standard speech norms. In his seminal work of New York City speech, he found that lower working classes and higher social classes share the same positive social evaluation towards the use of post-vocalic [r] and, by extension, standard varieties. Nevertheless, Labov's *'Consensus Model'* has been criticized by many researchers. Milroy and Milroy (1998), whose framework was based on a *'Conflict Model*' of society, note that "in nation states in which there is consciousness of a standard language, vernacular maintenance can result in conflict

between two opposing norms." (p. 37). The use of the non-standard form *'h-less'*, Milroys assert, was positively evaluated by many working class speakers.