

# English Language Teaching in India: Sociolinguistic Approach

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## Abstract

English was introduced in India by the British about four centuries ago as an instrument of trade and commerce. Soon it began to be used as a tool of administration also. As the time passed, it became not only an integral part of the education system but also acquired a significant social role. Today even after 73 years of independence, it continues to be a languages of intellection and communication for meeting the specialized needs of education, business, commerce, law, politics, science and technology. In the absence of any Indian language enjoying the status of a common link language in the country, the social environment strongly supports the use of English. The constitutional provision, about English as an associate official language of India is recognition of the role of English in the country and represents the collective will of the nation. In continuing to accord a place of importance to English, we have accepted a reality and ensured a smooth and worked linguistic contact among our people and between our country and the world outside. It is well-known that English has served as a powerful instrument of thought and communication during the days of struggle for independence and also as an aid to support the upsurge for social and economic growth. After independence the importance of English did not diminish, despite sporadic attempts to decry it as a vestige of the British imperialism. Instead, the country responded to the changed situation in a mature way and evolved a correct perspective on the value of English. One can clearly observe that the attitude towards the role of English in our society has now more or less stabilized after the initial turmoil and there are signs of fresh and proper efforts to view it and to use it as a means of serving our national interests.

Where one can derive satisfaction from the present attitude towards the place of English in our society, there is no room for complacency so far as teaching is concerned. Even today English Language Teaching (ELT) appears to be in disarray, largely ineffective and irrelevant. In a developing country such as ours where the need of the hour is rapid social and economic growth and where there are too many heavy demands on the exiting meager resources, utmost economy in every sphere of activity is essential. No less important is the time factor. Unfortunately so far as ELT is concerned, there is hardly any conclusive evidence to show that we have been guided, to the extent desirable, by these important considerations. Despite efforts during the last 73 years, ELT is not yet marked by a spirit of dedicated professionalism.

Because of several political and socio-economic factors, we find a great diversity in our efforts to teach English at different levels and also a great divergence in the proficiency attained by different groups of learners. Even at the university level the teaching scenario does not present a clear picture of what we are doing and what we propose to do. There is no uniformity of approach of direction. If the purpose is clear, there is confusion about the path on which we should move. Sometimes we know in which direction to move but then the vision of destination is blurred. The study is required to improve the process of learning and teaching English Language in India.

**Keywords:** Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Multilingual society, Pluralistic society, Communicative Skill

## Introduction

It is true that the problem of ELT has engaged the attention of both the Indian and foreign scholars for a long time. Since 19<sup>th</sup> century language specialists have been trying to improve the quality of language teaching by referring to general principles and theories concerning how languages are learned, how the knowledge of language is represented and organized, and how language itself is structured.

The first models of teaching English in Independent India were based on structural approach (STAP), which was introduced in 1950s and continued to dominate in 1960s. However, in the wake of new developments in the areas of linguistics as applied to language teaching the efficacy of STAP was questioned and the attention was diverted to the importance of creativity in language. Under the impact of this new development the transformational generative approach (TGAP) was evolved and the existing syllabuses were revised by some institutions. As a result there was some improvement in the situation. But the experience soon revealed certain deficiencies inherent in this approach and there was an earnest search for a more relevant and purposeful alternative. In the beginning of 1970's a significant development in the area of 'language as communication' took place. A number of scholars (Winddowson 1978, Munby 1978, Brumfit and Johnson 1979, Littlewood 1981) published the results of their investigation. A new approach termed as functional approach (FAP) emerged and led to the designing of new syllabuses, and production of fresh teaching materials.

Viewed in the Indian context the question is whether this latest development fully takes into account the social and cultural factors that have exercised a deep impact on English, studies, etc. then there are powerful forces at work in favour of the recognition of a new variety of English termed by labels such as Indian English, Swadeshi English, Indish, etc. then there are related question such as the models of English to be presented to students, the use of the mother tongue (LI) in ELT and the problem of attaining harmony between a foreign language and an indigenous non-verbal code in oral interaction. The fact is that in our multilingual society, the use, development, and teaching /learning process of language in the educational context is riddled with complexities. This study, therefore addresses itself to the central issue of evolving a comprehensive package of ideas and concepts that would take into account the complexity of factors that characterize our heterogeneous, pluralistic society. It has been rightly observed that "sociolinguistic situation in India is marked by an extraordinary degree of linguistic diversity, which parallels the ethnic and religious pluralism of the society". (Kachru,1988).

Our purpose then in this study is to examine the existing approaches to English language teaching (ELT) and to suggest a new approach keeping in view the present-day needs and requirements of our society. In here study carried out in 1984, Benerji draws our attention to the inadequacy of English language courses to meet the demands of the kind of competence required for functioning effectively in the real-life situations in India. Parasher (1977) and Das (1977) in their studies have also shown the importance of the use of English by the educated Indians in formal domains such as education, government and employment. There is a mismatch between what is being done and what needs to be done Banerji (1984) has suggested a new approach to ELT syllabus design to meet the requirements mentioned above. But in order to realize the kinds of targets she has set, it is essential to come out with an effective course of action.

## Analysis

Obviously, in suggesting any such thing one has to draw upon the significant developments that have taken place in ELT and also critically review theoretical considerations that influence its teaching. It is because of this reason that we have devoted one chapter (2) for a detailed examination of sociolinguistic developments. We have then discussed in detail in chapter (4), chapter (5) contains our answer to the problem; we have suggested a new

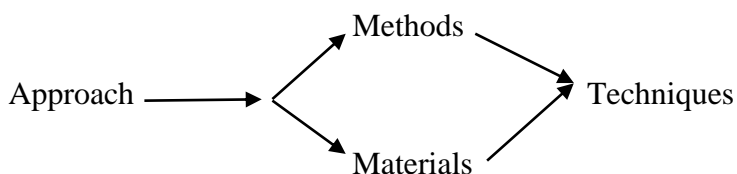
approach which we propose to call sociolinguistic approach (SAP). The study closes with chapter 6 which embodies the conclusion derived our analysis and investigation of the problem.

Here is would be appropriate to explicate what we mean by the term approach and to show how it is different from the terms method and techniques with which it is often confused. In this context it is relevant to refer Anthony (1963) who identified here levels of conceptualization and organization which he termed as approach, method and technique. He defines them as follows:

An approach is “a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning...it describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught.. method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural...A technique is implementational... what actually takes place in a classroom? It is A particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an Immediate objective Technique must be consistent with a method and therefore in harmony with an approach as well.” (Anthony 1963:63-67).

Thus we see that according to Anthony an approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about languages learning are specified; method is the level at which a theory is made practicable and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught and the order in which the content is to be presented; technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described. Anthony’s model serves as a useful way of distinguishing between different degrees of abstraction and specificity found in different language teaching degrees of abstraction and specificity found in different language teaching proposals. Strauss (1982) also makes an attempt to distinguish these three concepts but ultimately what he arrives at is merely a rephrasing of Anthony’s distinction.

It would then be appropriate to regard an approach as a sort of an **idea-bank** or a **power-house of ideas** and not a path or a destination. Viewed in this light, an approach merely generates action in a particular direction. The ideas provide a conceptual base, which suggests a syllabus that in turn determines the method and materials to be used for the realization of the goal suggested by the approach. The use of actual procedures in the classroom for this purpose is derived from method and materials. The interrelation of these concepts may be presented as follows:



## Scope

In this study we have confined our investigation to the determination of the first step in language teaching, namely, the specification of an underlying philosophy of English language teaching and learning process. We hope the results of the study would contribute towards the development of a unified theory for achieving a marked improvement in the quality of ELT in India.



## Growth of Sociolinguistics

During the last three decades there has been an increasing concern for the study of the social aspects of language and attempts have been made to integrate the views on language and society. This concern has led to the emergence of a new body of knowledge termed as **sociolinguistics**. Initially, it was considered merely to be a branch of linguistics but now it has acquired the status of an autonomous discipline. This development is significant inasmuch as it shows the amount of information gathered through numerous sociolinguistic studies all over the world and the insight that has been attained into the importance of the data collected through these studies.

### ORIGIN AND GROWTH

The interaction of language and society is the subject matter of an interdisciplinary field and it has become known in recent years as **Sociolinguistics**. The term **Sociolinguistics** appeared for the first time in the International Linguistic Bibliography in 1967. Even though the need for the analysis of language in its social context was felt by many authors, mainly linguists but also sociologists and psychologists as early the beginning of this century but the term sociolinguistics was coined by Haver C. Currie, a teacher of English at Houston University in Texas, in 1952. His intention was to encourage investigation into relation between speech, behavior and social status. Ten years later the terms Sociolinguistika and Socialnajalingvistika came into use in the USSR. It was first introduced among American linguistics by William Bright and Ramanujan in paper at the Eighth International Congress of Linguistics at Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1962 (published in 1964).

The growth of sociolinguistics took place mainly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This does not mean that the study of language in relation to society is an invention of the 1960s. on the contrary, there is a long tradition in the study of dialects and in the general study of the relation between word meaning and culture, both of which from part of sociolinguistics by our definition. To some extent, the work of linguists earlier in this century, and specific examples would include Sapir (1921), Malinowski (1923), Jespersen (1925), Firth (1937), Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1956) helped to pave the way for the emergence of this new field. These earlier works, however, hardly anticipated the sudden growth of sociolinguistics.

The reasons for the sudden explosion of interest were varied and interrelated. First, in the U.S.A. and Europe (Ammon, Dittmar and Mattheier 1987), educationalists and sociologists had shown concern about the relationship between language and society. For example, issues related to language and social class in Britain, language and race in the USA and language and immigration policies in West Germany had contributed for its further growth. In India, the growth in observed by an extraordinary degree of linguistic diversity which parallels the ethnic and religious pluralism of the society (Kachru, 1988).

Second, there was the growing interest in sociology itself, both in USA and Europe. Sociology as an academic discipline experienced a rapid development in the 1960s and early 1970s. The growing interest in the social problems of this discipline influenced the adjacent academic fields, of which linguistics was one. Thus, the growth of sociology legitimized the interests of linguists in socially important problems, such as language and social class, language and sex, language and race, language and immigration, and language and diverse linguistic groups.

Third in the 1960s, with the ascending of Chomskyan linguistics the dissatisfaction was increasing significantly among many linguists. Saussure's (1916) earlier distinction between langue and parole, Chomskyan's central dichotomy between competence and performance precipitated a strong reaction to the generativist orthodoxy of the day. As Lavandera puts it, "a sizeable number of linguists struck out on their own, as it were, and devoted themselves to building alternative conceptions of language, in which its social function was regarded as paramount". (Lavandera(1988) p.1). Soon linguists began to question the Chomskyan conception of linguistic

competence, and to posit alternative theoretical concepts. The most significant of which was Hymes model of **Communicative Competence**.

What are important to note is the widespread interest in sociolinguistics and the realization that it can throw fresh light both on the nature of language and on the nature of society. The work that was done earlier has been systematized and brought under the broad umbrella of this science. A number of scholars soon applied their minds to the in depth study of different aspects of sociolinguistics.

The publication of specialist academic journals in the field, namely, *Language in Society*, and the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, together with the large body of published work on the study of language and society for example Hertzner (1965); Bright (1966); Le Page (1964); Denison (1970); Fishman (1972s); Giglioli (1972); Pride and Holmes (1972); Labov (1972a); Bernstein (1972); Hymes (1974); and Trudgill (1974) brought about significant developments in the field. It would be appropriate here, to refer to some of these studies. As the discussion would reveal there is a slight overlap in their conceptualization of different dimensions of the subject. Each one however makes a significant contribution in the understanding of various aspects of sociolinguistics.

Hymes first described the analysis of language in its social context as the ethnography of speech (Gumperz and Hymes, 1964). He claims that sociolinguistics is the main area of interest..... would seem to be semantic description or sociolinguistics or both (Hymes 1964a: 11). The first conference actually on sociolinguistics under that name took place at the University of California in Los Angeles, in 1964. Later, a number of scholars worked on different aspects of sociolinguistics and published the results of their analysis.

Let us look at the contributions of some scholars if not all in this area. Gumperz (1964) works on verbal repertoire. Fishman's (1972a) contribution is on domains. Grimshaw (1966), Hymes (1967 a and b) and Fishman (1968 a, b) are concerned with a programmatic discussion of linguistic, anthropological and sociological contributions to sociolinguistics. Hymes (1974) makes a plea for an integrated field of research that goes beyond the discipline itself. Fisherman (1968b), Denison (1970) and Le page (1969) study the problems of multilingualism. Fishman aims to extend his interest in the sociology of language whereas Labov (1970b) extends his interest by linking linguistic analysis to social context. Labov (1966, 1970) discusses this in sociolinguistic structure.

In recent years, emphasis has been laid on the empirical work. Thus, there are empirical investigations into reading and speech in the works of Levins and Williams (1970). Gumperz and Hymes (1972) study the strategy of social communication. Hymes (1971) enquires into the Pidgin and Creole languages. Bernstein (1972) works on codes. Ervin-Tripp (1972) investigates on sociolinguistic rules. So far Indian sociolinguistics are concerned, they have been mainly preoccupied with the analysis and description of the process of Initialization of English in sociolinguistic terms.

As we indicated in the beginning the term sociolinguistics immediately suggests an interconnection between two separate and distinct disciplines namely linguistics and sociology. According to Crystal (1985) sociolinguistics is a branch of LINGUISTICS which studies all aspects of the relationship between LANGUAGE and SOCIETY. Many sociolinguistics might accept this interpretation as a starting point. Others recognize it as a discipline in itself and define as the study of language in its social context (Labov, 1972, a) or the study of language in its socio-cultural context (Lavandra, 1988). Some challenge the sub-ordination of sociolinguistics to Linguistics proper and argue for its recognition as a discipline in its own right (Ammon, Dittmar and Mattherier, 1987) In fact, since its origin, there has been a noticeable diversity related to the adequate definition of sociolinguistics terms and frequent debates about its status as a field of study. Some regard it as an independent discipline others as an interdisciplinary endeavour; view it as a part (or field or sub-field ) of general linguistics, while others perceive it

as central focus of all linguistics and argue, as Le Page does that in some senses, “all sociolinguistics is linguistics and all linguistics is sociolinguistics” (Trans., 1988).

Hymes (1974a) views sociolinguistics as a multidisciplinary field which includes not only sociology and linguistics, but also social anthropology, education, poetics, folklore, and psychology. Hymes (1974) has made an interesting observation that linking linguistics with the social sciences and in particular, anthropology has quite a long history. Terms such as ethnographic philological ethnology, linguistic anthropology, etc..., have been used right from the nineteenth century. Until world War-II these mixed terms were generally phrasal formations, either, coordinate-linguistics and anthropology; genitival –the sociology of language; or adjectival- anthropological linguistics. Slowly the compounds with linguistics as the second element have come into use. Hymes concludes that this usage signifies that it is linguistics and linguistic concepts and methods which have become central to the theme.

Since many disciplines’ interests converge into sociolinguistics, it seems reasonable to consider it as a multidisciplinary field. This raises an issue whether sociolinguistics has an independent status in linguistics or whether it is merely an eclectic amalgam of ideas and procedures from different disciplines. It is obvious that there should be common understanding among the specialists about a particular field. In simple terms we may say, that the description of language is the subject matter of linguistics, just as the description of human cultures constitutes the enterprises of anthropology. However, the question is whether sociolinguistics has reached such a level of definable autonomy. Let us briefly examine this issue.

Sociolinguistics has gained a great deal from sociological methods of research. Fishman promoted the use of the term Sociology of language (1969, 1971, 1972a, b, c etc.) which almost covers the entire field of sociolinguistics. He rightly points out:

“...the sociology of language focuses upon the entire gamut of topics related to the social organization of language behavior including not only language usage per se but also language attitudes and overt behavior toward language and towards language users.”(Fishman 1969, 45)

His studies comprise main issues such as survey work, language policies and language planning. In practice, the sociology of language has been typically associated with topics such as bilingualism, multilingualism, diglossia, verbal repertoire, code-switching, code-mixing, language maintenance, language surveys and sociolinguistics of society (Fasold 1984) and has produced in recent years a substantial body of literature (Fishman 1967; Cooper 1976; Fasold 1988 (a and b); and Spolsky 1988).

It is not surprising to note that sociology has a long standing connection between theory and empirical investigations. In linguistic descriptions, however, the intuitive evidence is used to justify the data. It is thus clear that an independent sociolinguistics cannot rely merely on methodological perspectives drawn solely from one of these disciplines. An independent sociolinguistics, to have a proper interdisciplinary perspective cannot be merely an additive it must be integrative. Hymes (1976) has repeatedly subscribed to an integrated theory of sociolinguistic description\* He aptly remarks:

“ It should be clear that a mechanical amalgamation of standard linguistics and standard sociology is not likely to suffice....Adding a speechless sociology to a sociology free linguistics can yield little better than postdoc attempts at correlation between accounts from which the heart of the relevant data will be missing” (Hymes 1974: 76).



It is thus clear that simple amalgamation of two disciplines namely sociology and linguistics cannot provide explanations which an integrated approach is capable of applying. A sociolinguistic theory goes beyond the bounds of these two disciplines and is thus able to provide an explanation for the generation of fresh data.

The discussion and debate about the interdisciplinary nature of sociolinguistics have continued up to the present day. Significantly, however, Grimshaw (1987) remarks that up to the 1970s if not to the present, the cross fertilization of sociology with linguistics has been far more noticeable in linguistics than in the field of sociology. By the late 1970s, moreover, the term sociology of language had come to be seen, especially in Britain, as referring to a sub-field of sociolinguistics. (Bolton 1992). It has been noticed that sociolinguistics was increasingly recognized as the super ordinate term to refer to the wide range of studies concerned with the relationship of language and society.

From the above discussion we can infer that the main focus of sociolinguistics is language in use. Linguistics differs from sociolinguistics in taking account only of the structure of language to the exclusion of the social contexts in which it is learned and used. Hence, it can be argued that language structure constitutes the subject matter of linguistics, whereas sociolinguistics deals with language use. The task of linguistics according to this view is to work out the rules of language, after which sociolinguistics may enter the scene and study any points at which these rules make contact with society; for example, alternative ways of expressing the same idea are chosen by different social groups.

At this stage it would be appropriate to discuss briefly Trudgill's (1978) a detailed taxonomic framework for describing the scope of sociolinguistics. It is shaped largely by the recognition of different objectives within the field of sociolinguistics. He suggests that it is possible to divide studies of language into three groups:

- (I) Those where the objectives are purely sociological or social-scientific;
- (II) Those where they are partly sociological and partly linguistic; and
- (III) Those where the objectives are wholly linguistic.

According to this classification, the first group of the studies comprises the work of that linguistics interested in the study of language and society. The main purpose of these studies is to make statements about society. This category would, and then include Bernstein's (1971) studies of codes.

The second group of studies includes the work of those concerned to make statements about both language and society. Thus, this group covers a wide range of sociolinguistics studies including discourse analysis, the ethnography of speaking, anthropological linguistics, the sociology of language, and the social psychology of language.

The third group of studies encompasses the work of linguistics whose objectives are to make statements about language and society chiefly to inform and illuminate areas of linguistic inquiry, such as linguistic change, linguistic variability and the structure of linguistic systems. Fishman also views sociolinguistics as a means of widening the contextual horizons of linguistics, beyond the phrase, beyond the sentence, beyond the utterance to the speech act, the speech event and the speech occasion. Hymes (1974) offers a different perspective on the scope of sociolinguistics. What he terms as goals of sociolinguistics is discussed briefly as follows:

- (i) The social as well as the linguistics: It means social problems involving language and use of language, that is, socially oriented work with practical goals.

- (ii) Socially realistic linguistics: It means the work concerned with socially oriented approaches to 'main-stream' linguistic issues such as linguistic rules and sound change etc. It recognizes dependence of the analysis of meaning and speech acts on social context.
- (iii) Socially constituted linguistics: This phrase according to Hymes (1974) "...is intended to express the view that social function gives form to the ways in which linguistic features are encountered in actual life". It aims at a theory of grammar.

A socially constituted linguistics is concerned with social as well as referential meaning and with language as part of communicative conduct and social action. Some of the themes that have emerged from this point of view are mentioned below:

- (i) Linguistic theory as a theory of language, entailing the organization of speech;
- (ii) Speech communities as organization of the ways of speaking;
- (iii) Competence as personal ability;
- (iv) Performance as an accomplishment;
- (v) Language as shaped by its users; and
- (vi) Speech variation as regulated in social life.

Thus "... the greatest challenge for sociolinguistic research is to develop methods, concepts and findings that will enable one ultimately to approach language from the linguistic sides not only as grammar, but also as language organized in use; from the social side, to approach social structure, cultural patterns, values and the like, terms of their realization in verbal and symbolic action" (Hymes, 1972).

## DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECTS

Let us now look more closely at what sociolinguistics is. As the term itself indicates its two central concerns are language and society. As we started earlier, sociolinguistics investigates and theorizes on the relationship between language and society. The study of this relationship has remained neglected for a long time. It was Firth who used the term sociological linguistics in 1935 and discussed the study of language in a social perspective. For some time sociologists, anthropologists and social psychological interested in speech as an indicator of certain social, psychological or anthropological factors continued to look at language from their point of view. That is why to some extent most of the efforts in anthropology, sociology, social psychology and linguistics converge in sociolinguistics. In fact, we are all familiar with the complex links between language and society. It is common knowledge that people speak according to their background. It is possible to relate a person's speech to his place of origin or education or social group or generation or even occupation, among others and the tone of conversation indicates the intimacy of interlocutors.

We judge people not only on the basis of what they say but how they articulate. Although this popular knowledge about language and its speakers is really a collection of stereotypic associations which may be more



fiction than fact, we apply it constantly in our daily encounter. Such knowledge of linguistic behavior was however, long considered unworthy of study by linguists and teachers of non-native languages. The reason seems to have been the result of exaggerated emphasis for the written form of language on the one hand, and an over-narrow interest in the historic development of language on the other. Then in the middle of the 1960s, as we have already discussed earlier in this Chapter, there was new discovery and new awareness for the inextricable links between language and social behavior. Till then, people were interested in establishing language as an absolutely independent entity.

As we know, linguistics has restricted its focus upon the formal aspects of language. It has treated each language as a coherent, autonomous and self-sufficient system. Unfortunately it did not realize the problems of multilingual societies such as language interference, identifying speech functions, switching rules and attitudes towards language diversity.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in understanding the relation of linguistic forms to social meaning. With the exception of dialectologists and anthropologists, in fact, linguistics has never really kept in very close contact with language as it is actually used. The separation of *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech) made by Ferdinand de Saussure has been well preserved by scholars. Saussure thought of *langue* as the *langue* shared by all its speakers, was considered so general that linguists could speculate about it from limited source of speech (even their own) while *parole*, the individual dimension was considered so variable that it would take large scale surveys to measure.

According to Chomsky (1965), linguistic theory is primarily concerned with an ideal native speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community. This attack on the formal features of an idealized *langue* had been extremely powerful in the analysis of language. The formal linguistic assumption that linguistic descriptions and theory should investigate homogeneous language structure has come under serious attack during the last three decades. Scholars realized that it was not possible to account for linguistic realities with speakers who were not ideal and speech communities which were not homogeneous. More and more linguists have begun to realize that in order to understand human communication, an investigation of only formal and structural features is not sufficient. Attention must therefore be paid to extra-lingual factors like context of situation, addresser - addressee relationship, role of participants, function of speech events, kind of discourse, topic of discourse, socio-cultural features and so on. The related recent developments in this area have been noticed in sociolinguistics.

The fact that linguists have been primarily concerned with the homogeneous form of language does not mean that there has been no awareness of linguistic diversity and variable linguistic behaviour. The attempts of generative semanticists and socio-linguists to view language in its social context have been in line with the British school of linguists (Firth 1957, Halliday et al. 1964).

Firth derived his idea of the content of situation from Malinowski (1923). Halliday's remark that, "the linguists' interests have always extended the language as a social behaviour applies to linguists and sociolinguists".(1973:49). Thus the tradition of looking at language as a social phenomenon has been there. But it is in recent past that there has been a remarkable shift in emphasis from the form of language to its functioning, from homogeneity to heterogeneity, from language bereft of context to language in sociocultural context. Labov has recently observed that despite the historical separation of language and social meaning, there has been a "noticeable movement away from the extreme asocial position in theoretical work towards a view of linguistic structure and evolution"(1971:43) which includes every day speech in a community. It is generally felt that the motivating factors for this growing approach of language form and social meaning are:

- (i) the desire to find a sound empirical base for linguistic theory;

- (ii) the conviction that social factors influencing language are legitimate topics for linguistic investigation;
- (iii) the linguistic analysis of language of multilingual societies; and
- (iv) the response to the growing feeling that such linguistic knowledge activity.

It is interesting to note that linguistics from Saussure to Chomsky emphasized some of these factors in the abstract form of leaving out an important aspect that is a study of infinite varieties of language in use. As against Saussure's option for the study of langue and Chomsky's for the study of competence as the subject of linguistics, the sociolinguistics made the opposite choice. For sociolinguistics the variability of parole or performance that constitutes the substance of linguistics. Labov rightly says: "It seems natural enough that the basic data for any form of general linguistics would be language as it is used by native speakers communicating with each other in everyday life".(1971:153)

Some of the social aspects of sociolinguistics have been identified as follows:

- (i) the variation of speech in different social settings and various conventions we follow to organize our speech etc;
- (ii) individual's communicative activity in its social setting;
- (iii) speech functions;
- (iv) linguistic diversity;
- (v) the intricate patterns of language use in multilingual societies; and
- (vi) the use of English as a non-native and L2 variety in multilingual and plural-cultural societies.

The variation of speech in different social setting and the various conventions we follow to organize our speech together constitute one of the aspects of sociolinguistics. Recently, several thorough and perspective studies on language use in particular situations or of a particular speech act have been made for example, classroom discourse (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975); medical diagnostic interviews (Candlin, Bruton and Leather 1976); a therapeutic psychiatric session (Labov and Fanshel 1977) and analyses of the speech act of explanation (Weinstock 1980). Such studies reveal the extraordinary complexity of ordinary language use in that utterances fulfill several functions simultaneously. In fact, many conversational and interactional structures have been found to exist as part of sociolinguistics for instance, telling joke, narrating stories, participating in the classroom talk/discussions between students and teacher, establishing and maintaining social relations, seeking and giving information, learning or teaching how to do or make something, expressing one's reactions, talking one's way out of trouble, sharing leisure activities, conversing over the telephone, entertaining others, displaying one's achievements, acting out social roles, discussing ideas and opinions, playing with language and so on. It is generally believed that the social reality cannot be interpreted by statistical table but is actually constructed in the process of interaction. The study of myths, folktales, riddles and rituals with reference to the society in which they are produced also form a part of sociolinguistic studies. It is, thus clear that the language in use is the main focus of sociolinguistics.

Conclusion

The study of the individual's communicative activity in its social setting which is referred to as ethnography of speaking, or more widely as ethnography of communication (Sherzer, 1977) is another aspect of sociolinguistics. This aspect of sociolinguistics extends the area of linguistics beyond the study of formal properties of communication. Therefore, in the speech act, we can notice less emphasis on the formal properties of language and on the mental properties of language use (psycholinguistics), and more stress on the interpersonal functions of speech acts and on the relationship between linguistic form and social meaning. The act of communication is therefore seen not as basically an exchange of linguistic messages, but rather as a socially meaningful episode in which the use of language, social rules and functions and social settings play a prominent role. Thus, in a given situation, it is the sequence of interpersonal events that provides the context for the given message.

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