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SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN RELATION TO NATIONAL AND
GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGINS

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ABSTRACT

Sociolinguistics is a term that refers to the study of the relationship between language and society, and how language is used in multilingual speech communities. Sociolinguistics assumes language as a component, uniformly presented in the form of semantics all over the world. However, there are various differences in the use of language which can be observed on the basis of nation or state. These variations in English language or other languages are subject to interesting research. The standard of any language is marked by its pronunciation, or grammar. The standard language is chosen because it is commonly the official kind, and in case of English, it is an idealized version. This concept discusses the way sociolinguistics deals with the social function of a language and in doing so it shows the multiple meanings of language use. The use of language symbolically represents fundamental dimensions of social behaviour and human interactions.

Language, therefore, reflects a wide range of human behaviour both at the interpersonal and inter-group levels. It is being viewed and studied from different perspectives and the frontiers of the subject, therefore, are continuously and steadily moving forward. In plural societies today, socio-cultural convergence leading to linguistic convergence is a common phenomenon. Through various social and professional activities, the speakers of one linguistic group often acquire some amount of knowledge on the languages of other groups that are active in the social or professional circles. This acquisition leads to the creation of a linguistic repertoire in the minds of the individuals which they use in various situations as required. The new variety of English at the National level and Geographical level have emerged as a language of prestige and power, and is increasingly being used across most domains of life in India by many highly proficient speakers.

India is thus one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. However, the Indian government has given official status to only 22 regional languages in the 8th schedule. Hindi is the official language of the Union, but it shares this status with the language of the British colonizers, English, rather than with another indigenous language.

There are various ways by which people express themselves. This could be determined by the environment or the immediacy of such communication within a given time-frame. However, there are acceptable informal linguistic priorities available to speakers of a language within a given geographical entity in order to pass information at informal levels and relationships. Sociolinguistics investigates the way in which language changes, depending on the region of the country it is used in. To describe the variety of language that differs in

grammar, lexis and pronunciation from others, Moreover, each member of community has a unique way of speaking due to the life experience, education, age and aspiration.

Therefore, this research paper has focused on national and geographical context which is one of the parameters of sociolinguistics impression for English Language. Sociolinguistics deals with the social function of a language and in doing so it shows the multiple meanings of language use. In this paper, first the researcher has identified the various factors which influence national origin of sociolinguistics, English establishment in India and finally found that "English is free from any undesirable (e.g. ethnic or religious) connotations native languages may have. The pros of using English have wiped away the fact that it originally was the colonizers'."

Introduction

Sociolinguistics is a discipline that yokes sociology with linguistics. It is a branch of sociology and as a concept it is concerned with how language use is a determinant of a given society's linguistic requirements. Every society has linguistic codes acceptable for communication and interaction. Sociolinguistics show how groups in a given society are separated by certain social variables like ethnicity, religion, status, gender, level of education, age, etc. and how adherence to these variables is used to categorize individuals in social class or socio-economic classes. The socio-cultural study of language is a modern linguistic paradigm because the modern linguists acknowledged and accepted that language by its nature is totally a social phenomenon. It is a developing branch of linguistics and sociology, which investigates the individual and social variation of language. Just as regional variation of language can give a lot of information about the place the speaker is from, social variation tells about the roles performed by a given speaker within one community, or country. It is also a branch of sociology in that it reveals the relationship between language use and the social basis for such use. Sociolinguistics differs from sociology of language, in that the focus of sociolinguistics is the effect of the society on the language, while the latter's focus is on the language's effect on the society. Sociolinguistics is a practical, scientific discipline which researches into the language that is actually used, either by native speakers or foreigners, in order to formulate theories about language change. There are numerous factors influencing the way people speak which would be investigated by Nationality Differences, Geographic Origin Differences, Ethnicity Differences, Occupation Differences, Class Differences, Age Groups Differences and Gender Differences.

Sociolinguistics is a term that refers to the study of the relationship between language and society, and how language is used in multilingual speech communities. Sociolinguists are interested in explaining why people speak differently in different social contexts. And the effect of social factors such as (social distance, social status, age, gender, class) on language varieties (dialects, registers, genres, etc), and they are concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the way they are used to convey social meanings. When a language is spoken in different countries, linguists speak varieties of that language, or national dialects; e.g., American English, British English, Canadian English, Australian English, Jamaican English; or Spain's (or Peninsular) Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Venezuelan Spanish, and so on. Generally, the different varieties of a language differ from one another mainly in matters of pronunciation and vocabulary; differences in morphology and syntax seem to be minor. Generally, within a country, a language varies in different ways and for different reasons. The variety of a language spoken by the residents of a particular geographic area is usually referred to as a regional dialect. There are marked differences between the use of a given language by its native speakers and other ethnic groups. This brings in one of the major reasons for the varieties of a particular language. There would be some differences in pronunciation between the speakers in regard to geographical region from which the speaker comes or belongs to.

Sociolinguists believed that language is uniformly exists in form of semantics all over the world. However, there are various differences in the use of language which can be observed on the basis of country or even state. These variations in English language or other languages are the subject to research. The standard of any language is marked by its pronunciation, or grammar. It is believed that every person has his or her own accent to present their views reflecting the characteristics of community, caste or creed. Accent is often confused with the term dialect which denotes aspects of pronunciation together with words and syntax slightly changed from the standard variety. There are various dialects of a particular language with diverse grammar

rules and vocabulary. Furthermore, one language user can speak two different dialects, or varieties of one language. In countries like China or Malta, there are separate forms of language used on everyday basis and on special occasions. Under, the linguistic condition, when one variety of language is considered more prestigious and one more vernacular, but both are in use depending on situation. There are some other factors influencing language alteration across from regional variations of a language within the boundaries of a country or speech community.

In certain areas of the country, English has been identified as a lexical, and way to variety of languages. In the past era English for Indian people was only a pidgin as they used to share a common language which is a combination of two or more than two languages for the purpose of trading. In sociolinguistics, it can be shown that speakers change the forms of language they use in quite precisely describable social circumstances. In every aspect of human activities, there are varieties of languages that are applied in that setting. Every social situation has a linguistic bias suitable for it. Speakers might switch from a 'high' form of their language to a 'low' form as depending on the social or National and geographical or both situations.

India is thus one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. However, the Indian government has given official status to only 22 regional languages in the 8th schedule. Hindi is the official language of the Union, but it shares this status with the language of the British colonizers, English, rather than with another indigenous language. By the time India became independent in 1947, English had already consolidated its position in primary school and higher education. English was introduced in India in the early 1600s by Christian missionaries. English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration with the Minute of 1835 by T. B. Macaulay. In a multilingual and multicultural country like India, the position of English is determined by various social, political, and cultural considerations. During British colonization, English was used as a tool of power to cultivate a group of people who identified with the cultural and other norms of the political elite. English was considered a tool of civilization.

Ferdinand de Saussure in his work *The Course in General Linguistics* (1916) stated that 'language and society are inseparable from each other'. Further, he stated that language is primarily a "social activity" and "language is socialized at every level, from the production of phonemes to the interpretation of complex meaning". Researchers and Scholars thereafter have carried out a number of research works on language in relation to society and have brought to light interesting socio-cultural elements underlying language use. According to K.Verma and Nagarajan (2013), "Language is essentially a social phenomenon since language lives in the minds and tongues of its users". Language, therefore, reflects a wide range of human behavior both at the interpersonal and inter-group levels.

Factors Influencing National Origin of Sociolinguistics

Economic Status: This group refers to the language speakers who have relatively low economic status.

Economic Changes: This factor is greatly affected by modernization, industrialization and urbanization.

Social Status: This is when a majority language is considered as a language of high status or prestigious language which is considered to have high social status.

Socio-Historical Status: When speakers are inspired to struggle for their common interests as members of an Ethno linguistic group, as group members in the past did.

Language Status: Seeking for the use of a language with international communication; especially in a multilingual community.

Establishment of English Language in India

English language was introduced in India in the early 1600s by Christian missionaries. English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration with the Minutes of 1835 by T.B. Macaulay. According to the Minutes, a class of people were to be formed; "a class who may be interpreters between the British and the millions whom they govern, a class of persons, Indians in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect (Kachru, 1983)." The colonial strategy was to use English education as a means to strengthen British political authority in the country.

People who knew English were given jobs, there by compelling Indians to pursue English education. English became the lingua franca of the educated people in India. English gradually became the language of government, education, and advancement; in sum, "a symbol of imperial rule and of self-improvement

(McCrum et al., 1988).” After independence from the British in 1947, it was considered important to have an indigenous Indian language as the official language of India for maintaining the linguistic unity of the nation: “Hindi seemed most qualified (to serve as a national language), since it had more native speakers than any other Indian language and was already widely used in interethnic communications.

Before independence, English was the language of the elite society and the administration. The first universities were established in India in 1857 in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. English provided a medium for understanding technological and scientific development. Ultimately, the legal system, the national media and important professions were conducted in English. By the 1920s, English had become the language of political discourse, intra-national administration, and law. It is the language associated with liberal thinking. Since independence in 1947, English has penetrated even deeper into Indian society (Kachru, 1986). Even though English has a high index of communicability in India, Fasold (1984) suggested that English lacks *symbolic power* because it has not been declared as a national language; it is just an associate official language. Fasold acknowledged that other multilingual countries like Malaysia and Indonesia adopted, standardized, and developed a non-indigenous language as their lingua franca, and then promoted the lingua franca to serve as a national language. According to Fasold, these languages were standardized and developed as national languages because there was no obvious indigenous language that could be used. Fasold did not find this to be the case of English in India since Hindi is spoken by many people than any other language in India and has cultural attributes that English does not have. However, Kachru stressed the importance of speakers’ attitudes when determining the (symbolic) power of a language: what one thinks the language will do for the person and what others think of a person when one uses the language. Similarly, Bourdieu (1991) argued that symbolic power rests on social recognition. Unification and codification of a language is an important way of achieving recognition because these lead to the use of a language as a common language. In so far as this affects access to economic and social power, use of a language provides its speakers with linguistic capital. But linguistic capital is not restricted to economic and social prestige, it also provides cultural power. The more a language is used, the more linguistic capital will be available for its holders to get access to cultural power, and thus to symbolic power. Thus, for Kachru and Bourdieu, it is the usefulness and the prestige of a language that provides it with symbolic power.

In the last three decades, Indian English has been established as a language of national affairs; similar in status and function as, for example, Bahasa Indonesia, which is the language of education, communication, transaction, and trade in Indonesia. Like the lingua franca of Indonesia, Indian English is now also used in the development of national culture, science, technology, and mass media.

Geographical Origins

There are various ways by which people express themselves. This could be determined by the environment or the immediacy of such communication within a given time-frame. However, there are acceptable informal linguistic priorities available to speakers of a language within a given geographical entity in order to pass information at informal levels and relationships. Sociolinguistics investigates the way in which language changes, depending on the region of the country it is used in. To describe a variety of language that differs in grammar, lexis and pronunciation from others, Moreover, each member of community has a unique way of speaking due to the life experience, education, age and aspiration. Regional variation is less discussed in second language situations since the focus of variation is typically on Language rather than on geography. Even so, Pingali (2009) described IE accents as regional in nature, and classifies them on the basis of the geographical regions and further regions within them. Corpus studies on particular features (light verb construction, complementation) support the idea of regional varieties. Although these studies find over all similarities between different varieties of English on the Indian sub-continent (i.e., between IE, Pakistani English, Bangladeshi English and Sri Lankan English; Hoffman et al., 2011; Nam et al., 2013), subtle differences also exist. For instance, the light verb construction with an indefinite article (e.g. *take a walk, to have a chat*) is very frequent in IE compared to other English usage. Thus, even though the regional varieties in South Asia all originated at more or less the same time and from British colonization, they seem to have taken on subtly different characteristics in different countries. Of course, the indigenous languages in different regions across South Asia also differ. It is therefore difficult to know whether the regional differences in South Asian English

and in IE are attributable to the same socio-cultural factors that drive regional variation in the monolingual situation.

There are various ways by which people express themselves. This could be determined by the environment or the immediacy of such communication within a given time-frame. However, there are acceptable informal linguistic priorities available to speakers of a language within a given geographical entity in order to pass information at informal levels and relationships. A slight differences in pronunciation between speakers that point at the geographical region which the speaker comes from. Sociolinguistics investigates the way in which language changes, depending on the region of the country it is used in. To describe a variety of language that differs in grammar, lexis and pronunciation from others, Moreover, each member of community has a unique way of speaking due to the life experience, education, age and aspiration.

Attitudes in the Context of Geographical Region towards Socio-linguistics

The term 'social characteristics' means the function of the social variables in a society, which can be isolated to correlate with linguistic characteristics based on region or area. These socio-linguistic characteristics are functioning under four variables: religion, caste, age and education and variations in these factors vary from place to place. Social acculturation ranges from inter to intra cultural territories. In the intra-acculturation process, the possibilities for the diffusion of cultures are comparatively high. The spoken varieties of Tamil have large amount of Sanskrit and English forms which are due to the Tamil people's acculturation with Aryan and European cultures respectively. Tamil language, a clear cut case of diglossic situation has two functional varieties that is, spoken and literary. The margins of these varieties are flexible, which lead to a fluent interflow of materials from each other.

The study of attitudes (socio-linguistics) of an individual as well as group has more significance in many socio-linguistic studies. Following are some of the important features among them:

- I. Attitude studies help in social control. Wherever a controlled or planned social development is aimed at, the knowledge of the attitude of the persons belonging to a particular society is extremely an essential procedure. Most of the social changes are only voluntary in nature and no amount of legal or statutory measure can make people behave in a particular way. For instance, a 'national or regional language planning' will be successful only when it turns towards the appreciable attitudes of the concerned public.
- II. Attitude study helps in the formulation of linguistic groups. It is necessary for any socio-linguistics to classify the people according to their characteristics.

This study has found that a speaker belongs to an 'area' (region), their speech varies from place to place. The variation may be in terms of just a few items or at the other extreme almost all the items. It is certain that the variations are in terms of only a few features e.g. some lexical items, bound morphemes. A speaker belongs to a family which in turn belongs to a 'group' socially definable. This socially definable group may be a class or caste. In terms of the label a speaker belongs to the particular group. The use of an appropriate language is viewed as a demonstration of socialization achieved in certain forms of behavior depending on the national and geographical location. Language is one of the systems of behavior in its own right and is also a tool to acquire other systems of behaviors in different regions

Conclusion

Overall, the findings suggest that, among highly proficient speakers of Indian English, variation in pronunciation is socially conditioned, suggesting that IE has entered the differentiation phase of Schneider's (2003) dynamic model of English evolution. Among the speakers in this experiment, IE tracks personal expression even while allowing for communication across regional, ethnic and other social boundaries. Thus IE is truly an Indian language; one that people can relate to and call their own even while it is also used as a lingua franca without any loaded aspect of ethnic group. Due to globalization and the importance of English in the global market, IE is becoming more important to Indians than any of the other indigenous languages of India. Thus it might not be farfetched to say that IE will soon acquire the status of (national) language that unifies the country.

But due to the enormous linguistic and ethnic diversity of India, India has problems choosing a national language. The biggest problem has been that there is no single indigenous language that a large

majority of the citizens accept as a symbol of national identity due to jealousies between groups. It is for this reason that Hindi, an indigenous language, is questioned in its status as national language. As an ethnic and regional language, the use of Hindi as a national language is perceived by a significant portion of the population an imposition of one group over the others. Any attempts to enforce the use of one indigenous national language throughout India might lead to greater state autonomy or division of a country that readily divides along ethnic/regional and social/economic lines. Recall that Indian independence cost the division of Indian subcontinent into present day India and Pakistan, based on religion. This division is fierce and symptomatic of the strong differences in social identities that occur throughout India. Because of the constant threat of division, India needs a language that is neutral with respect to ethnic and regional identities and so could act as uniting power. Many think English can be that one language, for example, Kachru (1986), stresses the neutrality of English: "English is free from any undesirable (e.g. ethnic or religious) connotations native languages may have. The pros of using English have wiped away the fact that it originally was the colonizers'."

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