

Sociolinguistics A Language Study in Sociocultural Perspectives

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SOCIOLINGUISTICS:
A Language Study in Sociocultural
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This book is a total revision of “Sociolinguistics: An Introduction”. It was originally our teaching material of “Sociolinguistics Course” in English Department of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Lambung Mangkurat. The teaching material consisted of ten chapters. The whole contents of the chapters are adopted and adapted in -and to be- almost all parts of this book. Some other parts are adopted and adapted from the manuscripts by the other writers for completing this book into 14 parts.

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Banjarmasin, 2019

The Writers

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PART 1

SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND ITS SCOPES

Fatchul Mu'in

1.1 Introduction

A language is not only studied from the internal viewpoint but also from the external one. Internally, it is studied based on its internal structures; whereas, externally, it is based on the linguistic factors in relation to the factors beyond the language.

A study of internal language structures (or, it is based on the sub-systems of a language) will result sub-discipline of linguistics such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. It is conducted through theories and procedures belonging to the discipline of linguistics; it is not related to the problems beyond the language.

When a study of language in which the linguistic factors are related to the factors beyond the language, such as language use that is done by its speakers in a certain speech community, it refers to sociolinguistics. According to Fishman, for instance, socially, the language use involves "*Who speaks, what language, to whom, when and where*" (Fishman, 1972:244). When some aspects of sociology are adopted in studying a language, this means it presents an interdisciplinary study; and its name represents a combination of sociology and linguistics. In this relation, some experts call it as sociology of language; and some others call it as sociolinguistics.

The following discussion involves some terms such as language, linguistics, sociology or its aspects, and sociolinguistics as well as relationships between language and society

1.2 Language

Before starting to discuss a language, sometimes we are necessary to define it. In this relation, we may make some questions such as: "What is a language?", or "What do you know about a language", or "What is meant by a language?" Someone's answer may be different from that of the other. For instance, he says: "Oh, it what we use in communication" or the other says: "It is made up of sentences that convey meaning", or perhaps someone else says: "It is a means of communication". If those definitions are viewed from the study of language, they are insufficient ones. Let us examine the following definitions:

A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols that permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact (Finocchioro, 1964).

1

A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication (Wardhaugh, 1986)

1

A language is arbitrary system of articulated sounds made use of by a group of humans as a means of carrying on the affairs of their society (Francis, in Ramelan, 1984)

A language is a set of rules enabling speakers to translate information from the outside world into sound (Gumperz, 1972).

A language is a means of communication that uses speech sounds as a medium (Ramelan, 1984)

Based on the definitions of a language above, we can state some characteristics of human language, as follows:

Firstly, a language is a *system*. Since a language is said to be a system, it must be systematic in nature. The systematicness of a language can be seen from the fact that, take an example, a sentence is not ordered at random. In this relation, we cannot say "Goes Ali school to everyday." English language has its own patterns of ordering some words to be a sentence. The patterns of ordering show that a language must be systematic.

Secondly, a language is said to be *arbitrary*. This means that it is firstly created on the basis of social agreement. In this relation, there is no reasonable explanation, for instance, why a certain four-footed domestic animal is called *dog* in English, *asu* in Javanese, or *anjing* in Indonesian. Giving a name of the animal is really based on the agreement among the members of the social groups. On other words, Javanese, English and Indonesian people made an agreement to call the animal as *asu*, *dog*, and *anjing* respectively.

Thirdly, a language is *social*. We all know that a language is socially acquired, learned and then used. If this statement is related to language acquisition and/or language learning, we may have an illustration that a new-born child acquires a communicative competence with a given language in a speech community; in the next step, he learns and uses the language in a speech community. Thus, a language is not genetically transmitted; but, it is socio-culturally acquired and/or learned.

Fourthly, a language is *spoken*. Basically, a language is always spoken. This statement implies that all people the world over, regardless of their race or ethnic group, always speak a language. This means that they always have a way of communicating ideas by using sounds that are produced by their speech organs. Another means of communicating ideas, that is the use of printed or written symbols, which is more prevailing and more often used in daily life. This means that they are exposed to the written language as found in newspapers, magazines or letters so that they often confuse

written language and the actual language, which is spoken. In this relation, it can be said that the spoken form of a language is primary, whereas the written form is secondary. This is to say that the written form of a language is only a representation of what is actually spoken.

1.4 Linguistics

Linguistics is defined as the scientific study of language. From different viewpoints, as a science, linguistics can be divided into several branches, among others, descriptive linguistics and historical/comparative linguistics (if it is based its methodology), synchronic and diachronic linguistics (if is based on its aspect of time), and phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics (if it is based on a language as a system).

1.5 Sociolinguistics

A term *sociolinguistics* is a derivational word. Two words that form it are sociology and linguistics. Sociology refers to a science of society; and linguistics refers to a science of language. A study of language from the perspective of society may be thought as linguistics plus sociology. Some investigators have found it to introduce a distinction between sociolinguistics and sociology of language. Some others regard sociolinguistics is often referred as the sociology of language.

Sociolinguistics is defined as:

The study that is concerned with the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. In other words, it studies the relationship between language and society. 21

It explains we people speak differently in different social contexts. It discusses the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. All of the topics provides a lot of information about the language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community, and the way

people signal aspects of their social identity through their language (Holmes, 2001)

Sociolinguistics is “the study that is concerned with the interaction of language and setting” (Eastman, 1975; 113). It is the study that is concerned with investigating the relationship between language and society with the goal of a better understanding of the structure of language and of how languages function in communication (Wardhaugh, 1986 : 12)

1.6 Socio-cultural Aspects

A group of people is required by both community and society. They communicate and interact between and another. They have a membership consciousness on the basis of the common goals and their behaviour is ordered and patterned. If they live in a given area, have the same culture and living styles, and can collectively act in their effort to reach a certain goal, they will be known as a community.

Not all groups of people occupying certain areas are known as societies; but they are known as communities such as those who are in local communities, schools, business firms, and kinship units; and they are only sub-systems of a society. Thus, society is any group of people being relatively self sufficient, living together in a long period of time, occupying a certain area, having the same culture, and conducting most of activities in the group.

Parsons (1966: 20) states that a society is in the first instance “politically organized”; it must have loyalties both to a sense of community and to some “corporate agency” of the kind we ordinarily consider governmental, and must established a relatively effective normative order within a territorial area.

A society in which some groups of people are living may show what we call social stratification. A term *social stratification* used to refer to any hierarchical ordering of group within a society (Trudgill, 1983).

A system of social stratification is not always similar to one another; it may be represented in *castes* (such as in India); it may be represented in different social classes: high class, middle class, and lower class (such in United States); and it may be represented in some terms such as: elite group vs. common people, “*kawula vs. gusti*” (such as in Indonesia). A society in which its members are stratified shows social *classes* followed by *social status and role*.

Social class may be defined primarily by wealth, or by circumstances of birth, or by occupation, or by criteria specific to the group under investigation. If wealth is a criterion, this may be calculated in terms of money, or in terms of how many pigs, sheep, or blankets an individual or family possesses, or how much land they claim. Social status is often largely determined by social class membership (Troike and Blackwell, 1982: 87).

A married man automatically has a status as a husband of his wife and as a father of child(ren); in his office, he may be a director; and in his neighbourhood, he may be a religious leader. According to Soerjono Soekanto, social role is a dynamic aspect of status (Soekanto, 1982: 236-237).

Thus, the man has three statuses: as a father, a director, and a religious leader. When he fulfils his duties and responsibilities in accordance with his single status, he plays one role. Whatever the groups are called, each of them must occupy a position in a social rank or have a social status. Therefore, a member of a given social rank or social status plays a role in accordance with his status.

Social relationships among people in society are based on some rules, values, etiquette, etc. In communication, for instance, people are ordered by rules (of speaking); they are guided by values (of how to behave in a good manner) than can be conducted through etiquette (of using a language).

Social Units of Language Use

a. Speech Community

Speech refers a surrogate for forms of language, including writing, song and speech-derived whistling, drumming, horn calling and the like (Hymes, in Gumperz and Dell Hymes, eds., 1972: 53). An important concept in the discussion of communication is the *speech community*. It refers to a group of people who use the same system of speech signals.

Another definition of the speech community is any human aggregate characterized by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language use (John T. Platt and H.K. Platt, 1975: 33).

Troike and Blackwell state that speech community must meet three criteria: (1) it is any group within a society which has anything significant in common (including religion, ethnicity, race, age, deafness, sexual orientation, or occupation), (2) it is a physically bounded unit of people having range of role-opportunities (a politically organized tribe or nation), (3) it is a collection of similarly situated entities that something in common (such as the Western World, European Common Market, or the United Nations) (1982:19).

b. Speech Situation

According to Dell Hymes, a speech situation is a situation in which a speech occurs. Within a community, we may detect many situations associated with (or marked by the absence of) speech. Such situations will be described as ceremonies, fights, hunts, meals, lovemaking, and the like (in Gumperz, John J. and Dell Hymes, eds., 1972: 54).

c. Speech Event

According to Dell Hymes, a speech event refers to activities or aspects of activities that are directly governed by

rules or norms for the use of speech. An event may consist of a single speech act; and it often comprises several speech acts.¹

d. Speech Act

According to Dell Hymes, speech act is the minimal term of the speech event. It represents a level distinct from the sentence, and cannot be identified with any single portion of other levels of grammar, nor with segments of any particular size defined in terms of other levels of grammar. An utterance may have the status of command depending on a conventional formula. When we ask someone to leave the building, we may say: "Go!" not "Go?" An interrogative sentence "Can you help me?" may be meant to ask someone to do something; "what time is it?" may be meant to remind that the listener comes very late.²

e. Speech Styles

The term *style* refers to a language variety that is divided based on the criterion of formality. This criterion tends to subsume subject matter, the audience of discourse, and the occasion. Based on the criterion, Martin Jose (in Brown, 1982: 192) recognizes the speech into *frozen, formal, consultative, casual and intimate styles*.

A *frozen (oratorical)* style is used in public speaking before a large audience; wording is carefully planned in advance, intonation is somewhat exaggerated, and numerous rhetorical devices are appropriate.

A *formal (deliberative)* style is also used in addressing audiences, usually audiences too large to permit effective interchange between speaker and hearers, though the forms are normally not as polished as those in a frozen (oratorical) style. A

¹ Gumperz and Dell Hymes, eds., 1972: 56
² *ibid*

1

typical university classroom lecture is often carried out in a formal (deliberative) style.

A *consultative* style is typically a dialogue, though formal enough that words are chosen with some care. Business transactions, doctor-patient conversations, and the like are consultative in nature.

Casual conversations are between friends or colleagues or sometimes members of a family; in this context words need not be guarded and social barriers are moderately low.

An *intimate* style is one characterized by complete absence of social inhibitions. Talk with family, loved ones, and very close friends, where you tend to reveal your inner self, is usually in an intimate style.

Someone may speak very formally or very informally; his choice of the styles is governed by circumstances. Ceremonial occasions almost require very formal speech; public lectures are somewhat *less formal*; *casual* conversation is quite informal; and conversation between intimates on matters of little importance may be extremely *informal* and *casual*.

We may try to relate the level of formality chosen to a number of factors: (1) the kind of occasion, (2) the various social, age, and other differences that exist between the participants, (3) the particular task that is involved, e.g., writing or speaking, and (4) the emotional involvement of one or more of the participants (Wardhaugh, 1986: 48).

f. Ways of Speaking

A way of speaking refers to how a language speaker uses in accordance with behavior of communication regulated in his speech community. This means that he has to apply "regulation" of using his language. That is why Fishman suggests that in using a language someone has to consider *to whom he speaks*. Considering the person to whom he speaks, he will determine what language or its varieties he wants to use to speak. His consideration is not only based on *to whom* he speaks,

but also on *when or where* he speaks. The language speaker will consider the setting of time and place.

In relation to the *ways of speaking* Dell Hymes states that the point of it is the regulative idea that the communicative behavior within a community is analyzable in terms of determinate ways of speaking, that the communicative competence of persons comprises in part a knowledge of determinate ways of speaking (in Gumperz and Hymes, eds., 1972 : 57).

g. Components of Speech

A language use occurring in a speech community must be in relation to speech situation, speech event, speech act, and speech styles, as well as components of speech. Those form an integrated parts in the communicative behavior. Dell Hymes (in Gumperz and Hymes, 1972 : 59-65) states the speech are in the sixteen components, being grouped together under the letters of the word SPEAKING. SPEAKING here stands for S=Setting, P=Participants, E=Ends, A=Act sequence, K=Key, I=Instrumentalities, N=Norms, and G=Genres. The further explanation will be explained later.

1.7 Social Functions of Language

Forms of sentences of a language generally serve specific function. The sentences are created, among others, on the basis of purposes. The purposes of creating sentences are (a) to inform something or someone to the audiences; the sentences created are called statements (declarative sentences), (b) to question about something or someone; the resultant forms are interrogative sentences, (c) to ask or command someone to do something; the resultant forms are imperative sentences, and (d) to show a surprise on someone or something; the resultant forms are exclamatory sentences.

Traditionally, there are three functions of a language. These three functions of a language are actually related from one to another. For the sake of discussion, they are discussed in separate ways. The prime function of a language has been assumed to be *cognitive*; a language is used to express ideas, concepts, and thought. The second function is said to be *evaluative*; a language has been viewed as a means of conveying attitudes and values. The third function of a language is referred to be *affective*; a language is used by its speakers to transmit emotions and feelings.

According to Mary Finocchiaro, there are six functions of a language are; they are as follows:

Personal. The personal function enables the user of a language to express his innermost thoughts; his emotions such as love, hatred, and sorrow; his needs, desires, or attitudes; and to clarify or classify ideas in his mind.

Interpersonal. The interpersonal function enables him to establish and maintain good social relations with individuals and groups; to express praise, sympathy, or joy at another's success; to inquire about health; to apologize; to invite.

Directive. The directive function enables him to control the behaviour of others through advice, warnings, requests, persuasion, suggestions, orders, or discussion.

Referential. The referential function enables him to talk about objects or events in the immediate setting or environment or in the culture; to discuss the present, the past, and the future.

Metalinguistic. The metalinguistic function enables him to talk about language, for example, "What doesmean?"

Imaginative. The imaginative function enables him to use language creatively in rhyming, composing poetry, writing, or speaking (1989:1-2).

According to Roman Jakobson (in Bell, Roger T. 1976:83), functions of a language are related to aspects.

ASPECT	FUNCTION
Addresser	Emotive, expressive, affective
Addressee	Conative
Context	Referential, cognitive, denotative
Message	Poetic
Contact	Phatic, interaction management
Code	Metalinguistic

Although the model is primarily connected with the nature of literary language, it provides a means of listing six major language functions by indicating how the shift of focus from one aspect of the speech event to another determines the function of the language that is used in it.

For example, (a) in relation to *emotive function*, the addresser aims at the direct expressions of his attitude to the topic or situation; (b) in relation to *conative function*, the speaker focuses on the person(s) addressed, for instance, when he calls the attention of another or requires them to carry out some action; (c) in relation to *context*, the participants of a speech act focus on the object, topic, content of the discourse; (d) in relation to *message*, the speaker focuses on the message; (e) in relation to *contact*, a (certain) language is used for the initiation, continuation and termination of linguistic encounters; and (f) in relation to *code*, a language is used to talk about the language itself.

1.8 Factors Influencing Language Use

They are four dominant factors influencing someone's language use in a given speech community: (a) the participants: who speaks, to whom he speaks, (b) the setting: where does he speak? (c) the topic discussed, and (d) the function: what and why does he speak?. These factors (and the other factors) will be

discussed in detail in the next chapter (Wardhaugh, 1983). These four factors can be illustrated as follows:

For instance, there are two persons involving in a speech act. They are called as participants. They are identified as father and his son. At home (*setting*), in order to be familiar between them (*function*), both father and his son (*participants*) speak Javanese language to talk about daily activities (*topic*); they use Indonesian language in another topic. Both speakers never Javanese outside their home to each other; they use Banjarese or Indonesian language.

1.9 Social Dimensions Influencing Language Use

Starting from the factors above, language use is determined by social dimensions: (a) social distance scale: how well we know someone, (b) a status scale: high-low status in social life; superior-subordinate status, and (c) a formality: formal-informal; high-low formality.

Social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behaviour. The age-grading phenomenon can be used as evidence. In this relation, for instance, young children speak differently from other children; and children speak differently from mature. Consequently, there are some varieties of the same language (dialects, styles, speech levels, etc.) and ways of speaking, choices of words, and rules for conversing. Linguistic structure and/or behaviour may either influence or determine social structure.

Sociolinguistics studies a language and its varieties, and how they are used in the speech community in relation to the socio-cultural background of the language use itself.

1.10 Summary

A language is an important thing in a given community, a speech community. It is not a means for communication and interaction but also for establishing and maintaining human relationships.

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