



Socio-Linguistics and language variation

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Abstract

We can describe linguistics as a systematic learning of the way in which a language works. The word 'Linguistics' has been derived from Latin lingua (tongue) and is tics (knowledge or science). Etymologically, therefore, linguistics is the scientific study of language. Language is a social- cultural- geographical phenomenon. There is a cavernous bond between language and society. It is in civilization that man acquires and uses language. When we study a language which is an abstraction of abstractions, a system of systems, we have to study its further abstractions such as dialects, sociolects, and idiolects. As *J.B. Pride* says, "*socio-linguistics is not simply an amalgam of linguistics and sociology (or indeed of linguistics and any other of the social sciences)*".

Keywords: 'linguistics', latin lingua (tongue), etymologically

Introduction: Language Variation

Socio- linguistics studies the varied linguistic insight of socio-cultural meanings which in logic are both familiar and unfamiliar and occurrence of everyday social interactions which are nevertheless qualified to picky cultures, societies, social groups, speech communities, languages, dialects, varieties, styles.

Language can vary, not only from one individual to the next, but also from one sub- section of speech- community to another. Thus language varies in geographical and social space. Variability in a social dimension is called social ectical. According to socio- linguistics, a language is code. The major variety that exist within the code are; Dialects, Registers, Idiolects, Dioglossia, Pidgins, Creole.

Code

A code is '*an arbitrary, pre- arranged set of signals*' (*Gleason, 1968: 374*). A language is merely one special variety of code. It is an abstract system which happens to be accepted arbitrarily in the community which uses it.

Dialect

A local, chronological or social diversity within a lone language is a dialect; it differs in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary from the standard language, which is in itself a socially favoured dialect. So a dialect is a variation of language sufficiently different enough to be considered a separate entity within a language but not different enough to be classed as a separate language. A variety of language used at a particular stage in its historical development, e.g. Prakrit and Pali in ancient India, may be called temporal dialects. It is customary to describe them as varieties of a language according to users. For examples Brijbhasha, Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Khari Boli is some of the dialects of Hindi. For the non- specialists the word 'dialect' denotes 'lesser' types of

language and they tend to think of it as 'language's poor country cousin'.

Isogloss

An isogloss is '*a line indicating the degree of linguistics change*' (*Gleason 1963: 398*). Isogloss is a representation of statistical probabilities, a graphic way of portraying a transition in speech characteristics from one area to another, a bundle of isoglosses may be interpreted as marking a zone of relatively great transition in speech. It is a term modelled on geographical terms like Isotherm and Isobar. It is contrast to another linguistic term Isograph, *i.e. 'any line on a linguistic map, indicating uniformity in the use of sounds, vocabulary, syntax, inflection'*.

Registers

According to users, registers are the varieties of language according to use. Registers are 'stylistic functional varieties of a dialect or language'. The focus is on the use and the subject-matter- the field of discourse, a jargon of the sports, films, law and so on the medium- mode of discourse, whether it is in the form of a written material, printed message, or recorded message. Registers also refer to the level of formality or the manner of discourse. A registers is also determined by the medium or mode of discourse. The main distinction is between speech and writing.

Each of these varieties will be a Register.

Register and style

We may talk of, for example religion, in a temple with the old folk or at a seminar with scholars, or in a restaurant with friends. It is difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between the two axes of Register and Style. The analysis of style is called Stylistics.

Idiolect

Idiolect is a mixture of words used by one person, including peculiarities of accent, grammar, vocabulary. A dialect is made of idiolects of a group of speakers in social or regional subdivisions of a speech community. Linguistics frequently examines own idiolect to create universal statements about language. So the Idiolect is “**an identifiable pattern of speech characteristics of an individual**”.

Diglossia

Within a community two or more languages may exist by side and the speakers may use each one for different purposes. This is known as Diglossia. One of the varieties may be used for formal occasions, for official communication, education, law, literature, while the other form may be used at home, with friends, when shopping and so on. The former is a non-standard variety and is called High variety, the latter a usually non- prestige variety is called the Low- variety.

Pidgin

A pidgin is a contract language, a mixture of elements from different natural languages. Its use is usually restricted to certain groups, e.g. traders and seamen. Pidgin is a compromise language, a sort of working solution to the communication problem between two divergent speech communities that come into contact for specific business purposes.

Creole

When a pidgin becomes a lingua franca, it is called a Creole. It has no such history or much prestige either. But on account of its wider application and first language status, it has to be distinguished from Pidgin.

Conclusion

Socio- linguistics is an attractive and difficult field of linguistics. It studies the ways in which language interacts with society. The success of socio- linguistics eventually depends upon clean linguistics. As *C.F. Hockett* says, “*each language defines a speech community: the whole set of people who communicate with each other, directly or indirectly, via the common language*”.

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