

THE THEORETICAL ISSUES ON HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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Abstract

This paper discusses the theoretical information about the History of Sociolinguistics focusing on the origin and development as a science.

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It is essential to find the answer to the questions: how Sociolinguistics is different from linguistics and when it began to appear in science. Linguistics makes us aware of the structure of language whereas sociolinguistics tells us how we interact with each other using that structure in everyday situations.[1] Dell Hymes “language in society” 1974 has drawn a distinction between the structural and functional approaches to the study of language. The structural approach, as the term indicates focuses on the structure of the language and the analysis of code is given the primary importance. On the other hand, the functional approach focuses on the functional aspect of language i.e. its use in society. The analysis of language use is given primary importance and the analysis of code is secondary. The linguist analyzes the language out of context whereas the sociolinguist analyzes the language as is used in social context. In brief we can say, linguistics is the study of language, primarily the structure of language. Sociolinguistics is the study of the use of language at different levels and for different purposes and different functions.

Sociolinguistics is defined as the study of language in relation to society whereas the sociology of language is defined as the study of society in relation to language. The goals of sociolinguistics and those of the sociology of language are different. Differentiates between sociolinguistics and the sociology of languages follows: sociolinguistics is “the study of language in society, whereas the sociology of language is “the study of society in relation to language”. The focus of the two fields is different. In sociolinguistics we study society i.e. the context of language use to know more about the language and in the sociology of language we study language use to know more about Society. A sociolinguist refrains from drawing conclusions about society and in the same way a Sociologist prefers to ignore any discoveries related to language .No doubt, there is a difference between sociolinguistics and the sociology of language but the main difference is basically that

of emphasis. It depends on whether the investigator is more interested in language or in society, and also on whether he has more skills in analyzing linguistic or social structures.

Not only linguists and sociolinguists are interested in the study of language in society but also researchers from a variety of other disciplines like anthropologists, psychologists, educators, language planners, etc. are interested in unfolding the mystery of language. For example, anthropologists have explored the kinship systems and some psychologists are concerned with the possible effects of linguistic structure on social and psychological behavior. Many educators are involved in language planning, development of language and teaching of the standard language. If we ask both linguists and sociolinguists to analyze a construction “Shut up”, their approach to analysis will be different. A linguist will say it is an imperative sentence in which we can drop a subject. On the other hand, a sociolinguist will say it is a sentence used as a directive forgiving a command and will give the norms of its usage in society. Activity Analyze the piece of conversation given below on linguistic and sociolinguistic grounds. What difference do you find in between them? It is thought about the relationship between the two speakers, their roles and the situation in which the conversation has taken place. As well. whether the speaker is making a request or fixing an appointment or making an invitation. This would be a sociolinguistic orientation to the analysis of the conversation, However if we analyze it from the linguistic point of view, we will be looking at the sentence types and structures used by the two speakers. When we talk of sociolinguistics, two terms catch our attention i.e. “Socio” or “pertaining to society” and “linguistics or “pertaining to language”. A layman can guess that sociolinguistics has something to do with language and society. Technically, sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that deals with the study of language in relation to society. Language and society are like hand and glove. They are inter related as language can't exist without society. Sociolinguistics can throw much light both on the nature of language and the nature of society.

The History of Sociolinguistics It is normally agreed by most linguists that scholarly linguistics was first practiced in ancient India, by Panini where issues of any living language is addressed [2] Mesthrie R. “ Introducing sociolinguistics” p. 2001, p.26. Accordingly, Panini is considered by some scholars as one of the pioneers of Sociolinguistics, by the fact that some of his rules tackled on stylistics [3] Kiparsky P. “ New perspectives on historical linguistics”- 201 p 18. Nevertheless other famous scientists point out that the history of modern Sociolinguistics can have rooted in the final half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth-century with the influence of two approaches of the western traditions, namely: The Historical linguistics in the nineteenth century and the Structuralists linguistics in the

twentieth century. With regard to Historical and comparative linguists, they focused their attention on studies of 'dialects'. Furthermore, the studies of this period gave rise to two subdivisions of Sociolinguistics: the study of rural dialects in Europe and contact between languages that originated new 'mixed languages [4] R. Mesthrie et al “Introducing sociolinguistics” 2009, p. 3. If in one hand Historical comparative linguists were concerned with studies on mixed languages and language contact and dialects, Structural linguists were on the other hand more concerned with the anthropological issues on language, more precisely, the description of American indigene languages that were on the verge of extinction in the early twentieth century. And there are a lot of views that are very different and questionable discussions among skillful scientists. As a result, their devotion in studying language in an anthropological angle foreshadowed the rise of a branch of sociolinguistics, that is, the ethnographical approach. Therefore, has it has been described in the preceding paragraphs that sociolinguistics issues has been addressed since the last two centuries. Nevertheless, in the studies of the nineteenth century there was no record of the word sociolinguistics been used. That is given due to the fact that the term sociolinguistics only appeared for the first time in the The History of Sociolinguistics initial half of the twentieth century. For example, the article “History of Sociolinguistics and Linguistics Theories” noted that 2the term sociolinguistics was first used in 1931 as a title of an article Sociolinguistics in India in Man in India by Thomas C. Hodson” Nonetheless, Mesthrie (2001) states that as often as not, one can see the term sociolinguistics firstly used independently in 1952 by Haver Currie, who tackled on some social issues from the linguistic research (p. 1). Hence, the half part of the twentieth century is considered as the crowning period for Sociolinguistics, owing to the fact that many scholars started to focus on language study from a social perspective. For example: support that point by claiming that: Significant works on Sociolinguistics appearing after this date include: Weinreich's influential Languages in Contact (a structural and social account of bilingualism) of 1953; Einar Haugen's two volume study of the social history of the Norwegian language in America on the dimensions of sty. Nevertheless, “Sociolinguistics as an established area of language study only dates to the 1960s” We have seen that the history of sociolinguistics could be briefly described basing on two mainly approacheLike Wittgenstein’s tools, our linguistic resources are what we supposedly deploy in order to achieve particular communicative outcomes and effects in episodes of linguistic interaction. The difficulty for a sociolinguistics eager to avoid reification and embrace indeterminacy is that the notion of linguistic resources, which has none of the metaphorical lustre of Wittgenstein’s toolbox, is absolutely dependent on a reified and abstract view of the linguistic sign because such signs must logically already be in existence prior to their use or else there is no coherent sense in which they can be conceived of as resources.

This allows such ‘resources’ to be envisaged as circulating and leading a life of their own beyond the control of the individuals who deploy them. Furthermore, it also requires that the linguistic sign have determinacy of form for if it did not there could be no question of individuals sharing or using the ‘same’ resources on different occasions. Yet sociolinguists have so far shown little appetite for addressing the vexed theoretical question of why it is that linguistic signs can somehow display indeterminacy of meaning whether denotational or indexical, yet remain resolutely determinate in respect of form. The great difficulty of course for the sociolinguistic researcher is that as soon as indeterminacy of form is conceded, s/he has no – or at least a very different type of – data with which to work. Devotees of sociolinguistics are especially likely to appreciate the two contributions by Alan Bell and Barbara Johnstone in Part 6. Editors of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* and *Language in Society* respectively, Bell and Johnstone each provide a reflective and at times critical commentary on the development of sociolinguistic theory as borne witness to in the pages of their journals. Both acknowledge the discipline’s crucial theoretical debts to thinkers such as Labov and Hymes, while at the same time drawing attention to the ever-increasing diversification of the field. Bell makes one especially pertinent point when he notes that sociolinguists do not raise the question “What is language?” often enough compared with the frequently debated “what is a language?” One might also add that before one can feasibly ask ‘what is language?’ one must first pose the even more foundational question ‘what is communication?’ since how one goes about answering that particular question will go a long way to determining the nature of one’s answers to all those subsequent ontological questions regarding language and languages. It is only by returning to these foundational meta theoretical questions and coming up with genuinely alternative answers that one will be properly justified in speaking of a paradigm shift in sociolinguistic theory.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, in addition to their unmatched organizational contributions to the development of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language, Charles Ferguson and Joshua Fishman have each staked out pioneering claims to major sectors of the study of language in its social context. How important are they to contemporary sociolinguistics? A citation search using Google Scholar shows that Fishman has many more hits than Ferguson, mainly for books (*Reversing Language Shift* tops the list; among his papers, a 2007 paper on Whorf is the most cited, with over 100 hits). Most of Ferguson’s hits are papers, starting with over 1000 for diglossia, followed by 260 for baby talk, 140 for foreigner talk, and 100 for politeness. Fishman’s topics and methods have perhaps produced more followers, in particular with the political relevance of language loyalty and loss. Many scholars working on these topics are in the field of education, while Ferguson’s followers are more strictly in the narrower

field of sociolinguistics. Additionally, the strength of Fishman’s following is shown in the large number of tributes in festschrifts and birthday celebratory conferences. Perhaps this is a mark of his longer publication list; it also reflects the fact that he has continued to develop his ideas and approach, while Ferguson’s strength was in innovative recognition of topics of sociolinguistic relevance. Obviously, there is no point in trying to award grades; each has made (and Fishman continues to make) major contributions to studies of language in society. Without their scholarship and leadership, the field would have been thinner and weaker. 1 . What is Sociolinguistics? When we talk of sociolinguistics, two terms catch our attention i.e. “Socio” or “pertaining to society” and “linguistics or “pertaining to language”. A layman can guess that sociolinguistics has something to do with language and society. Technically sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that deals with the study of language in relation to society. Language and society are like hand and glove. They are inter related as language can’t exist without society. Sociolinguistics can throw much light both on the nature of language and the nature of society. We talk in different styles in different social contexts. Let us take an example of Hari when he talks with his boss in the office. Hari : Good afternoon, sir Boss : There is a meeting at 7.00pm, I want you to be around .Hari : Yes sir, I will surely be here. This response reflects Hari’s awareness of the social factors which influence the choice of appropriate ways of speaking in different social contexts. Sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. Sociolinguistics, like other subjects, is partly theoretical and partly empirical. What we mean by that is we can’t just sit back and think about various aspects of language use. In other words, we can’t solely rely on our personal experiences and draw conclusions about the use of language in society. First, because the way we interpret our own experience might not be right since most of us are not consciously aware of the wide range of variations in speech we hearing our everyday lives. And second, personal experiences are a very limited source to generalize about language in society or different societies. We need to go out, explore, collect the data, analyze it, make interpretations and then reach to a conclusion. To be precise, sociolinguists study the relationship between language and society. They explore the social function of the language and the way it is used to convey the meaning. Sociolinguists explain why we speak differently in different social contexts. According to Fishman sociolinguists are interested in knowing “who speaks, which language to whom and when”. To elaborate what Fishman has said, it matters to sociolinguists; a) who the speaker is, what his role in society is; b) which language he/she is using, whether it is formal or informal, dialect or standard; c) Who the listener is, whether he/she is a boss, a peer or a subordinate, a father, a mother, a sibling, or a child; d) when people are speaking, what the situation is, whether it is outside the office or in the office, at home or outside the home, in a

meeting or at a party. Sociolinguistics brought us a lot of different findings which could be clue for most uncommon linguistic phenomena.

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