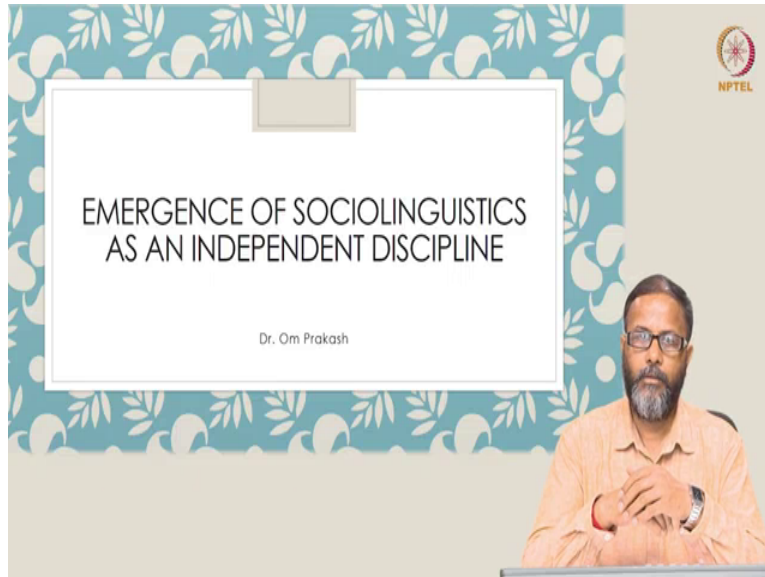


Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
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Emergence of Sociolinguistics As An Independent Discipline

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Welcome to class. Today we will start a series of videos where we will talk about the Emergence of Sociolinguistics as an Independent Discipline. Why are we doing this? We are doing this to underline our historical development in the field of linguistics, where this new discipline emerged out of co-linguistics and gained currency and popularity and was established as an independent discipline by a few scholars in the field who are also known as founding fathers of modern sociolinguistics.

By doing this, we are not denying the facts of the relationship between language and society, and the role of language in social configuration, such relationships between language and society. Such themes have already been explored and people have done a lot of good work in that. Notable contributions include Ferdinand de Saussure's 'structural linguistics'. There he talks about la langue, la parole, ideas like synchronic, diachronic, and other dichotomies of Saussure. So, language and its relationship with society was explored.

But why we are doing a separate series on this theme is to underline the fact that a new wave of interest and scholarship emerged in the 1960s, which had a different approach in looking at

language from this sociological perspective, that angle. People have worked—like anthropologists, sociologists, like Edward Sapir, like Benjamin Lee Whorf. They have already worked in the field and contributed a lot. But the 1960s decade has proved to be so fertile and so distinct that we will focus on a few scholars who truly contributed to the emergence of this discipline as an independent discipline with a new approach.

So, the interest in language and society was not new. And it is not the case that it emerged in the 1960s. But why 1960s as a decade is important, we will learn very shortly. So, we are going to talk about the emergence of sociolinguistics as an independent discipline.

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The slide features the title 'Sociolinguistics' at the top center. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a red and white design and the text 'NPTEL' below it. A list of six bullet points is positioned on the left side of the slide. On the right side, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing an orange shirt, speaking at a podium.

Sociolinguistics

- socio- (referring to society) and linguistics
- scientific study of social aspects of language
- focuses the relationship between language structures and social structures
- emphasizes the communicative competence of speakers (language use)
- language variation (i.e. due to different socio-cultural backgrounds)
- language is not only used for exchange of information but also to create identity

Sociolinguistics, a compound word or term, has two components: ‘socio’ that refers to society and ‘linguistics’, a discipline, which studies language. So, these two disciplines merge together. So, sociolinguistics is a study of, it is a social study of language, a scientific study of social aspects of language. So, how language interacts, negotiates in society. What prompts the user of the language to use a particular variety with a particular variant in a sociocultural context, in a sociocultural space. How a speaker constructs identity and reflects and expresses his solidarity with the communities, speech community. So, these are the thrust areas of sociolinguistics.


It focuses on the relationship between language structures and social aspects. We will come to this relationship in a while. Sociolinguistics is more of looking at language in actual

sociocultural context, language used in actual sociocultural context. And we will talk about Dell Hymes communicative competence as a response to the generative linguistic theory by Chomsky. Variation is a very central theme of modern sociolinguistics.

It all started with William Labov and how the tradition continues and how this study of variation vis-a-vis social class, gender, geographical location, cultural space, other indexes and factors, how they factor in understanding language variation. How these variations are triggered by certain sociocultural components, certain sociocultural factors. We will talk about it. That is a major thrust area of sociolinguistics, modern sociolinguistics and study of language variation.


So, language is not only used for communication, language is not only about exchanging ideas and sharing opinion and views, information, it is beyond that. It constructs the identity of the speaker. A speaker represents the solidarity, reflects the solidarity with the speech community he or she is located in. And there are certain other factors which are central to this study of language in this newly emerged discipline called sociolinguistics.

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From Dialectology to Sociolinguistics

- study of language in relation to dialects from a regional angle
- begun in late 19th Century
- also called 'Dialect Geography'
- sub-discipline of linguistics
- No focus on social factors in language use and change




How did it emerge? We have to understand the background of it. So, dialectology, philology, historical linguistics, these were the established fields. And dialectology looked at language from, a language in relation to the geographical location. So, how the change in geography, how the change in space brings in changes in language? The systematic study of variations in dialects

began in the mid-19th century, but carried on in the late 19th century. It was also called dialectal geography. It was a sub-discipline of linguistics.

However, the focus of dialectology as a sub-discipline of linguistics was different. The objectives were different. And there was no focus on social factors in language use and change. So, these changes were purely studied in terms of linguistic changes. The structures were studied purely in terms of linguistic structures. And there was no focus on the relationship between linguistic structures and social structures. It was more of linguistic variation that dialectology studied.

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The slide is titled "Objectives of Dialectology" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. A list of objectives is presented on the left side, and a photograph of a man with a beard and glasses is shown in the bottom right corner.

- 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

So, the objective of dialectology was to register language use, focus on regional variants, documenting individual place dialects, linguistic geographic data, producing linguistic maps, analyzing language variation in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and lexis were diverse, and it ignored the social aspect of language use. So, this was the objective of dialectology.

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The slide is titled "Methods Used" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. The methods listed are:

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

In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man with a beard and glasses, wearing an orange shirt, sitting at a desk with his hands clasped.

However, it changed after the 1950s. And why the late 50s was so important, we will come to that in a while. But let us first talk about what methods they used. So, they used tape recorders and roamed around and recorded speeches. They targeted the rural population, which was non-mobile. And in the rural population, they targeted older people, elderly people, who were non-mobile and preferably not educated. So, they saw them as a source of raw data. People who could not, who did not travel and so they were the one who were seen as the source of authentic data in this study.

So, it shows the biased choice of informants. They used to collect a list of items, isolated words, how they are used, a few sentences, how these words are used in those sentences or syntactic structures, morphological changes, accent changes and pronunciation. These were the focus areas of this dialectological study. And they used questionnaires both written and oral and they recorded the respondents and their responses. So, this was the method used in dialectology.

And you can see that there was hardly any focus or discussion on the social factor of such changes, such variations, the social factors in change of linguistic structures in terms of pronunciation, choice of words, syntactic structures, morphosyntactic elements. So, the entire focus was on linguistic variation. However, the social variation and social index did not figure out in these studies, and that is why what I was talking about the 1960s: the idea of doing linguistics with relation to society, was so different.

Now, we need to understand the development and the background of the 1960s. So, let us start with the 1950s and why these two decades are so crucial to understand. If we look at the early works, and early developments in the field of linguistics, of course, Ferdinand de Saussure is called the father of modern linguistics. So, Saussure's structuralism, and then we have this Bloomfield's idea, Leonard Bloomfield, and then we have this Zellig Harris and other people working in the field.

The 50s was dominated by behaviorist ideas, behaviorist paradigm and structuralism, where we see the last monumental work, I say last because after that things changed, so that was a historical development. So in 1957, BF Skinner came up with his monumental work "Verbal Behavior" that we have already talked about. And this behaviorist paradigm looked at language as human verbal behavior. So, it was part of total human behavior. So, the whole idea of tabula rasa and stimulus response and operant conditioning and, so lots of stimulus response chain, operant conditioning and reinforcement: so all these ideas were prevalent and dominant.

This approach was severely criticized by Noam Chomsky and 1957 is the year which is marked with the arrival of a new paradigm. So, the dominant paradigm was behaviorism which was questioned and criticized by Chomsky and he came up with the generative paradigm. So, his 1965 publication changed the whole discourse and approach in looking at language and he set the goal of linguistic theory to be understanding and predicting the competence, linguistic competence of the speakers or the users and his focus was mainly on the computational aspect of language. So, language and mind, or the computational aspect is what he focused on.

He had no explosive arguments and nothing to offer directly in the sense that the other people looked at language as a means of communication and language use was of prime importance to them. So, if you look at the Chomskyan idea of linguistic competence and linguistic performance that was challenged by people like Dell Hymes and MAK Halliday. They talked about communicative competence, Dell Hymes particularly coined this term 'communicative competence', that equates with linguistic performance.

So, 'language in use' was the primary object of study in linguistics as a reaction to the Chomskyan idea, abstract idea of language and mind and linguistic competence. They envisage the ideal speaker and hearer situation in a speech community and say that competence is not

restricted by other external factors like memory loss, occupied minds and some other things. And the idea of universal grammar, the idea of language acquisition device, the idea of principles and parameters and all that this entire Chomskyan enterprise was questioned and criticized by a group of scholars, of course, Dell Hymes and people like MAK Halliday led it from the front.


So, this Chomskyan idea was gaining currency and getting popularity. And there was another parallel group that was working on the performance aspect of the language like Dell Hymes for that matter, MAK Halliday. In 1963, William Labov worked on his MA dissertation where he talked about language use in Martha Vineyard Island and he tried to establish the social stratification, the social class and the age which was a prime factor in raised diphthongs and rollover diphthongs in Martha Vineyard Island, where the group identity was so prominent that this raising of the vowel became an identity marker.

And the islanders who did not like outsiders or visitors on the island, try to create a group of collective identity where they deliberately by choice used a raised vowel and how that age was a factor. So, William Labov was the first to show the social factors, which were primarily responsible for this linguistic variation, in language use.

In his other study on social stratification of language, the New York study, he established class and the other social factors as primarily responsible for variation in the language. So, William Labov's methodology, technique and the result of his studies established the dominant role of social factors in such language changes, in such language variations in use and that established a definite and different school of doing linguistics where the social factors factored in primarily in understanding such linguistic variation.


So, right from dialectology where linguistic variations were attributed to geographical locations, these social factors factored in within the the community for these variations and from there we have a variationist tradition that started.

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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




So, rural dialectology moved to urban dialectology and if we see the Linguistic Atlas of the United States, the focus shifted from rural dialectology to urban dialects. And again, interest and the objective of such studies remained the same.

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Sociolinguistics as Discipline 1960s


- 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 what I was talking about William Labov, in the 60s, we see a change. And people like William Labov, people like Basil Bernstein, people like Dell Hymes, people like John Gumperz,

people like Charles Ferguson, and people like Joshua Fishman—these six people are considered fathers of modern sociolinguistics.


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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



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However, the contribution of people like William Bright, Allen Grimshaw, Einar Haugen, Uriel Weinreich and Susan Ervin-Tripp cannot be ruled out. So, these 11 people were primarily responsible for shaping this discipline. So, their works, their contributions shaped the discipline. And what we know today as sociolinguistics, it all started in the 60s.

So, if you look at William Labov, he pioneered the work in variation studies and developed it, and was devoted to showing the relevance of social determinants of variation for linguistic theory. So, social determinants like age, gender, social class, ethnicity, so all these determinants factor in linguistic changes and linguistic variations.

The British sociologist, Basil Bernstein, worked on class related codes: how class becomes a very important social determinant to understand the language use. Then people like Dell Hymes worked on ethnography of communication and focus was more on language use in a sociocultural space. So, Dell Hymes shaped the ethnography of communication and educational linguistics, who molded social linguistics by editing several pioneer volumes and flagship, of the flagship journal called 'Language in Society'.

Then people like John Gumperz worked on interactional sociolinguistics, people like Charles Ferguson worked on diglossia. His major contribution is the idea of diglossia, a sociolinguistics situation where two varieties of the same language or in some cases two different languages are used within the same speech community for two different social functions. And he calls one code as H code, the other code as L code. H means high and L means low.

However, with a caveat he says that naming these codes H and L have no hierarchical distinction. It is all about giving a particular term to a particular variety. And of course H language or H code will have high prestige value and L language or L code will have low prestige value, used in informal settings, very dynamic in nature and likely to change frequently at a very high speed.

However, the H variety which enjoy high prestige is used in formal domains and the degree of formality is very high. It has a written form. So, it will be more restricted and reluctant to change. So, it remains, it retains its structures and form almost like a uniform standard which does not undergo frequent changes. So, Ferguson's idea of diglossia was a major breakthrough and then other contributions as well shifted that discipline.

Then we have Joshua Fishman, who worked on sociology of language. And there was a huge debate and a lot of overlapping ideas about calling the disciplines, sociology of language or sociolinguistics. So, he is one of the major contributors in shaping the discipline.

Then the people like William Bright, who worked on native languages and cultures of California and places around it and his serious contribution, his very scholarly contribution in the research on native American languages is pioneer and very important to understand this discipline. He was one of the people who shifted the discipline.

Then Allen Grimshaw worked on language and social context. He visited India in 1961 and that gave a lot of inspiration to him. And he worked on language in social contexts. People like Einar Haugen, basically a person of language planning, worked on bilingualism and language shift. He was the first linguist to write about the ecology of language. Study of Norwegian language planning was a groundbreaking work he produced. And he is credited for many other contributions and he is one of the founding fathers of modern sociolinguistics that we are talking about.

Then Uriel Weinreich, he is another person whose seminal work for understanding language contact, minority languages and language revival is very important and significant in the field. Then Susan Ervin-Tripp, a psychologist, also contributed majorly in shaping this discipline. And with her work on distinction between compound and coordinate bilingualism and child language acquisition cross-culturally, she is credited for contributions in understanding the discipline and shaping the discipline in the present form.

In our coming lectures, what we plan to have are separate lectures on each of these people about their journey as a linguist, about their contribution and impact of their work on the discipline, in the discipline.

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Techniques of data collections



- **Maintaining Observer's Paradox**
- as **informal** and **casual** as possible
- Labov's Survey:
 - interviewer in the role of a customer
 - informants do not know that their language is being investigated
- "Where can I find lady's shoes?"
"Fourth floor."
- **repetition** → emphatic speech



So, we will talk about all of these contributors and all of these scholars, researchers, who shaped the field of modern sociolinguistics. And if you look at their contribution, they are all contemporary. And if you look at their contributions, the decade of 1960 was very crucial and very fertile.

And these people started with this approach, new approach, variation vs tradition was pioneered by Will Labov, linguistic interactions by John Gumperz, sociology of language by Joshua Fishman and then people like Ferguson, Charles Ferguson, who talked about diglossia, people like William Bright, who talked about native American languages and cultures, people like Basil Bernstein about class and code, people like Allen Grimshaw language and context.

So, all these people have contributed together and we can have more names to the credit in shaping this discipline. But we will have a separate lecture on these 11 founding fathers of sociolinguistics, whose original work gave shape to this discipline and outlined the major thrust areas of the discipline and this is how a new independent discipline emerged with these people.

If you quickly look at the methodology how it changed from dialectology, methods in dialectology to methods in modern sociolinguistics, if you look at the methodology used by William Labov, observer's paradox is an idea, is a phenomenon that all scholars working in the area of language and society or sociolinguistics, they should maintain where the respondent is not aware and is not at least conscious of the fact that his speech is being recorded. It has to be as

informal and casual as possible. Setting has to be very informal and casual, then only we can have the real speech sample.

In a Labov survey, he observed this observer's paradox. We will talk about the observer's paradox in one of our lectures later on, and identifying sociolinguistic variables, we will talk about it later on. And he disguised himself as the customer in his New York study and asked a question to all possible identified respondents, where can I find the lady shoe? And he was studying this raw sound as a sociolinguistic variable. Of course, the answer would be the fourth floor. And here we see the occurrence of the sound in both the words and it was in a spontaneous response to his question. So, anybody passing by would answer "on the fourth floor". And this is how he collected his data.

So, the observer's paradox remains a very, very important and significant phenomena to keep in mind during data collections for such studies. We are aware the respondent does not have to be careful, cautious and aware and intimidated. And the interviewer or the researcher has to create a very informal and casual setting so that the real speech comes out. It is also important to understand sociolinguistic variables. So, if you are studying sound changes, you need to identify what sound can act as a sociolinguistic variable.

So, we will talk about social linguistic variables and how to identify them in some other class. But this is it for now. Where we have just initiated this series of talking about sociolinguistics as an independent discipline, how it emerged and who are the people who are considered founding fathers of modern sociolinguistics, their journey about, their journey in the field, their journey in this research, and how their contributions shaped this discipline and how their contributions set the tone and the major thrust areas of the discipline.

So, we will continue with all these people in separate videos and we will have one video for each one of them separately underlining the journey as linguist, their contributions, their approach, their techniques used and their contributions and impact of their contributions in the discipline. So, this is it for now. Thank you very much. We will talk about other aspects that I have just highlighted in some other videos. For now, thank you very much.