Basic Tenets of Social Dialectology (the Locus of Variation):

Sapir (1921) notes that "Everyone knows that language is variable" (p. 147). Variation, by its very nature, is socially embedded in various social contexts, across different individual speakers, communities of speakers and regions. Individual speakers make deliberate choices as to whether to use standard or non-standard variants, depending on the social context in which they interact with their interlocutors. Notwithstanding its pervasive nature, variability was considered as out of favor in earliest linguistic inquiries. Chomsky (1957) and his followers, for instance, focused on the *idealized* and *uniform* entities of language and dismissed *variable data* as "unstructured or random and therefore not worth studying" (Milroy & Milroy, 1998, p. 33). Scholars working within formal linguistics paradigm claimed that any linguistic variation is attributed to either 'linguistic mixture' or free fluctuation, and hence must be, at best, avoided in any linguistic enquiry. With the advent of variationist sociolinguistics in early 1960s, Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) introduced two central tenets that criticized the established linguistic descriptions and formed the cornerstones of modern sociolinguistic theory. *'Orderly Heterogeneity'*, it was asserted, posits that variation is systematic (or caused) and not random or unstructured. Rather, it is systematic and co-varied with various, interrelated, socio-demographic structures, thus a viable object of study.

Fieldworkers working within variationist sociolinguistic paradigm concur that linguistic differentiation patterns significantly with external factors. Some of these factors are 'natural', such as 'space' and 'time' axes, while others are 'human' factors, such as age, gender and class stratification (Milroy & Milroy, 1998). Interaction of language variation with the *natural* motives were examined by dialect geographers and traditional dialectologist ever since the second half of the nineteenth century. The distribution of linguistic variation across socioeconomic parameters has been an eye-catching area of research for many social dialectologists. A basic tenet in sociolinguistic variation theory is the Multiple Causes (Bayley, 2013, which postulates that variation is not constrained by one single external factor; rather, it is constrained by several factors simultaneously, ranging from global social categories (e.g., gender and ethnicity), migration and mobility, to social evaluations and personal stances (e.g., masculinity, toughness)