CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Learning Objectives :

1. To comprehend what Sociolinguitics and Sociology of Language mean.

2. To compare Sociolinguitics with Sociology of Language

3. To understand the relationship of language to society

4. To identify some methodological concerns.

5. to know the relationship between sociolinguistics and language teaching.

1. Definitions of Sociolinguistics and Sociology of Language

There are several definitions of sociolinguistics put forward by linguists, among others :

1) Sociolinguistics refers to "the study of language in relation to social factors, that is, social class, educational level and type of education, age, sex, ethnic origin, etc." ( Richards, et aL, 1995;262).

2) Sociolinguistics is “the study of language in relation to society" (Wardhaugh, 1998: 13)

3) Sociolinguistics is defined as "the scientific study of the socialaspect of language" (McArthur, 1992: 946).

4) Sociolinguistics is "the study of the interaction between language and the structure and functioning of society" (Crystal, 1998: 618).

From the definitions above, sociolinguistics includes society or social actors/aspects, language and the relationship between them.

Some linguists equates sociolinguistics with sociology of language, such as Joshua A. Fishman. But most others make a distinction between them.

1. According to Wardhaugh, sociology of language refers to "the study of society in relation to language" (1998: 13).

2. Sociology of language is "the study of varieties and their users within social framework" (Richards, et al.,1995: 262)

2. Comparison between Sociolinguistics and Sociology of Language Some investigators have found it appropriate to try to introduce a distinction between *sociolinguistics* or *micro-sociolinguistics* and the *sociology of language* or *macro-sociolinguistics.* In this distinction, sociolinguistics is concerned with investigating the relationships between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and of how languages function in communication; the equivalent goal in the sociology of language is trying 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. Hudson (1996: 4) has described the difference as follows: sociolinguistics is 'the study of language in relation to society/ whereas the sociology language is cthe study of society in relation to language.' In other words, in sociolinguistics we study language and society in order to find out as much as we can about what kind of thing language is, and in the sociology of language we reverse the direction of our interest

Using the alternative terms given above, Coulmas (1997; 2) in Wardhaugh (2006: 13) says that 'micro-sociolingustics investigates how social structure influences the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlate with social attributes such as class, sex, and age. Macro-sociolinguistics, on the other hand, studies what societies do with their languages, that is, attitudes and attachments that account for the functional distribution of speech forms in society, language shift, maintenance, and replacement, the delimitation and interaction of speech communities.'

The view taken here is that both sociolinguistics and the sociology of language require a systematic study of language *and* society if they are to be successful. Moreover, a sociolinguistics that deliberately refrains from drawing conclusions about society seems to be unnecessarily restrictive, just as restrictive indeed as a sociology of language that deliberately ignores discoveries about language made in the course of sociological research. So while it is possible to do either kind of work to the exclusion of the other, I will be concerned with looking at both kinds. My own views are essentially in agreement with those of Coulmas (1997: 3) in Wardhaugh (2006: 14), expressed^ as follows:

There is no sharp dividing line between the two, but a large area of common concern. Although socio!inguistic research centers about a number of different key issues, any rigid micro-macro compartmentalization seems quite contrived and unnecessary in the present state of knowledge about the complex interrelationships between linguistic and social structures. Contributions to a better understanding of language as a necessary condition and product of social life will continue to come from both quarters.

3. The Relationship of Language to Society

A concern for the v human communication7 aspect within the definition of language implies attention to the way language is played out in societies in its full range of functions. Language is not just denotational, a term which refers to the process of conveying meaning, referring to ideas, events or entities that exist outside language. While using language primarily for this function, a speaker will inevitably give off signals concerning his or her social and personal background (Mesthrie, 2009: 5-6). *In* short, language and society are closely interrelated.

According to Wardhaugh (2006), there are several possible relationships between language and society. One is that social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behavior. Certain evidence may be adduced to support this view: the *age-grading* phenomenon whereby young children speak differently from older children and, in turn, children speak differently from mature adults; studies which show that the varieties of language that speakers use reflect such matters as their regional, social, or ethnic origin and possibly even their gender; and other studies which show that particular ways of speaking, choices of words, and even rules for conversing are in fact highly determined by certain social requirements.

A second possible relationship is directly opposed to the first: linguistic structure and/or behavior may either influence or determine social structure. This is the view that is behind the Whorfian hypothesis, the claims of Bernstein, and many of those who argue that languages rather than speakers of these languages can be 'sexist'.

A third possible relationship is that the influence is bi­directional: language and society may influence each other. One variant of this approach is that this influence is dialectical in nature, a Marxist view put forward by Dittmar (1976), who argues (p. 238) that 'speech behaviour and social behaviour are in a state of constant interaction' and that 'material living conditions' are an important factor in the relationship.

A fourth possibility is to assume that there is no relationship at all between linguistic structure and social structure and that each is independent of the other. A variant of this possibility would be to say that, although there might be some such relationship, present attempts to characterize it are essentially premature, given what we know about both language and society. Actually, this variant view appears to be the one that Chomsky himself holds: he prefers to develop an asocial linguistics as a preliminary to any other kind of linguistics, such an asocial approach being, in his view, logically prior.

***4.*** Basic Methodological Concerns

Sociolinguistics is like other sciences, so we should meet several requirements when attempting to investigate it. Below is a set of principles of axioms worthy of consideration (Wardhaugh, 1998: 17-8):

1. *The cumulative principle.* The more that we know about language, the more we can find out about it, and we should not be surprised if our search for new knowledge takes us into new areas of study and into areas in which scholars from other disciplines are already working.

2) The uniformation principle. The linguistic processes which we observe to be taking place around us are the same as those which have operated in the past, so that there can be no clean break between synchronic (i.e., descriptive and contemporary) matters and diachronic (i.e., historical) ones.

3) The principle of convergence. The value of new data for confirming or interpreting old findings is directly proportional to the differences in the ways in which the new data are gathered; particularly useful are linguistic data gathered through procedures needed in other areas of scientific investigation.

4) The principle of subordinate shift. When speakers of a non-standard (or subordinate) variety of language, e.g., a dialect, are asked direct questions about that variety, their responses will shift in an irregular way toward or away from the standard (or superordinate) variety, e.g., the standard language, so enabling investigators to collect valuable evidence concerning such matters as varieties, norms, and change.

5) The principle of style-shifting. There are no c single-style' speakers of a language, because each individual controls and uses a variety of linguistic styles and no one speaks in exactly the same way in all circumstances.

6) The principle of attention. 'Styles' of speech can be ordered along a single dimension measured by the amount of attention speakers are giving to their speech, so that the more 'aware\* they are of what they are saying, the more 'formal' the style will be.

7) The vernacular principle. The style which is most regular in its structure and in its relation to the history of the language is the vernacular, that relaxed, spoken style in which the least conscious attention is being paid to speech.

8) *The principle of formality.* Any systematic observation of speech defines a context in which some conscious attention will be paid to that speech, so that it will be difficult, without great ingenuity, to observe the genuine 'vernacular’

**5. Relationship between sociolinguistics and Language Teaching**

In the 1970s- 1980-s there developed in both Europe and North America an approach to foreign- and- second language teaching that drew on the work of anthropologists, sociologists and sociolinguists. It has concentrated on a language as a social behaviour, seeing the primary goal of language teaching as the development of the learner's *communicative competence. A communicative competence* is a term in sociolinguistics for a speaker's underlying knowledge of the rules of grammar (understood in its widest sense include phonology, orthography, syntax, lexicon and semantics) and rules for their use in socially appropriate circumstances (McArthur, 1992:239).

Communicative competence includes:

1. Knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language

2. knowledge of rules of speaking (e.g. knowing how to begin and end conversations, knowing what topics may be talked about in different types of speech events, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations)

3. Knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, 4) knowing how to use language appropriately (Richards et at, 1995: 49).

There are four components of communicative competence which can be identified:

1. Grammatical competence (also formal competence), that is,

Knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and semantics of a language (also see competence)

2. Sociolinguistic competence (also sociocultural competence), that

is, knowledge of the relationship between language and its nonlinguistic context, knowing how to use and respond appropriately to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, thanks, and invitations, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations, and so forth (see also appropriateness, pragmatics, role relationship)

3. Discourse competence (sometimes considered part of sociolinguistic competence), that is, knowing how to begin and end conversations

4. Strategic competence, that is, knowledge of communication  
strategies that can compensate for weakness in other areas (Richards &  
Schmidt, 2010:99).

Furthermore, using language appropriately involves knowing the sociolinguistic rules for speaking in a community. It means understanding the influence of social factors on speech behaviour. Choosing the appropriate variety or code to use in a such communities involves choosing from distinctly different languages, as well as styles within a language. (Holmes, 1998: 370) thanks and invitations