



## CRITICAL REVIEW OVER SOCIOLINGUISTICS: AN APPROACH TO STUDY VARIETIES OF LANGUAGE

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### Abstract

Through this paper, the researcher makes an effort to learn diverse languages and their patterns by the assist of an important branch of linguistics which is sociolinguistics. Language learners have a number of problems regarding language variation and definitely we have no clear idea rather an unconstructive idea grown up in the mind of learners. Sociolinguists attempt to solve the difficulties by learning language by dint of individual linguistic items of particular speakers. Having acute problems about the types of language variation we have to be technical to solve the quandary by following both analytical and theoretical concept. Unquestionably Sociolinguistics is the study of the relation between language and society and it is the reciprocal understanding between the uses of language and the social structures by which the user of language live. From the first perception of Hudson, we come to know that sociolinguistics informs and stimulates the neophyte to afford a hypothetical outline which is connected to the theory of language structure or so-called theoretical linguistics. It is helpful for those who are interested to see how the relations of language to society appear to one whose training and research has been almost exclusively in structural linguistics. At the same time, it is an enterprise to pick out many contributions that a sociolinguistic standpoint can make to the study of language. Concerning the study of language from the point of view of teaching and research, sociolinguistics has become recognized sources of learning varied languages. Language learners often awfully confuse about variety and difficulty create among the learners that what is variety? The answer is simple; it would be any kind of languages as for example dialect, registers, standard language, isogloss, social dialects, diglossia, pidgins as well as creoles.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistics, language variation, dialects & register, diglossia, mixture of varieties.

### Introduction

The enlargement of sociolinguistics has taken place since the late 1960s and there is no way "to imply 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 general study of the relations between word-meaning and culture both on the nature of language and on the nature of society" (Hudson: p.1). Lexically, the

definition of Sociolinguistics is the study of the way language is affected by differences in social class, region, sex etc. Hudson Defines Sociolinguistics as "It is a study of language in relation to society" (Hudson, 1980). In further reading on Sociolinguistics Holmes verbalizes that Sociolinguists study the relationship between language and society and they are concerned in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts, and they are anxious with identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. Examining the way people use language in different social contexts afford a plenty of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community, and the way people convey and construct aspects of their social identity through their language (Holmes, 2012). On the other hand, Literally, Language is the system of communication in speech and writing which is used by people of a particular country or area. Language is the system of communication and it cannot be learned overnight it has a minimum set of rules to reach the highest level of learning different languages. After reading various articles and books it is very obvious that sociolinguistics is the study of sociology and linguistics. In addition, Wardhough beyond doubt gives us superb contends: as he said:

"The Sociolinguistics will be concerned with investigating the relationship between language and society with the goal of better understanding of the structure of language and of how language function in communication" (1986, p.12).

In that case, sociolinguistics plays a vital role to learn varieties of language by going through the miscellaneous means such as speech communities, language, dialect, standard language, isogloss, social dialects, registers, diglossia, and mixture of varieties.

### **Literature Review**

To develop this hypothesis, researcher follows a number of primary and secondary data along with the study from varied books of linguistics in Honors and Masters level syllabus. As a supportive materials for the development of research we literally follow some fundamental books as for example: *Sociolinguistics: R.A.Hudson; Cambridge*

*University Press (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Sociolinguistics: Bernard Spolsky; Oxford University Press, & Janet Holmes: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (4th edition).* In order to attain further data, the researcher also has skimmed through various articles, websites, along with e-books to justify how sociolinguistics can be an approach to study varieties of language.

### **Research Methodology**

To meet the cardinal needs of the study both the primary and secondary data have been collected. Here the researcher chooses the title *Sociolinguistics: An Approach to Study Varieties of Language* as his research object. Based on the analysis of Sociolinguistics, ample critical essays and scrutiny was available in the form of books and in many literary journals which are very helpful as a supporting material for further study regarding the research. Various books and articles are composed by a number of writers, researchers, teachers and students. Moreover, the different linguistics correlated websites of internet are also helpful in this regard. The researcher applies qualitative research to collect data until the researcher reaches a point of data saturation. The technique of data collection of the researcher used in this paper is library research by collecting, selecting and paraphrasing both of primary and secondary data sources compatible with the issue of this paper.

### **Sociolinguistics and its inauguration**

The designation, 'Sociolinguistics' came to the limelight by the hand of Thomas Callan Hodson in 1939 through his articles "*Sociolinguistics in India*" that was published in *Man in India*. So it is clear to us that the very "linguists of India and Japanese studied the social aspects of language in 1930s. In 1900s a Swiss linguist Louis Gauchat cultivates knowledge on sociolinguistics but none can give much attention on him. It is the study of the sociological aspects of language. It is the evocative study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used, and society's effect on language. Though linguistics is an aged topic but sociolinguistics has immense opportunity to conduct several fields of languages that actually need for a

human being to communicate with a number of speech communities in such way whether we can be able to achieve varied format of language as for instance- it may be spoken, written, drawn, signed as well as printed. Day by day it becomes a fashionable movement since 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century and covers linguistics, psychology and anthropology. Even academic, scholar, researcher, and student get huge curiosity to do infinite thesis on it. However, the basic task of this research paper to substantiate how sociolinguistics can be an approach to study varieties of language. So let's launch an effective discussion to reach the ultimate goal of this research article.

### **Discussion**

There is no doubt that sociolinguistics can make the way to the language learners who have immense thrust for obtaining knowledge from a variety of languages. As we come to know that "sociolinguistics is the field that studies the relation between language and society, among the uses of language and the social structures in which the users of language live. It is a field of study which assumes that human culture is made up of many related patterns and behaviours, some of which are linguistic" (Spolsky: p.3). It is seen that sociolinguistics can be consider "partially practical and somewhat hypothetical and even partly a matter of depart and amassing bodies of fact and partly of sitting back and thinking" (Hudson, 1980). and we see the 'armchair' approach to sociolinguistics can be "fairly creative, whether it is based on facts collected in a systematic way as part of research or simply on one's own experience" (Hudson, 1980). As it is seen in chapter two Hudson talked about varieties of languages. He mentions, if one thinks of language as a phenomenon including all the languages of the world, the term 'Variety of Language' can be used to refer to different manifestations of it. At the same time if somebody thinks about music as a general phenomenon and then it obviously focuses on different varieties of music. What makes one variety of language different from another in the linguistics items that it includes? So we may define a variety of language as a combination of linguistic objects with similar social distribution. So from this perspective, this definition

certainly let us to entitle any of the following 'varieties of language as for example "English, French, London English, the English of football commentaries and the language or languages used by a particular persons" (2.1.3:p.22-23). The linguistic items can also be called lexical items basically sets of such items of which they have no constraint on the relations among varieties still they can partly cover one variety may include another. However, it should be a perfect time to disclose linguistic items to arrive the destination so that it can be established that sociolinguistics can be an approach to study a variety of language.

Sociolinguists believe that 'Speech Communities' is the most vital essence to study different languages which is allied to varieties or linguistics items. Speech Community can also be described as 'Linguistic Community'. It is widely used to refer to a community based on language. In terms of any drawback in speech communities, they can be studied and even it may be possible to find interesting differences between communities which is linked with the differences in their language. As we come to know that an erudite linguist defines speech community:

"Speech community: all the people who use a given language (or dialect)" [Lyons. p. 326]

In social context, we learn that every community has a special language and obviously it is a given language that usually prescribed by community's forefather once upon a time on them. Since the people who lived in the community they bound to follow the bestowed language imposed on them by the ancestral. Every language has formal and informal category and the community's people use both of the language in different situation. Furthermore, Charles Hockett has given a more complicated definition on speech community as we find:

"Each language defines a speech community: the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language" (p.8).

Here we learn from the definition speech community means a combination of people who

converse with their communal people both formally and informally. Even they use colloquial language to communicate with the members of the community. From the further study we find that sociolinguists explore all sorts of communication along with language that usually exercises among the people of the individual community. As a language learner I had an opportunity to talk to a Santal (a member of an ethnic group) friend in my university level. Being a man of Santali<sup>1</sup> community he had strong command on both Santali and Bangla language as well. The words he used some time, when he talked to me 'Daka' (rice), 'Utu' (curry) 'Gogo' (mother) 'Bongo' (father) 'Mishrai' (sister) etc. I also mention a Santali sentence for an instance; "*am en dular mia*" (I love you). Through the examples it is very lucid and vivid that in the field of sociolinguistics, the sociolinguists enable to find out varieties of language and dialect.

Then, a number of language variety discuss in sociolinguistics such as language, dialect, register. These language variety or linguistic items are immensely clear when it defines and Most of the time, it is seen that sociolinguists become very much confused to make differentiation among them. Now let's know the basic differences among language, dialect, register. Firstly, language is a particular style of speaking and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area. An Irish linguist, in his book "*language and society*" illustrates language in social perspective: he said "Language is both a system of communication between individuals and a social phenomenon. The area of language and society – sociolinguistics – is intended to show how our use of language is governed by such factors as class, gender, race, etc. A subsection of this area is anthropological linguistics which is concerned with form and use of language in different cultures and to what extent the development of language has been influenced by cultural environment. Indeed the father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), saw language as a type of social behaviour and in this he reflected French

<sup>1</sup>Santali is a minor community in Bangladesh most of the Santali people live at Rajshahi district in Bangladesh. They are also called Santhal as well as

sociological thinking of his day, above all that of his contemporary Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). But a set of independent, objective principles, in short a methodology for investigating social factors in language use, was not available until some decades after the advent of Saussurean structuralism. In the early 1960s a number of linguists in America began to investigate English usage in the United States from a social point of view" (Hickey, p.1-2). In the book "Language, an Introduction to the Study of Speech" the observation of Sapir, in language "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols" (1921:7). It is very simple that Sapir says language is an individual property for an individual human being expressing ideas and feelings. It is also apparent to language learners that the spoken language is much more important than written form. Language indeed patronizes people's culture, tradition, custom, and manner and provides opportunities to preserve these and hand on from one generation to another.

Secondly, in terms of communication and expression, language is on the whole diversified with various social contexts. What make one variety of language separate from another are the linguistic items that are occupied in the language. The three important elements that represent the varieties of language are: language, dialect, and variety; these terms are close to each other especially language and dialect which are regarded as nontechnical terms. (Zahra, p.15). From that perspective it can be said that sociolinguistics encounters social language in various format such a dialect, register, diglossia along with high and low variety.

### **Register**

The phrase register is widely used in sociolinguistics to indicate varieties of language according to use. In other words, a register is a speech variety used by a particular group of people, usually sharing the same profession as for instance, doctor, lawyers, businessmen, engineers, etc or the

Munda ethnic group. They basically speak Santali and most widely spoken language of Munda.

same interest, for example stamp collection, Cricket fans, etc. According to Holiday (1978), register differences are at least three dimensional: (i) Field being concerned with the purpose and subject-matter of communication, (ii) mood referring to the means by which communication occurs, and (iii) Tenor depending on the relations between participants. So from this study we might mull over there are three essential field of register. Even register show us sundry distinction of language use such whenever we write a letter we may write it in different ways as for example: "in writing one letter a person might write *I am writing to inform you that...* But in another the same person might write: *I just wanted to let you know that*" (Hudson, p. 46). So right now it is quite luculent what exactly register is.

### Language Standardization

Furthermore in language variation it is seen that Standard Language or Language Standardization as a dialect, a variety or some closely comparable combination of dialects that enjoy prestige as the speech of educated persons of the capital city or other socially respected group is often designated as the standard language, for example standard English standard Bengali standard and others (Maniruzzaman, p.344). Again, we come to know that "it is probably fair to say that the only kind of variety which would count as a proper language is standard language" (Hudson, p.32). He promotes "the notion standard language is somewhat imprecise but a typical standard language will have passed through the following processes which are selection, codification, elaboration of function and acceptance. Selection "is somehow or some other a particular variety must have been selected as the one to be developed into a standard language"(Hudson,1980) later on, codification is "some agency such as an academy must have written dictionaries and grammar books to fix the variety so that everyone agrees on what is correct. According to Hudson codification has taken place and it becomes necessary for any ambitious citizen

to learn the correct forms and not to use in writing any incorrect forms that may exist in their native variety. Then elaboration of function "may require extra linguistic items to be added the variety especially technical words" (Hudson, 1980) and finally acceptance is "the variety has to be accepted by the relevant population as a variety of community" (Hudson, P.33). In sociolinguistics language standardization is a superb process to let know so many high variety and low variety along with formal and informal lingo.

### Regional Variation and Social Dialect

We often use language to communicate with people in the different circumstances within our community following social status, gender, age, and ethnicity. Being a small country Bangladesh, we see there is huge difference found among the people of different districts as it contrasts with two districts Jashore and Jamalpur. It is seen that people of Jamalpur use the word 'Punai' (boy) on the other hand; the people Jashore use the word "Pola' (boy)<sup>2</sup>. This is called regional variation or social dialect. Regarding this variation, we come across infinite sources of variation in speech as for illustration "the pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary of Scottish speakers of English, is in some respects quite distinct from that of people from England, for example. Though there is variation within Scotland, there are also some features which perform an overall unifying function. The letter 'r' in words like 'girl' and 'star' is pronounced in a number of English-speaking areas, and Scotland is certainly one of them. And a Scot is far more likely to say 'I'll not do it than I won't do it'. Similarly, the pronunciation of bath with the same vowel as in sat distinguishes a speaker from the north of England from a southerner. And while many speakers of English use the same vowel in the three words bag, map and bad, workers in Belfast pronounce them in ways that sound like [beg], [ma::rp] and [bod] to English people. Speech provides social information too. Dropping the initial [h] in words like house and heaven often indicates a lower socio-economic background in English. And so

<sup>2</sup>'Pola' and 'Punai' are colloquial words used between the two districts in Bangladesh meaning boy but being a same meaning it has twice forms.

does the use of grammatical patterns such as 'they don't know nothing them kids or I done it last week'. We signal our group affiliations and our social identities by the speech forms we use. There are many such stories – some no doubt apocryphal – of mistakes based on regional accent differences. To British ears, a New Zealander's 'dad' sounds like an English person's 'dead', 'bad' sounds like 'bed' and 'six' sounds like 'sucks'. Americans and Australians, as well as New Zealanders, tell of British visitors who were given 'pens' instead of 'pins' and 'pans' instead of 'pens'. On the other hand, an American's 'god' sounds like an English person's 'guard', and an American's 'ladder' is pronounced identically with 'latter' (Holmes, p.131-132). In addition, numerous studies we notice Thomas Scovel had shown same thing which is 'Spoonerism'. It "is like the unfortunate use of breast in bed instead of the best in bread is named after the Victorian cleric and teacher" (Scovel, p.32). This can also be considered language variation by slip of tongue. So sociolinguistics is such an essential sources of learning numerous languages by which we can encounter varied social incidence along with verbal communication.

#### **Vernacular Languages:**

A variety of studies have found another key language variation which is 'Vernacular Languages'. Basically "the term vernacular is used in a number of ways. It generally refers to a language which has not been standardized and which does not have official status. There are hundreds of vernacular languages, such as Buang in Papua New Guinea, Hindustani in India and Bumbar in Vanuatu, many of which have never been written down or described. In a multilingual speech community, the many different ethnic or tribal languages used by different groups are referred to as vernacular languages. Vernaculars are usually the first languages learned by people in multilingual communities, and they are often used for a relatively narrow range of informal functions" (Holmes, P.77). In short it is such a language which has no social status at all still it has no proper written document but exists as language in our society. So it is considered as one of the elementary language varieties.

#### **Pidgins:**

Furthermore, studying varieties of language the researcher has tried to review some literatures having learnt something more on Pidgins and creoles. As Hudson says in his book "a pidgin may be what is called a Trade Language" and he also says "a pidgin is a variety specially created for the purpose of communication with some other group, and not used by any community for communication among themselves" (Hudson, p.60). According to Holmes, he has said "a pidgin is a language which has no native speakers. Pidgins develop as a means of communication between people who do not have a common language. So a pidgin is no one's native language. Pidgins seem particularly to arise when two groups with different languages are communicating in a situation where there is also a third dominant language. Pidgins developed as languages of trade between the traders – who used a colonial language such as Portuguese, or Spanish or English – and the Indians, Chinese, Africans or American Indians that they were trading with (Holmes, p.85). Let's see the example of Pidgin language:

#### **Diagram: Pidgin Language:**

"Bipo tru igat wanpela liklik meri nau nem bilong em Liklik Retpela Hat. Em i save slip wantaim Mama na Papa bilong em long wanpela liklik haus. Papa i save wok long bus, i save katim paiawut na ol man save baim long em. Oraiti gat lapun meri i stap long narapela haus. Dispela lapun eml Tumbuna Mama" (Holmes, p.85).

#### **2. Diagram: Translation of Pidgin Language**

"A long time ago, there was a little girl named Little Red Riding Hood. She lived with her mother and father in a little house. Father worked in the bush, cutting trees for firewood, which he sold to people. Now there was a very old lady who lived in another house. This old lady was Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother" (Holmes, p.85).

As a language, pidgin, on the whole has commercial demand as we see in verbal communication in miscellaneous business as well as trade and it is also called Trade language. But it

cannot be thought that it is commercial language only as Homes above says" which has no native speakers".

### Creoles

From the perspective of language varieties, Holmes does believe that "a creole is a pidgin which has acquired native speakers. Many of the languages which are called pidgins are in fact now creole languages. They are learned by children as their first language and used in a wide range of domains. we even come to know that "From a linguistic and sociolinguistic point of view, the most interesting lingua francas in many respects are pidgin and creole languages" and "a pidgin which has developed into a creole language" (Holmes, p.85). About creole Hudson has mentioned "a pidgin which has acquired native speakers is called a Creole language and the process whereby a pidgin turn into a creole is called Creolization" (Hudson, p.63). Hence it might be said that Creole is the comeback of pidgin. Also, (Crystal, 1980, p.98) mention that a creole is "a term used in sociolinguistics to refer to pidgin language which become the mother tongue of speech community, as is the case in Jamaica, Haiti, Dominica, and in several other ex-colonial part of the world".

### Mixture of varieties

Diglossia is "a type of linguistic situation in which there is a division between two languages or two varieties of a language such that one variety, the so-called 'high' or H- variety is used in public life in addressees, in the media, in schools and universities, etc. And another variety, the so-called 'low' variety or L variety, is used in domestic life — with family and friends. Examples of diglossic situations are to be found in Switzerland (Hochdeutsch and Schwizerdütsch), in various Arabian countries (Classical Arabic and the local dialect of Arabic), Paraguay (Spanish and Guaraní)"(Hickey, p.32). Hudson says it " is a relatively simple arrangement and the term diglossia was introduced into the English-language literature on sociolinguistics by Charles Ferguson (1959) in order to describe the situation found in place like Greece. We have heaped up from the research there are two varieties basically we find high and low or standard and vernacular (Hudson, p.49). The researcher attempts

his best to prove sociolinguistics; an approach to study varieties of language. Even in order to reach the goal the researcher had to deal with plenty amount of schoolwork. A variety of studies have found a number of countries have more than two or three languages used to communicate within the communities. It would be clearer if you noticed on a massive democratic country name India and it is found a numerous language is used by the people of different communities from the online source India belongs to more than a few languages, as for example Hindi, Bangla, Dogri, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Maithili, Malayalam, Marathi, Panjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu etc. From Janet Holmes' book 'An Introduction to Sociolinguistics' we come to know that "Over half the world's population is bilingual and many people are multilingual. They come in contact a number of languages because they need them for different purposes in their everyday interactions (Holmes, p.76). In fact, during my research period I have already mentioned, I had a cross examination with my 'Santal' friend and I obtain various interesting words used in Santali language as it is: "some words he used sometimes, when he talked to me 'Daka' (rice), 'Utu' (curry) 'Gogo'(mother) 'Bongo'(father) 'Mishrai' (sister) etc. I also mention a Santali sentence for an instance; "*am en dular mia*" (I love you). So it is completely proved that Bangladesh has a language variation and by the sociolinguistic analysis it is possible to understand that there are some people who are multilingual. In sociolinguistics, the phrase code- switching and borrowing are used to enlighten and illustrate two very common phenomenons relating to code mixing, that is how different languages become mixed up with each other (Hudson, 1980). Then the phrase bilingualism plainly refers to using or being able to two languages, especially with equal or nearly equal competency and fluency. From the book of Maniruzzaman *Introduction to Linguistics* (2017, p.351) he explains Weinreich (1967, p.1) puts forward: "the practice of alternately two languages will be called bilingualism, and the persons, involved, bilingual". Similarly, Mackey (1970, p.555) defines bilingualism as the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual". Oksaar

(1971, p.172) gives an identical definition, and adds that a speaker should be able to switch code automatically. However, Baker and Jones (1998) advocate that there are three kinds of Advantages of bilingualism- communication advantages, cultural advantages, cognitive advantages.

### Conclusion

The main intention of this research paper is to attain the target that sociolinguistics is an approach to study varieties of language and finally this attempt is blooming to find out problems and its solution by dint of analyzing a number of books and research articles. We have come to know that from this research article "has ranged over copious categories of language variation including language, dialect, register, standard languages, high and low varieties in diglossia, pidgins and creoles"(Hudson, p.68). It is also proved that sociolinguistics can make the way to the language learners who have immense thrust for obtaining knowledge from a variety of languages. The researcher has developed some regional variation from different district of Bangladesh. In sociolinguistics "language varies according to its uses as well as its users, according to where it is used and to whom, as well as according to who is using it. The addresses and the context affect our choice of code or variety, whether language, dialect or style" (Holmes, p.239). To sum up, in recounting the information above it is said that sociolinguistics certainly an approach to study variety of language.

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