

SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND IT'S FUNCTIONS IN MODERN LINGUISTICS

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Annotation

Sociolinguistics explores language in relation to society. This means that it is concerned with language as used for communication amongst different social groups of people in different social situations. This thesis analyzes sociolinguistics and its functions in modern linguistics.

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INTRODUCTION

In brief, the aim of **linguistics** is to determine the properties of natural language. The investigation of individual languages is done with the intention of explaining why the whole set of languages are the way they are. This is the search for a theory of *universal grammar*. In this process the analyst aims to construct a device, a grammar, which can specify the grammatical strings of one language, say English or Bulgarian, but which is also relevant for the grammar of any human language. In this way, linguistics puts its focus on determining what the component parts and inner mechanism of languages are. In accomplishing this, theoretical models of language tend to exclude certain things, consigning them to the lexical, semantic or pragmatic components of language, or even outside of language altogether.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sociolinguistics is a relatively young discipline. Most of the growth in sociolinguistics took place in the late 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, there has been a long tradition in the study of *dialects* and in the general study of the relations between word-meaning and culture, both of which can be subsumed within the domain of sociolinguistics. However, the awareness that sociolinguistics can shed light on both the nature of language and the nature of society is relatively new.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sociolinguists argue that language exists in context, dependent on the speaker who is using it and dependent on where it is being used and why. Speakers mark their personal history and identity in their speech as well as their sociocultural, economic and geographical coordinates in time and space. So taking a broad approach to the subject of sociolinguistics would mean to include in it everything: *from considering 'who speaks', what language, to whom, and when and to what end, i.e. the social distribution of linguistic items, to considering how a linguistic variable might relate to the formulation of a specific grammatical rule in a particular language or dialect and, finally, to the processes through which languages change.* (Wardhaugh 1992).

Depending on the purposes of the research, the different orientations of sociolinguistic research have

traditionally been subsumed under two umbrella terms: **Sociolinguistics** and **'The sociology of language'**. In this distinction **sociolinguistics** is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal to understand more thoroughly the structure of language and how languages function in communication. The equivalent goal in **the sociology of language** is to discover how social structure can be better understood through the study of language, e.g. how certain linguistic features serve to characterize particular social arrangements. Both sociolinguistics and the sociology of language require a systematic study of language and society if they are to be successful.

The sample of classroom interaction in e.g. illustrates how a 'question' may not function as a question at all. As seen from the instructions in the beginning, the question forms are not meant as questions but as part of a game directed at practicing a particular language structure.

Accordingly, establishing the truth value of students' answers is not an issue at all. Comparing the function of questions in this sample with that of the questions we discussed in example four above we'll discover one more difference. As argued the questions in the above sample were not genuinely searching for information either. But they had a different function from the function of questions in this excerpt. In example four, questions were elements of the attorney's strategy to make the opponent to his client, appear ridiculous and foolish which would add further strength to his defence strategy.

What all this implies is that it would be wrong to generalize whether or not speakers of a particular language have means to discern, comprehend or produce different discourse meanings. One and the same grammatical form may serve different functions in different discursive frames.

Another approach is to describe language as it is actually used and explain how the language resources are being exploited in diverse real life communicative situations. In general, approaches taking as a starting point language use are **functional as** they consider how different language **forms** are used in specific **context** to express particular **meanings**.

Some people argue that our ability to use language is actually the essence of what makes us human whereby the study of language in use should be considered primary. Without going deep into the debate on the primacy of structure or function, we can adduce a few more instrumental reasons for studying language as it is used in real life communication.

In brief, besides knowledge about language structure we need to explain:

- How language is used in such caring professions as teaching and medicine to explain, educate, nurse, reassure or learn other languages in a less time consuming and effortful way.
- How broadcast and print journalists use language to present events and news, to persuade or manipulate the audience/ readers to believe that what is presented is the sheer truth.

CONCLUSION

Interactional sociolinguistics employs discourse analysis for *interpretation* of social interaction in which the *emergent construction* and *negotiation of meaning* is facilitated by the use of language. Although the interactional approach is basically a functional approach, it has a more balanced focus on function. ISs believe that, *language and context co-constitute one another: language contextualizes and is contextualized*, such that language does not just function "in context", language also forms and provides context. One particular context is social interaction. Language culture and society are grounded in interaction; they stand in a reflexive relationship with the self and the other, and the self-other relationship, and it is out of these mutually constitutive relationships that discourse is created.

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