

**Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics**  
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**Lecture 1**  
**Course Introduction**

Welcome to class. Today, we are going to understand the topics, and the mode, and the philosophy behind designing this course, utility of this course, and why a person not even from linguistics background but from other disciplines also needs to understand complexities of language as a social phenomenon.

The name of the course, 'Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics' has been named this way to make sure that the commoners or the person with no linguistics training and background can understand these fundamental concepts and understand the nuances of these concepts.

This course does not require any prior knowledge of linguistics, the course has been designed in such a way that even a common person who does not have training, specific training in the discipline will be able to understand. So, this is a beginners course in that way. But at the same time, efforts have been made to make it grounded in the theoretical background of the discipline and make the learner familiar with chronological developments in the discipline.

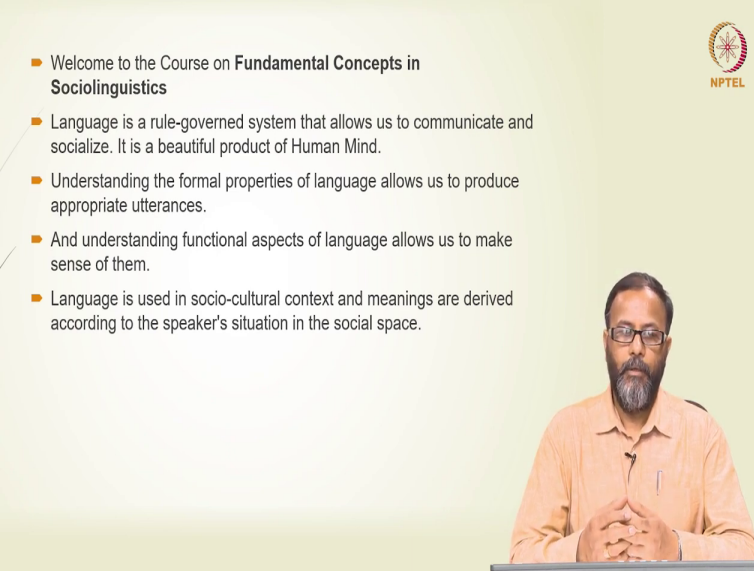
Language is a beautiful product of human mind, and it comes to us so naturally and easily that most of us do not even realize the complexities of it. We have no idea sometimes why our behavior and attitude towards speakers of other languages change. What do we think of other languages? What kind of biases do we have about other languages?

How do we associate with people who speak a different language? Our social attitude, our social behavior, our association, the process of socialization all these are influenced to a great extent by our attitude towards our own language. So, this course makes you familiar with an interdependent and symbiotic relationship between language and society.

And we call it fundamental concepts in sociolinguistics to make sure that you understand the fundamental ideas in sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics a compound word refers to two separate disciplines sociology and linguistics and how these two are related. What is the common ground?

This is the basis of this course. So, welcome to our course on “Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics”.

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- Welcome to the Course on **Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics**
- Language is a rule-governed system that allows us to communicate and socialize. It is a beautiful product of Human Mind.
- Understanding the formal properties of language allows us to produce appropriate utterances.
- And understanding functional aspects of language allows us to make sense of them.
- Language is used in socio-cultural context and meanings are derived according to the speaker's situation in the social space.

Language is a rule-governed system, and it allows us to communicate and socialize. We cannot imagine socialization, relating to each other, interaction without language, language forms communities. We all have linguistic allegiance. We all relate to ourselves, keeping at the center language that we use to interact and socialize.

So, we can have formal properties of language that talks about the structure and formal properties of it and the other is the language use, functional properties. So, what are the factors which determine a particular selection of lexicons, expressions? How is language used in a context, socio-cultural context?

Does culture and society we live in, do they have influence on the language we speak? And, do languages have influence on social patterns and cultural practices? So, that is a long-debated issue, but there is no denial that language does have influence and impact on social order and cultural practices and vice-versa. Social orders, social configurations and cultural norms and practices do influence language.


So, they are interdependent. So, language is not an independent entity. It is grounded socio-culturally, it has roots in our socio-cultural background, it grows like an organism, we

cannot take it out. If you want to understand a language you require to understand the culture and social norms of this communities which speak that language and then you can relate to it.


So, it is a socio-cultural product, it is used in a socio-cultural context. And the meanings that we derive, we derive in terms of speaker's location in the socio-cultural space. So, if you want to understand Tamil and, in their language, you need to understand the Tamil society. Understanding a language makes you understand a complete new culture. It takes you to a new culture, new society. So, we cannot keep them separate.

So, the mandate of this course is to underline this interdependent symbiotic relationship between language and the society is spoken in. Language and their speakers, members of a speech community, how they are related. Language is used for communication and socialization, interaction and verbal exchanges. But the role of language is not limited to that; it is a vigorous marker of our identity.

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- This course takes you on a journey where you get an opportunity to discover Language through various socio-cultural contours; such as:
  - Identity, Gender, Social Class, Culture, Dialects, Bilingualism/Multilingualism, Language Variation and Change, Language Policy and Planning, etc. and so many other concepts.
  - And to discover how language engages with these concepts.



And we associate ourselves with a community by subscribing to the cultural practices and social norms. Language encodes our cultural history, our social patterns, our common narratives; it represents our collective memory, narratives. So, it is very, deeply rooted in our social history in our, in our cultural history and knowledge.

So, this course has several modules. We will have 12 modules in total. I have tried to focus on one theme in a particular module. However, you will find some overlapping concepts and some overlapping modules. In the 12 weeks, it is difficult to encompass a wide range of topics and themes in this discipline. But I have tried to make it as accommodative as possible. For eg, concepts like language and society, language and culture, language and gender, language and identity. So, how the social matrix, the social themes like gender, class etc. determine the use of language. What is the relationship between language and society? How does it represent the social configuration, social stratification, social status, social class? What is the relationship between language and culture?

You might be aware of Sapir Whorf hypothesis, linguistic determinism. So, does language determine our cognitive capabilities and its use? We will see that. We will understand language as a system to begin with in module one. So, we will talk about language as a system, how multiple subsystems like phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics interact and form a single composite form called language.

So how these subsystems interact and form a composite system, making language a complete system. We will talk about language and culture, where we will talk about linguistic relativity, Sapir Whorf hypothesis, and language and gender. That is, how language encodes gender and how gender is represented in language. We will talk about language and class. Does language vary according to the class? we will talk about it in this course.

Next is dialects. Dialects are more of linguistic attitude of a speaker towards the language they speak and also others attitude towards the language others speak. So, these concepts will be part of module one. Then will talk about how language is acquired. That is, acquisition of language. How do we understand the process of acquisition, what are the theoretical positions?

Like behaviorism, how behaviorism looks at language acquisition, first language acquisition, how a human child acquires a language. Perspectives like Chomskyan perspective, nativist theory. So, the theoretical position taken by Chomsky in genetic grammar or the functionalist approach, so we will talk about in module two, we will talk about various positions, theoretical positions, paradigms and understandings of language acquisition process.

Then we will talk about concepts like bilingualism, concepts like multilingualism. How is it significant for a speaker to understand and be able to use two languages? Does it influence the manner in which a speaker uses a language? What is linguistic manifestation? And what are the outcomes of such linguistic situations.

So, concepts like diglossia, that is, a sociolinguistics situation where within the same space community, we have two or more languages for various different functions. And the preference to use a particular language for a particular function is structured, it is not random and arbitrary, there is a pattern. So, we will discover that when we talk about diglossia. Concepts like code mixing and code switching; it is a bilingual outcome of a bilingual mind.

So, when a user prefers to mix items and concepts from one language to other, what is the motivation behind mixing two codes? What is the trigger, which allows a speaker to mix from two different codes and two different linguistic sources? What is the impact of it in the social situation and context in which it is being mixed? Code switching, so in the single larger discourse, what is the motivation for a user to switch from one code to the other?

So, we will talk about it. How does this phenomenon yield hybridity? So, how it creates linguistic hybridity? We will talk about it. Then we will talk about concepts like pidgin and creoles. So, what happens when two distinct communities with no language in common, come in contact and sustain this contact for a longer period of time, motivated by, triggered by trade and colonization process and how a new language is born because of this contact.

We will talk about concepts like language contact and convergence. We will talk about concepts like language maintenance and shift. Specifically, in case of migration, when a population migrates and settles in a new geographical location, how do they maintain their own language and culture and how gradually this process leads to shift, we will talk about it. Another module that we will talk about is the statutory status of languages.


So, in language planning, how and what is the process of language dissection and linguistic policy. We will talk about them. For example, the constitutional provisions and statutory provisions. We will talk about linguistic tension and linguistic harmony. So, there are a wide range of topics that we will do to cover this course.

These topics do affect our everyday life. So, sociolinguistics is a discipline and I have made special effort to make sure that these concepts reach the layperson or even somebody who does not have training in linguistics, and the discipline or formal training, will be able to relate to it. And you can observe things around you, the idea of mother tongue for that matter, standard versus non-standard languages, vernacular etc.

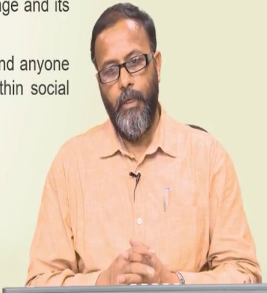
So, these are the concepts which form the foundation of this course. So, these are the basic fundamental concepts we are going to explore in this course. So, when we say sociolinguistics, there are two disciplines that we can imagine encoded in the name, sociology and linguistics. So, this term social linguistics came into higher use and current say not until 1960s. Though the term was used long back, but the term the way we know today, in modern linguistics.

1960s are fertile time for the emergence of this discipline. And we can see a series of, series of publications, series of works that came into limelight that gave foundation to this new discipline. It is not the case that earlier people did not work in language and society relationship. If you look at dialectology, it is a long practice tradition, before, much before 1960. So, early nineteenth century it started.

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- Language encodes our inherited knowledge and helps us create meaning out of our everyday experiences.
- Language is instrumental in constructing meaning and defining associations with our world.
- As a social phenomenon, it shapes every aspect of our lives and binds us together.
- Join me in this course for discovering a beautiful world of language and its centrality in organizing our societies.
- This course does not require any prior knowledge and training and anyone and everyone can join this exploration of locating language within social and cultural spaces.



So, if you look at the, the nature of the work before 1960s, by the way, it is important to understand why 1960s are so, that decade is so important. Post Second World War and

emergence of multiple hybrid disciplines, we find the Bloomfield in taxonomy and the behaviorist paradigm giving shape to understanding of the field.

And lots of new works pioneered the development like the behaviorist publication by B. F. Skinner in 1957, verbal behavior followed by severe criticism of Chomskyan criticism of this behaviorist paradigm beginning of a new paradigm called generative grammar/ nativist paradigm. That is, when language becomes an innate endowment. So unlike behaviorist language becomes innate endowment in nativism by Chomsky.

And then comes the Chomskyan insistence on understanding the abstract structural representation of language in human mind , making it so abstract and hardcore technical idea that attracted a lot of criticism from other people who were advocating the language use, functions of it. So, Chomsky emphasizes on form whereas a group of scholars criticized Chomsky and focused on the functions.

So, we see a series of responses by different scholars like Dell Hymes, M. A. K Halliday, who emphasize on language use. So, Chomskyan idea of linguistic competence was countered by Dell Hymes with the idea of linguistic, idea of communicative competence. So, we see that the series of responses and reactions gave a new discussion and it opened new frontiers of discussions in the field.

And by 1960s scholars, like Basil Bernstein, like William Labov, like Dell Hymes, M. A. K. Halliday, Joshua Fishman, Ferguson, Susan Ervin Tripp, William Bright, came up with some responses in some form or the other emphasizing on the socio-cultural manifestation of language and they emphasize on the context in which the language is being used. So, language is not simply a means of communication, but it also constructs our identity. There are social factors behind language use.

So, if we collate all these responses and reactions to this new development, we see that 1960s was a fertile decade and it gave birth to sociolinguistics as an independent new discipline. So, this course also takes you along with all these developments and makes you familiar with the contributing seminal works of these scholars, which shaped the form of this discipline.

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From Dialectology to Sociolinguistics

- study of language in relation to dialects from a regional angle
- begun by Georg Wenker in 1876
- also called 'Dialect Geography'
- sub-discipline of linguistics
- No focus on social factors in language use and change

NPTEL


The slide features a light green background. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a red and white design, labeled 'NPTEL'. In the bottom right corner, there is a small inset video of a man with a beard and glasses, wearing an orange shirt, sitting at a desk with his hands clasped.

So, moving on from dialectology to sociolinguistics, it is a long journey. In dialectology the emphasis was to understand the variation, in terms of grammatical variations, phonological variations, accent, style. So, language was studied as an object and how it varies in different locations and as an input or as a data we used to choose the rural population, which had less mobility, uneducated people, because then you would not have this risk of mixing of languages, varieties. So, there was a bias choice for understanding the dialectological variations. And it was considered as sub-discipline of linguistics.

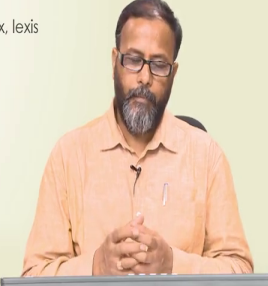
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## Aims of Dialectology



- registering language use
- focusing on regional variants
- documenting individual place dialects
- linguistic geographic data
- producing linguistic maps
- analyzing language variation (phonology, semantics, syntax, lexis and morphology)
- ignoring social aspects



Then we see the aim of dialectology was to understand and record the variation in language use and the focus was on regional variations, geographical variations and this entire enterprise try to document individual locations and the individual dialect used at that location, the properties of that particular dialect.

Then it was sort of a linguistic geographical data and producing linguistic maps. So, they studied language variations in terms of phonological variations, syntactic variations, the lexicons used. And this dialectology study did not focus on the social aspects of language. So, it was focusing more on the structural part of it and the form of it.

What form is used at what place? How it varies from the other place, and what are the changes and variations that we can underline? So, these are the motivations or aims of dialectology. Though it is studied as ‘language in use’ but from geographical point of view, its location, group and speech community and it was more of a contrasting from one particular dialect with the other.

And establishing the fact that this dialect is different from this dialect in terms of phonological variation, syntactic variations, or lexical variations; but it is not focused on the sociological factors, socio-cultural context in which they are used. So, it is studied specific space and specific community with specific dialect.

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## Methods Used



- tape-recording
- non-mobile, elderly, uneducated, un-travelled, rural males
- biased choice of informants
- list of items
- questionnaire (written/oral)




They use the same method that we use till date, but with little modification although. So, they used to go to such places, remote places record their speech, create their tapes. They used to focus on non-mobile, elderly, educated, not traveled rural population. So, in that case, the choice was biased and very focused.


They would collect list of items, vocabulary and they used to have questioners, both written questionnaires and oral questionnaires and that gave them a huge variety of data, they would analyze it and they would establish the properties of x dialect spoken at a particular place and this is how dialectal variations were recorded.

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## Urban Dialectology

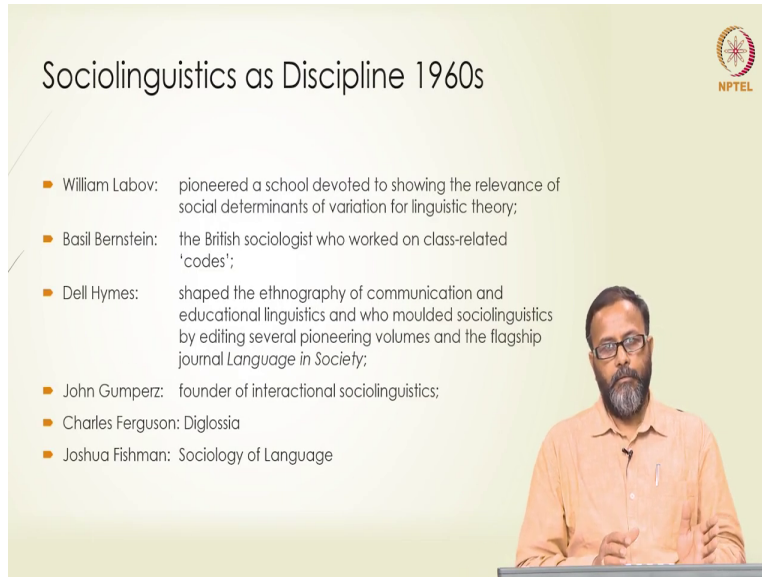


- mid-20th century works tried to integrate social factors
  - Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada* (by Hans Kurath, 1930)
- focus on urban dialects
- interest in phonology and grammar
- quasi-conversational speech
- choice of informants biased



In mid-twentieth century what we see, that the works try to integrate social factors to an extent and they, started focusing on urban dialectology as well. So there was a shift from rural dialectology now we come to urban dialectology. So, the focus was on urban dialects, varieties. But the primary focus still remained on phonology and grammar of the dialect. So, they would record quasi-conversational speech and here also the choice of informants was biased.

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The slide is titled "Sociolinguistics as Discipline 1960s" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains a bulleted list of six scholars and their contributions to the field. A video inset in the bottom right shows a man with a beard and glasses, wearing an orange shirt, speaking at a podium.

- William Labov: pioneered a school devoted to showing the relevance of social determinants of variation for linguistic theory;
- Basil Bernstein: the British sociologist who worked on class-related 'codes';
- Dell Hymes: shaped the ethnography of communication and educational linguistics and who moulded sociolinguistics by editing several pioneering volumes and the flagship journal *Language in Society*;
- John Gumperz: founder of interactional sociolinguistics;
- Charles Ferguson: Diglossia
- Joshua Fishman: Sociology of Language

But slowly we see the social factors and social aspects taking center stage in studying language. So, language gradually drifting towards being a social object. The sociological factors, cultural factors have started emerging in the writings of people and how these influence the language use. When we talk about modern sociolinguistics as a separate discipline, then 1960s is a milestone decade.

And I call a decade because it is not just work of one or two years, the entire 1960s as a decade produced a lot of seminal work that changed our perception about language and that grounded language in a socio-cultural context. Whether you call it in Fishman's and Ferguson's terminology, sociology of language, or you call your sociolinguistics it is more almost now they are being used interchangeably now.

And there was a deliberate campaign and efforts to establish this discipline and there were certain founders and founding fathers we should understand, and we should know. So, this course will focus on 12 such as scholars, we call founding fathers of modern sociolinguistics. So, we will have two modules dedicated to the works by such people like William Labov.

Labov pioneered a school devoted to showing the relevance of social determinants of variation for linguistic theory, so how social stratification, influence and control the language you wish.

So, it was a Labovian variation, variation is tradition. Two of his famous works, Martha Vineyard Island case study, and Fourth Floor Survey New York.

Then, there are British sociologists like Basil Bernstein, who worked on class related codes that pioneered a series of works. Later, Dell Hymes, also became a founding father of modern sociolinguistics. Dell Hymes's response to Chomskyan linguistic competence in terms of communicative competence and his work on ethnography of communication; the speaking model changed the understanding of language as a social reality.


John Gumperz is also founding father of modern sociolinguistics. So, John Gumperz who pioneered the work in interactional sociolinguistics - language in Jewish. Then Charles Ferguson, a seminal work on diglossia, the term diglossia, he coined the term diglossia, where he studied functions of language.

The sociolinguistic situation where two varieties of the same language or two different varieties are used for two different social domains, functional domains, formal or informal domains is diglossia. Then we come to Joshua Fishman's work on sociology of language, sociological factors which determine language use.

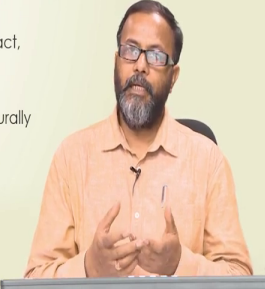
These six pioneers William Labov, Basil Bernstein, Dell Hymes, John Gumperz, Charles Ferguson, and Joshua Fishman must be studied for anyone who wants to understand sociolinguistics, symbiotic relationship between language and society, language and culture.

So, when you want to understand sociolinguistics, you need to understand these six founding fathers and also their work which gave foundation for the emergence of a new discipline.

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- William Bright: native languages and cultures of California, research on the Native American languages
- Allen Grimshaw: language and social contexts during a visit to India in 1961
- Einar Haugen: bilingualism and language shift. He was the first linguist to write about the ecology of language, Study of Norwegian language planning (Haugen, 1966) was a ground breaking work.
- Uriel Weinreich: a seminal work for understanding language contact, minority languages, language revival
- Sue Ervin-Tripp: distinction between compound and coordinate bilingualism, child language acquisition cross-culturally



But they are not alone. There is William Bright, who is credited for a very deep understanding of native languages and cultures. He is credited for the search in Native American languages and their cultures. Then, Ellen Grimshaw, for that matter who visited India in 1961 got interested in social context of language and contributed a lot.

Then Einar Haugen, a Norwegian, who was the first to talk about linguistic ecology. Who was the first to talk about, one of the first people to talk about language planning and the study of Norwegian language planning in 1966 that came out is groundbreaking work and still cited. Then people like Uriel Weinreich whose seminal work for understanding language contact, minority languages and language revival, we cannot overlook.

Susan Ervin Tripp who was a psychologist, but her study on compound and coordinate bilingualism and child language acquisition cross culturally established the socio-cultural context and acquisition process. So, to understand social linguistics as a discipline, we need to understand these founding pillars of modern social linguistics.

So, we have dedicated two modules to understand these 12 people and their seminal work, which gave rock solid foundation to this discipline.

So, they will have foundation in other modules, we will talk about language planning. We will talk about types of planning. We will talk about Indian context, trilingual formula, statutory

status of languages in India; we will talk about multilingual Indian ecological system. We will talk about education policy; we will talk about national education policy.

So, this course is more of a general understanding of language as a phenomenon and its deeply rooted state in the socio-cultural context. So, how languages are socio-culturally rooted is the mandate of this course. This course does not require any formal training. I repeat. And one does not have to be a linguist to understand this course.

But learners from various disciplines like sociology, political science, anthropology, literature, philosophy, comparative literature, and other social studies disciplines they will find this course very useful for them to understand language as a phenomenon and manifestations of it in our everyday life all over. So, I welcome all of you to this course.

And we will uncover a number of known facts, I mean, this course does not claim that it is going to introduce you to some unknown, mysterious and very technical themes and topics, we are going to talk about common themes, common topics, which we never paid attention to, which we could not look at closely. So, this is a generalized course for a wide range of learners and participants. And it does not presuppose any understanding of linguistic theories.

But it tells you in a narrative mode the beautiful story of language in our life, in our social life, how it constitutes our identity. You might have seen a lot of political conflicts originate into linguistic conflicts, from linguistic conflicts. Look at for example, creation of Bangladesh, the recent example, this is Urdu versus Bangla conflict, which led to division of East and West Pakistan. Look at the linguistic reorganization of states in India for that matter.

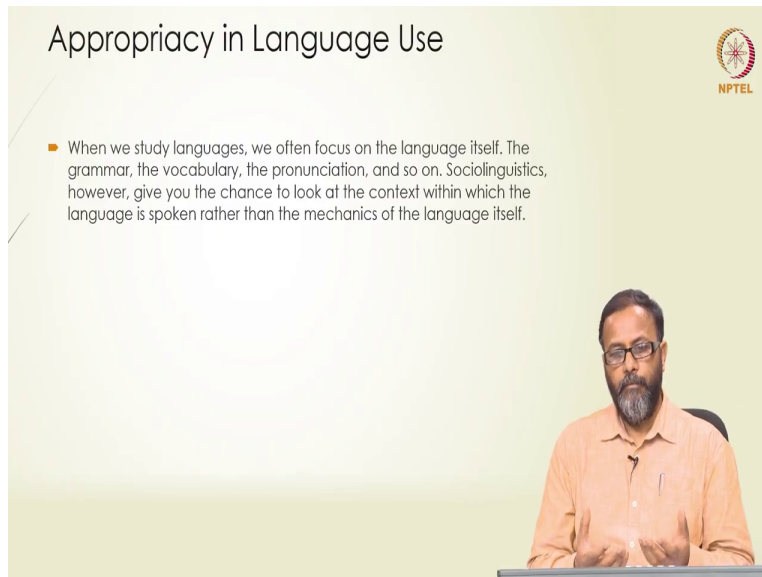
And look at the undercurrents. Multilingual societies like India or post-colonial societies, they have been struggling to frame a suitable language policy and experimentations are still on. We in India also have experimented a lot. And Indian constitution adopted on 26th January 1950 recognizes the importance of multilingualism and devices schedule eight to include multiple languages as official languages.

So, India statutory recognizes the society as a multilingual society. And today we have 22 languages in schedule eight scheduled, which are considered official languages of India. Unlike United States of America for that matter, where there is no official language. There is no

declared official language; English is the language of United States. And there is a movement by a group called English Only Movement.

Unlike France which is a declared monolingual state. So, there are many complex situations when you talk about language policy and planning. We will talk about process of digestion. We will talk about stages of planning, and we will talk about the post-colonial societies where this question is still remains unanswered.

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The slide features a title 'Appropriacy in Language Use' at the top left. In the top right corner, there is the NPTEL logo, which consists of a circular emblem with a lamp and the text 'NPTEL' below it. A single bullet point is positioned in the middle-left area of the slide. At the bottom of the slide, a man with a beard and glasses, wearing an orange shirt, is shown from the chest up, sitting at a desk and speaking.

### Appropriacy in Language Use

- When we study languages, we often focus on the language itself. The grammar, the vocabulary, the pronunciation, and so on. Sociolinguistics, however, give you the chance to look at the context within which the language is spoken rather than the mechanics of the language itself.

So, this course introduces a wide range of topics. To develop a fundamental understanding of language in society, language in use and that is why we have named it fundamental concepts in sociolinguistics. So, when we study languages, we often focus on language itself but this course talks about the language as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

How it constructs our identity, how it configures a social class, how social configuration is mimicked in linguistic stratification, what is our attitude towards a speaker for the language, what is the motivation of mixing the codes. So, all such general questions which you never focused on separately you will get a chance here to discover these ideas with a new perspective.

So, I welcome participants from all discipline, social science disciplines, not only linguistics, to participate and discover the beautiful world of language. So, this is the mandate of the course. I welcome you again and believe that in coming modules, 12 modules, you will be able to



understand language as socio-cultural phenomenon. So, join the course and let us begin our journey. Thank you very much.