

History of Sociolinguistics: Studies on Language in Relation to Society

Dr. KHETIR Naima¹,
Superior School in Applied Sciences, Bel Horizon. Tlemcen, Algeria.
E -mail address: hidayette13yousfi@outlook.fr
naima.khetir@essa-tlemcen.dz

تاريخ علم اللغة الاجتماعي: دراسات عن اللغة وعلاقتها بالمجتمع.

د.د. نعيمة ختير

المدرسة العليا للعلوم التطبيقية، تلمسان

Received: 20/05/2025

Accepted: 22/06/2025

Published:31/07/2025

Abstract: This article aims at providing a report outlining important topics tackled in the field of research of sociolinguistics known as ‘study of language in its social context’, and understanding the determinants of this branch as well as their applications to historical sociolinguistic research. Many different exploratory studies have revealed special characteristics of language use utilised by different groups of people. Qualitative descriptions of multiple fieldwork data are stated. As pioneers: Ferguson¹, Fishman², Labov³ and Bernstein⁴ clearly distinguished between concepts and contributed to the ‘study of language in its social context’. Sociolinguists showed more interests to characterise the study in language acquisition and social attitudes towards language. This article also stresses the description and assessment of specific contributions through stages in the realm of ‘analysis in relation to the speaker’s mind and social reference’. The exploration of this discipline and efforts to explain a number of socially significant language forms, serve to identify the status of speakers and communities. Another important issue is what parameters contribute to the understanding of language from the psychological, social, and sociolinguistic perspectives.

Keywords: History; sociolinguistics; language variation; interactional; social impact; psycholinguistics.

¹ Dr. KHETIR Naima, hidayette13yousfi@outlook.fr.

الملخص:

تهدف هذه المقالة إلى تقديم تقرير تاريخي كرونولوجي يوضح المواضيع المهمة التي عالجت مجال "أبحاث علم الاجتماع اللغوي" المعروف باسم "دراسة اللغة في سياقها الاجتماعي"، وفهم محددات هذا الفرع بالإضافة إلى تطبيقاتها على البحث الاجتماعي اللغوي التاريخي. فقد كشفت العديد من الدراسات الاستكشافية المختلفة عن سمات خاصة لاستعمال اللغة التي تستخدمها مجموعات بشرية مختلفة، تم ذكر أوصاف نوعية لبيانات العمل الميداني المتعددة، ومن الرواد في هذا المجال نذكر: "لابوف" و"برنشتاين" حيث ساهم هؤلاء في "دراسة اللغة في سياقها الاجتماعي"، كما أظهروا المزيد من الاهتمام بتوصيف الدراسة في اكتساب اللغة والمواقف الاجتماعية تجاه اللغة.

تؤكد هذه المقالة أيضاً على وصف وتقييم المساهمات المحددة من خلال مراحل في مجال "التحليل فيما يتعلق بعقل المتحدث والمرجع الاجتماعي". إن استكشاف هذا التخصص والجهود المبذولة لشرح عدد من أشكال اللغة ذات الأهمية الاجتماعية تعمل على تحديد حالة المتحدثين والمجتمعات، ومن القضايا المهمة الأخرى تحديد المعايير التي تُسهم في فهم اللغة من المنظورات النفسية والاجتماعية واللغوية الاجتماعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التاريخ؛ اللغويات الاجتماعية؛ تنوع اللغة؛ التفاعلية؛ التأثير الاجتماعي؛ اللغويات النفسية.

1. Introduction

Social studies have been led on language interaction with linguistic patterns and historians stressed the interrelationship of human social behaviour with language use. The impact of sociological significance on linguistic variation increased within a historical dimension giving access to content data of a variety of sources. This article approaches sociolinguistics issues exploring the co-variation relationship that serves as a link to understand the interaction and connection between language and various social elements. Therefore, empirically supported studies investigate the relationship between social context and language use, that is, how language changes with factors such as social class, education level, age, prestige, gender, race, and region.

Research orientations and analytic tools are of parallel importance that require diverse analytic approaches investigating relevant topics such as language myths and language ideology. The study of the interaction of linguistic practices and society gave rise to several interrelated concepts such as historical multilingualism, the formation of nation-states, the sociolinguistics of minority and regional languages.

Moreover, other important topics were dealt with such as urban vernaculars, immigrants and their languages, the role of prescriptive grammarians, and the social history of pidgins and creoles. This field of language study aims at elucidating critical phenomena that provide the reader with deep-sighted research of the subject such as, language attitudes, language contact, language shift, language planning, bilingualism and multilingualism among others.

Sociology of language is the investigation of the relations between language and society. It focuses on the impact of society on language, whereas sociolinguistic studies language in relation to society. For the former, society is the main purpose of study, while the latter, language is the basic determinant of study. Therefore, sociolinguistics studies language and how it varies on the basis of the user's sociological background, such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. However, sociology of language (also known as macrosociolinguistics) studies society and how it is influenced by language.

2. General Overview

Sociolinguistic research started in the 1960s and 1970s as sociologists focused on how the structure of language was shaped by the contexts of its presence, and how language use influenced intergroup communications and cultural aspects. In the USA, linguists who pioneered this field of research met at the Anthropological Association's 1963 Annual Meeting and the 1964 Linguistic Society of America Summer Institute. Later, the findings enlightened the fundamental notions determining sociolinguistic issues that describe language use within fundamental dimensions of social behaviour and human interaction.

The relationship between language and society is influenced by a wide range of encounters, from international relations to closely defined interpersonal relationships. Many founders contributed vividly in characterising the development of sociolinguistics over the past decades, such as: Joshua Fishman⁵, Charles Ferguson and other important names in sociolinguistics as well as the sociology of language⁶. William Labov forged his variationist approach to the study of language change⁷; Basil Bernstein's

work on social class contributed to the study of communication with his sociolinguistic theory of language codes.

Furthermore, Dell Hymes explained the artistry and 'competence' advancing how discursive practices are analysed in a sociocultural context. He created '*Model of Speaking*' that was forged as the term communicative competence within language education. Gumperz investigated variation in discourse within a particular speech community⁸.

3. Social Approach

Mallinson tackled the context of an elaborated identity approach that relates social hierarchy to social systems of interaction⁹. Early 1960s, the social phenomena shaping language were investigated by Foucault and Rorty (1993) who discussed class, gender and ethnicity¹⁰. The focal point in this theory stems from social constructionism. Erving Goffman, a sociologist, focused on the sociological framework known as symbolic interactionism, he discussed interactants drawing on cultural 'frames' and explained interactional 'footings' as means to understand what is going on as they talk.

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Garot¹² and Berard studied ethnomethodology and conversation analysis with the increase of particular specialisations within the field of membership categorisation analysis issues that were taken up by many sociolinguists¹³. They examined broadly the work of Garfinkel, Sacks and others connected to meaning and social order detected in interaction¹⁴. Farfan and Holzsheiter propounded several ways of theorising power and its association with people's speech, in addition to using their language in relation to their cultural backgrounds and their aims of interaction.

Theorists such as Anthony Giddens, Arjun Appadurai, Scott Lash and John Urry, David Harvey¹⁵, Immanuel Wallerstein¹⁶ and others undertook globalisation and migration and studied topics such as speech community in multilingual settings, geographical mobility, language change and ethnolinguistic identity in cyberspace. Paul Kockelman¹⁷ examined semiotic theory that was undertaken by Charles Sanders Peirce in sociolinguistics¹⁸.

Anthropology realm had a remarkable impact led by Bronislaw Malinowski whose basic conception embodying sociolinguistics is merely uncomplicated: Language is a set of symbols that underlie fundamental dimensions of social behaviour and human interaction¹⁹ which result from the meeting of different linguistic groups²⁰. Erving Goffman and other qualitative sociologists dealt with language in context far from referring to linguistic theories and methodologies to examine language in use.

Dialectologists such as Kurath, Bloch and Hansen, Allen²¹, McDavid, McDavid and O'Cain and Pederson, McDavid and Leasin the USA and Orton,

Sanderson and Widdowson in England analysed regional dialects as well as situational styles based on interviews. This kind of work represented the basis of more theoretically elaborated work in variationist sociolinguistics²².

A variety of aspects of language and meaning were embraced in Chomsky's approach: transformational grammar. The linguistic 'competence' introduced by transformational, and later generative grammarians was dealt with in terms of the ability of idealised speaker-hearer to produce isolated sentences. During early 1960s and 1970s Jürgen and other pioneers adopted a different approach. Language in use and perceiving language as social practice led to the creation of concepts such as *language as action and communicative competence* that followed John Austin's and John Searle's *Speech Act Theory*. Thus, the main prospect of linguists was set on verbal utterances in context in both oral conversations and written documents²³.

Yet, Chomsky's analysis of 'Language in use' ²⁴was perceived as mere 'performance' and unrelated to scientific investigation. Furthermore, sociolinguists see that conversations and everyday interactions are dealt with inherent rules and norms that explain their own system and rules (phonetics, phonology, syntax and discourse) that are interrelated to social variables²⁵. Early proponents of sociolinguistics examined many data categories and undertook a range of methods of analysis that were different from those of formal linguists. Thus, various genres were analysed by means of quantitative as well as qualitative methods and ethnography ²⁶. This investigation stresses more closely on the effect of particular systematic relationships of the context of language change on social phenomena.

The focal practice that characterises sociolinguistics is applying the results of studies based on social, educational, and political problems that probably could create an opportunity to connect theory, description, and application in the study of language. By 1970s different levels of analysis were centred with issues of language planning, diglossia and bilingualism²⁷, Joshua Fishman²⁸. The variationist school of sociolinguistics represented by William Labov) is mostly based on linguistic structure and more in language change²⁹. In seminal research on linguistic variation in New York city, Labov found out that structures of variation transformed into language change associate with age and social class of the speakers in addition to self-conscious speaking. He applied 'linguistic variable' notion that appeared to statistical results from stratified random samples of speakers. Therefore, an explicit and testable model originated showing how linguistic change moves through a speech community.

Theoretical approaches at the micro level specified the scientific investigation. Basil Bernstein contributed to the study of communication based on a sociolinguistic theory of language codes, which provided clues

about the existence of inequalities based on social class as found in language use. He claimed that there are elaborated and restricted codes within the broader category of language codes. As an educator, Bernstein studied the relatively poor performance of working-class students in language-based criteria, as they came up with scores as high as their middle-class counterparts when learning mathematics. In his theory, Bernstein found out a direct relationship between societal class and language³⁰. His insights explain the assumption of an educator who adopted theoretical approaches from pedagogy with sociology.

4. Language Variation and Change

Dialectology is one of the most important research projects in sociolinguistics, it concentrates on social and historical motivations of variation across dialects. Its main concern implies linguistic variation on the level of dialects as well as in its geographical and social diffusion, its historical, political, cultural motivation and its quantification.

'Language variation and change' (LVC) has been a focal questioning through decades in sociolinguistics since the 1960s, often known as 'variationist sociolinguistics'. This new concept was adopted by Labov's³¹ a pioneering work "The Social Motivation of a Sound Change" and The Social Stratification of English in New York City³². Both studies were considered as the linguistic system in a different way. This new approach was then implicated in a seminal work entitled "Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change" by Weinreich. Labov³³ improved an active clarification that directly embodied linguistic phenomena as social phenomena and took into account the political, cultural and social issues of their analysis.³⁴

Language is considered as inherently diverse and as interactions in a social community. The 'theoretical linguistics' associated with the generative views of language can stand in opposition with 'variationist linguistics', as explained by Labov, which explicitly targeted the ways in which speech utterances vary in a speech community. Variation is associated with language change and more research is featured out in LVC in the linguistics of variation. The linguistic pattern is basically structuralist because the unit of analysis which is the 'linguistic variable' is comprehended with this model.

Social factors implying variation and patterns of change can reveal clues like linguistic variation recognised within socially governed frame of reference that visualises social criteria such as class, gender, etc. These considerations explore experience involved in conducting sociolinguistic fieldwork based on data collection. Linguistic change is investigated in the structural aspects of spoken language processes.³⁵

Linguistic variation is central to the study of actual speech in a given speech situation in parallel with social constructs that reveal the context of speech. Nonetheless, dialectic is often found within the scope of LVC. When dealing with language in actual use, the focal point falls on LVC investigated on the basis of macrostructure structure and quantitative variation. This means that speech is analysed in accordance with language-society relationship which may be invisible in interactional sociolinguistics. This leads researchers to investigate linguistic variations that can be correlated to differences in the social characteristics of the speakers using everyday speech³⁶.

Mendoza-Denton (2008) stressed the characteristics of the relationship between the individual and society that gave necessary data to the researcher to examine the patterns of variation. Dodsworth investigated social class and social networks as well as language variation. Research questions ask how social class, in relation with other social and stylistic factors have an effect on linguistic behaviour³⁷.

When including social class variables in quantitative analyses, many variationists have implied a range of empirical practices from sociology that traces an individual's position in a discrete social class. Therefore, scales that draw upon factors like income, education, and occupation are used. was involved in the considerable point of LVC: language change, hence, research into dialects and accents focused on descriptions of linguistic variation, particularly lexis and phonology, using linguistic atlases to show the different distributions of different dialect forms. The important point in Kerswill's investigation was to present a better view in historical linguistics held at the time that all sound change was regular and had no exceptions. Thus, dialectologists aimed to show that linguistic change, far from being regular, was in fact irregular and did not affect all sounds and/or words equally.³⁸

Another outstanding analyst in dialectology is Peter Trudgill who describes the manner in which macro social structures are used to examine the close link between language and society, in addition to many parameters that influence the way we speak. These include gender, environment, age, race, class, prestige, region and politics. Trudgill's books (1974, 1975, 1979) and surveys on languages and societies from all over the world provide examples from Afrikaans to Yiddish. Relevant data contributed with a major advancement in the development of dialectology as a result of finding out how and why people's ways of speaking varied.

Considerations of how language contact shapes varieties brought up a wide range of explanations in relation to society and have a profound effect on how we are perceived by others. Kristiansen's contributions were involved in notions of awareness, attitude and ideology in language variation

and change. Moreover, he operated with a distinction between subjective factors (social values and evaluations) and objective factors (all the others). The central concern here is: “attitudes, ideology and awareness”, but mostly because it reflects the theoretical position, which characterises language change driven by what is mainly known as “subconscious attitudes”.

Moreover, Nevalainen investigated the sociolinguistic understandings of contemporary speech communities that can be referred to historical data. Sociolinguistic investigation gives rise to issues related to social, historical and empirical variation. The variationist approach embodies the notion that language change cannot exist without variation. Research undertaken on Early Modern English in Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg reveals clues about various linguistic changes that can happen in societies, even though, restricted generations of speakers use new linguistic patterns to become the main variant. Nevalainen states that findings show that adults could change their linguistic usage during their lifetimes.

Wolfram makes a report of a series of methodologies used by variationists and other sociolinguists indicating the importance of specific research in the fieldwork methods. The central point is on issues of relevance to fieldwork for the analysis of dialects associated with the linguistic and cultural characteristics. In this respect, different linguistic patterns in the dialect that serve different purposes are discussed. The choice of words and the way the words are put together vary between styles in written texts. The study of language forms used in written texts exhibits the issue of linguistic variability, such differences noticed within written forms, is an example of how assessment of linguistic forms change over a wide area³⁹.

Sociolinguistics methodology emphasises the way of investigating how people use language in different environments. It gives access to clarify the conceptions of linguistic patterns used in some kind of social reference like class, gender, racial or ethnic identification, gang affiliation, and other. Adequate qualitative/ quantitative research techniques are required to obtain a more or less reliable results. Notwithstanding research techniques, sociolinguistic research applications are quite different in their nature and always depend on the research question under investigation. This may be illustrated in the variation of certain phonological features across different social classes that need quantitative methods used in variationist sociolinguistics (Bronislaw Malinowski 1913).

In addition, the impact of a range of theoretical and methodological social perspectives and practices were embraced in Stuart Hall, and Raymond Williams 1958. William's and Hall's works tackled various physical and psychical fields that remarkably influenced the study of 'capitalist

modernity's criterion, yet cultural and social relations can change through time.⁴⁰

Haugen is considered as a pioneer American sociolinguist and a leading scholar within the field of Norwegian-American studies. His contribution in the study of language standardisation represented a thoughtful debate of standards as a means of control across society. Sociopolitical factors can influence the distinction between dialect and language, for instance, in some cases a given linguistic variety is considered a dialect in one set of historical circumstance and may be regarded as a language in another.

The issue of standardised languages reveal that all countries select a dialect on which their standardised language was based. It should be note that a given language can be assigned different roles, such as international, official and national statuses. Many investigations provided clues on the exploration of language situation and linguistic diversity that helps to better understand how language is categorised in relation to personal, cultural and social identities. This provides some clarification of language change that leads to variation within a speech community implying social valuation of particular features as 'good' or 'bad'⁴¹.

Einar Haugen highlighted language policy study and practice of the Danish multinational, Grundfos, and used it as a “sociolinguistic laboratory” to “test” the theory of language standardisation. As a research topic, language standardisation implements several theoretical standpoints and perspectives to explain the impact reflected in related fields such as national language planning and policy making⁴².

5. Interactional Sociolinguistics

Pragmatics emerged as an essential counterpart of sociolinguistics (1959,1962-64, 1973, 1982), wherefrom interactional sociolinguistics appeared considering how meaning is constructed as well as focusing on implied meanings. As language is an instrument of interaction, it enables people to be conscious of actual significance when they use a given linguistic variety and how they communicate and understand each other. Interactional sociolinguistics tries to provide reliable explanations on empirical communicative forms, for example, words, prosody, register shifts, and bodily orientations in addition to the meanings that speakers and listeners perceive and interpret through such forms. The major theoretical impact was to undertake ways in which sociocultural knowledge and communicative forms are interrelated in order to understand meaning.

Gumperz concentrated on “paralinguistic” and prosodic features and his findings developed the view that communication is both a correlation of talk and context. In fact, they are not simple constructs but context is implied

in talk. Due to his detailed and comparative knowledge of bilingual and language contact, Gumperz investigated instead multilingual phenomena such as code-switching, the juxtaposition of passages of speech belonging to two or more different grammatical systems. More explanations were implemented in his works related to the inferential and interpretive processes present in the communication of multilingual speakers. Thus, Gumperz found out that code-switching is only one of several discourse strategies that enable interlocutors to use contextual information about how to interpret communicative style. The concept of *contextualization cues* needs interactants in order to convey intimate knowledge of the communicative styles and practices of particular social groups. Distinctive aspects of an utterance, from word choice and grammar through voice quality, can act as contextualization data.⁴³

Hymes proposed the term '*ethnography of speaking*', later altered into '*ethnography of communication*', to describe a new approach to understand language in use. Hymes avoided to consider speech as an abstract mode, he rather preferred to investigate the diversity of speech as it is valid in ethnographic fieldwork. Hymes's central point was based on linguistics 'ways of speaking'. The idea of language as a set of ways of speaking can imply the idea of language as grammar, an abstracted set of rules or norms. Hymes provides a conception of speech that embodies both the 'means of speech' available to speakers, and the 'speech economy' these speakers participate in. With the help of innovative methodology in interactional sociolinguistics⁴⁴, J. L. Austin a British philosopher of languages, introduced the speech act theory in his book "How to Do Things with Words", which stems from structuralism and considers language as a sort of action rather than a medium to convey and express meanings. His view concentrates on the (ir)relevance of the use of the Austinian categorisation into locution, illocution, and perlocution in locating a divide in between pragmatics and semantics.

Significantly, the emphasis is related to the distinction between the locutionary act and the illocutionary act which embodies pragmatics and its separation from the semantic theory. Later, it was further developed by the American philosopher J.R. Searle. This theory is mostly adopted in the field of philosophy of languages. Austin explained with his findings that people not only use that language to assert things but also to do things⁴⁵.

Sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics are areas of study that can overlap. Research on linguistic competence demonstrates that distinctions may influence the ease of speaker's linguistic realisations. The main notion here is that there is no clear-cut between these differences that could be fundamental or that they prevent the formation of concepts. One important focus of recent psycholinguistic research is on syntactic organization, an

essential determinant of human language. The analysis of language use requires present psychological theories, while speech is a form of individual behaviour, that is to say, the grammar of the language of any individual is a construct.

The old psychological distinction between "learning" and "performance" is explained in psycholinguistic analysis of "competence" and "performance." This statement was affected by considerable research as *Communicative Choice* and by the "rules" underlying language use led by Suzan Ervin-Tripp. She acted as a pioneer and ingenious researcher in psycholinguistics as well as *Child Language and Communicative Choice*. She contributed with a remarkable intellectual innovation that led her to have a central role in the establishment of psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and child language. She also provided guidance ⁴⁶in the fields of bilingualism, second language acquisition and gender studies.

6. Multilingualism and Language Contact

Linguists and sociologists have conducted multilingualism and bilingualism fieldwork projects in the world during the last century to explore languages in contact. At the same time, academic disciplines were established in the West to describe the constructs of languages and cultures. This research emphasizes the quantitative distinction between *multilingualism* and *bilingualism* to analyse the complexity and diversity embedded in acquisition and use when more than two languages co-exist. It was found out that multilinguals have larger overall linguistic repertoires, but the range of the language situations in which multilinguals could participate, offers language choices more extensively.⁴⁷

Fishman (1965-2006) a pioneer in multilingualism and bilingual education carried out important studies in sociology and history of the Yiddish language planning, reversing language shift, language revival and ethnicity. Fishman created an intellectual platform that has clearly facilitated the implementation and spread of conceptual models as well as new theories that have created fruitful academic debates, syntheses and cross-fertilizations. Fishman dealt exclusively with the functional and sociological trends that led to the emergence of different themes like interaction, function, power, ideology, and globalisation. Societal bilingualism represents the functional distribution of languages or language varieties across a given population, often reflecting past migrations.

Functional patterns may also reflect differences in power among social groups (social classes, religious or aristocratic classes) with the dominant variety sometimes appearing clearly differentiated (diglossia) and strategic

resource in conversation⁴⁸. Ferguson made fundamental contributions to language universals, language use in society, and language change. *Diglossia* is a linguistic term forged by Ferguson when he dealt with studies on language and society. One of his realisations indicated that some communities make use of two varieties of the same language, thus they live in a "diglossic" speech community: A low (L) local, vernacular, spoken variety associated with informal, everyday communication; and a high (H) more prestigious, superposed version associated with education, government, religion and literature. Speakers and writers select between L and H according to the situation determinants. H and L refer to the different cultural values of a speaker or the speech situation⁴⁹.

The study of bilingualism was developed in an academic field that involved universals and methodological structures in addition to sociology as well as anthropology in order to highlight differences and examine cultural constructs. In experimental psychology, it was a determinant to test the latest theory or hypothesis in memory; and, even in linguistics. Thus, bilingual inquiry is maturing as a science which needs an account of both its sociopragmatic and psycholinguistic parameters⁵⁰. Empirical studies of contact situations focus on the investigation of the co-existence of two varieties on the individual level of bilingualism.

Fishman's works on bilingualism mirror contrasting terms of compound and co-ordinate bilinguals that take into account the differences emerge from a different temporal sequence of language acquisition produced by the individual. Hence, stable and unstable bilinguals stand for the stability of language acquisition by individuals, that is to say whether one will in his/her later life continue to use both languages in different domains in which they were acquired (stable bilingual) or lose his/her indigenous language and expose the dominant culture language.⁵¹

In the realm of dialectology evolution such as language contact and language change in general, new concepts emerged: *Pidgins* and *creoles* that describe new varieties of language generated in situations of language contact. A *pidgin* is related to its social role, used for limited communication between speakers of two or more languages who have usually extended contacts with each other, for instance, through trade, enslavement, or migration. A pidgin concept indicates elements of the native languages of its users and is typically simpler than those native languages as it contains fewer words, less morphology, and a more restricted range of phonological and syntactic options⁵². A *creole*, in the classical sense of Hall, is a pidgin that is usually spoken by the descendants of pidgin speakers who grow up using the pidgin as their first language. Creoles have a wide range of vocabulary items,

mainly, and more complicated grammatical resources (e.g., in Tok Pisin in New Guinea, Sango in the Central African Republic)⁵³.

7. Conclusion

Languages are rule-governed as societies, and sociolinguists assert how difficult it is to make generalizations about both concepts. It is no wonder that languages are as complex as societies, thus, sociolinguists try to describe scientifically this social and linguistic complexity. Human languages are always changing, as they correspond to changes in social structure, moreover, the central question remains the area of study supporting the view that there is neither societies as primitive nor primitive cultures, so it is equally naive to believe that certain people speak primitive languages. Investigations show that varieties of languages reflect social criteria such as regional, social, or ethnic origin and social requirements determine rules for conversing and choices of words. Therefore, theories were established to formulate and develop paradigms to enable the sociolinguist to explore new areas of interrelationship between language and society in order to understand the fundamental human phenomena. The formal linguist and the psycholinguist apply a plethora of methods to answer questions about language as a system with universal features. Hence, the sociolinguist takes it as a primary task to analyse the connections between the variations within language varieties and social groups. Exhaustive and definitive study of a single culture or of a single language is not often available, so, immediate prospects of the amount of variation could also be apparent wherever we investigate language varieties. Speakers use a wide range of styles and variations, even though they may not be conscious of precisely what they are expressing or what kind of reactions to the variants they have. Linguists working with the Chomskyan view have generally tried not to involve themselves with variation, assuming language as homogeneous and describing a linguistic competence that all speakers possess. Yet, sociolinguists' efforts have been based on the determination of social value associated with varieties, the stratification of 'symbolic values' attempts to explain language behaviour in speech communities, and seeks to understand the characteristics or marked functions of language for speakers and interaction. In the realm of linguistics and sociolinguistics, academic debates make clear that each approach to the study of language and society provides analysis of human communication and everyday social life.

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