

# The Gradual Evolution of Speech from Linguistics to Sociolinguistics

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### Abstract

*Fundamentally, human beings can communicate complex ideas and phenomena using simple signs, jesters, and sounds. The sound produced or communications made to express things are referred to as the intricate reverberation produced by certain sound waves to express various meanings. This phenomenon is known as Language. Verbal and nonverbal modes of communication include signs, jesters, written symbols, and visual cues. Language is an organized system of communication made up of sounds and signs that are produced and exchanged to carry meanings. Human knowledge attempts to investigate Language logically and methodically to create a sequence of logical facts that are presented cogently to convey a specific connotation. Linguistics is the scientific study of Language, emphasising meaning, discourse, and other characteristics of Language. It may be conducted by employing systematic scientific procedures involving observations, testing ideas, and formulating hypotheses. The study includes more than sound, grammar, and meanings; it also includes lexicon, syntax, grammar, and semantics. Jargon, slang, and novel constructs created by hundreds of thousands of individuals are combined into Language, an essential and fundamental occurrence. Language is primarily a product of human needs, and it develops or produces new languages based on what is most convenient for humans to convey meaning to others. Since Language impacts social structure and cultural practices, it is a communication factor that preserves social and cultural components within itself. Language is also influenced by social norms and cultural practices concurrently. It is acknowledged that the two components are unrelated. In sociolinguistics, the current study explores the evolution of Language as a social construct and a contemporary social structure.*

**Keywords:** Language, Linguistics, Sociolinguistics

Humans produced sounds to convey messages, which developed into a complex mode of communication when they started living as a community. A communal setup forms a society, and each society starts developing a language structure with an indefinite connection to its social activities and lifestyle. Sociolinguistics investigates the sociological and linguistic dimensions of society. These domains are intimately related to creating sophisticated documentation instruments employed to chronicle the past and predict the future. Information sharing is essential to everyday existence, the development of cultures, social interaction, and the evolution of living things. Not

only do humans exhibit communication, but all other living things do as well. Modern technology devices created by humans that are not living things also need communication.

Additionally, they have specialized programs, coding, or Language that they use for communication. Information is constantly being shared via satellite communications, systems, symbols, color, music, and even light. Speech is a kind of communication that uses sounds. The smallest unit of spoken Language that forms the basis of every Language is called a sound or phoneme. Man has evolved sounds into words, words into sentences, and subsequent phrases that offer logical, cohesive information according to the demands of time and circumstance. Linguistics is the study of these languages' constituent elements, grammatical structures, and information-transmission techniques. Words, sound, and information cannot exist on their own since they are only necessary when used inside a social framework. In order to establish an expanded form of social linguistics, or sociolinguistics, the study will analyze how Language evolved as a fundamental unit of communication. In sociolinguistics, the current study explores the evolution of Language as a social construct and a contemporary social structure.

Mankind's ability to communicate dates back to the homosapien period, when upright-walking, culturally-aware individuals first appeared on Earth. As an initial step in communicating information, sounds, signs, markings, carefully placed stones, broken branches, and facial expressions were established. With the aid of human intellect, man was able to blend a variety of sounds to convey a range of emotions; these sounds eventually became a language used for communication. Robert Bayley and Ceil Lucas, in their research outcome "Sign Languages" explains, that "the sociolinguistics of sign languages concerns the interrelationship of sign languages and social structure, just as the sociolinguistics of spoken languages concerns the interrelationships of spoken languages and social structure" (pp. 83). Language and society are therefore intertwined, demonstrating how communication is a necessary component of social fulfilment. Humans are fundamentally capable of communicating. They provide precise reverberation with various meanings by generating certain sound waves. Language is the product of generated and exchanged sounds and signals with meanings. It is an organized method of information transfer in which human understanding attempts to investigate Language logically and methodically to produce a sequence of logical facts presented cogently to convey a specific meaning. Language is flexible and adaptable because words evolve based on context and cultural insertion, resulting from human social activity—their capacity to communicate with other people and their arbitrary sense both develop with their Language. Sapir says, Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. These symbols are, in the first instance, auditory, and they are produced by the so-called 'organs of Speech'" (pp. 8). Oral-auditory symbols can only be produced by humans. These are meaning-expressing strings of spoken sound. The listener's hearing organs assist in transmitting the oral strings of sounds to him through the air. The brain decodes the sound waves after receiving them from the hearing organs and uses these symbols to determine their meaning. Humans have the innate capacity for communication, or it may be quickly learned, making it an essential human talent.

The goal of human knowledge is to logically and methodically investigate Language. Studies are conducted on Language as an object of research with several facets. Linguistics is the scientific study of Language, emphasising meaning, discourse, and other linguistic components. Linguistics might be studied scientifically through organized scientific procedures, observations, hypothesis testing, and theory development. The study includes sound, grammar, and meanings. In addition to grammar, syntax, lexicon, and semantics, the study of linguistics delves into the development and evolution of Language. A linguist is someone who strives to learn about and investigate languages.

Language is a complex process that requires different abilities to convey meanings completely. Langue, lahng, is the French word for Language or tongue. Larson, Freeman, and Cameron in their *Complex Systems and Applied linguistics*, exclaim that “Language learning is known as a complex process that requires different cognitive and linguistic skills and competencies to successful occurs” (92). Language is a fundamental phenomenon that aggregates the contributions of hundreds and thousands of people who invented jargon, slang, and new constructions. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Cows de linguistique generale* (1915) distinguishes langue from parole. Chris Baldick, in his *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, states that

langue refers to the rules and conventions of a given language—its phonological distinctions, its permitted grammatical combinations of elements, etc.—whereas parole (‘speech’) refers to the sphere of actual linguistic events, i.e. utterances. Saussure proposed that because langue underlies and makes possible the infinitely varied forms of parole, it should be the primary object of linguistic science... the power attributed to ‘Language’ in this tradition has little to do with Saussure’s notion of langue, and owes more to abstract conceptions of Language as a universal ‘system’. (pp.136,137)

Needs mainly drive language, which can change or develop into a new language depending on what is most convenient for humans to communicate meaning to others. Some of these qualities collect in people’s subconscious minds. Individuals don’t merely mimic Language but create original phrases in response to societal demands. As individuals search for new methods to express themselves, jargon, slang, and novel constructions are amassed into the Language. Three main parts make up a language: interfaces, rules, and words. Words are the fundamental building blocks of sentences and are kept in a portion of the long-term memory. They are sometimes referred to as the mental lexicon or mental dictionary. The rules, including syntax—the principles that enable the assembly of words into phrases and sentences—are the formulas or algorithms used to assemble language fragments into longer, more complicated linguistic segments. The laws of morphology combine word fragments with prefixes and suffixes to form complex words. The rule of phonology is it groups vowels and consonants into the shortest possible words.

The study of Language is included in the broad field of linguistics, which focuses on grammar, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics. Words, phrases, and sentences are the subject of grammar in a language; sound is the subject of phonology; meaning is the subject of semantics; and language usage in conversation is researched by pragmatics. The means of studying the process of Language in a real-time scenario is labelled as Psycholinguistics. Learning the means and ways of children’s language acquisition is called the study of language acquisition, and neurolinguistics concentrates on language computation in the brain. Spoken Language is different from written Language: descriptive grammar (how people speak), prescriptive grammar (how people should speak), and proper grammar (the specific rules and customs that were adopted by a language and which were accepted by all as a standard one). Despite all these, Language attains its completeness only through its complete transfer of meaning through communication. Meaning in a language is attained only through society and all the way s by its cultural practices. A sound that produces a particular meaning in one social construct might give another meaning in a different language or society. Ashley Crossman, in her article “Sociolinguistics”, states that,

Language is central to social interaction in every society, regardless of location and time period. Language and social interaction have a reciprocal relationship: Language shapes social interactions and social interactions shape Language. . . . Sociolinguistics is the study of the connection between Language and society and the way people use Language in different social situations. (n.pag.)

The social activities in society are closely interlinked with the Language they speak, and it serves as a medium to carry out the daily chores; thus, Language is used as a social activity, shaping the Language.

The vast subject of sociolinguistics provides excellent chances for scholars to acquire language skills and understand the social links connected to a particular society's history, culture, sociology, and daily activities. It examines the relationship between Language and society by examining how speakers of various languages behave in various social contexts. The fundamental tenet of sociolinguistics is that Language is dynamic and ever-changing. It cannot be consistent and uniform; instead, it is diverse and inconsistent for each user and the society or social groups that the user communicates with in the same language. Peter Trudgill in his research work "Sociolinguistics-Language and Society" claims that,

One of the main factors that have led to the growth of sociolinguistic research has been the recognition of the importance of the fact that Language is a very variable phenomenon, and that this variability may have as much to do with society as with Language. A language is not a simple, single code used in the same manner by all people in all situations, and linguists now understand that it is both possible and beneficial to try to tackle this complexity. (pp.21)

In social linguistics, word choice, colloquialism, and pronunciation are examined in language samples from various randomly selected populations. To ascertain the link between Language and society, the collected data is compared to socioeconomic indicators such as education, income, wealth, occupation, ethnic background, age, and family dynamics. One important area of applied linguistics is sociolinguistics. It is interdisciplinary and aims to comprehend how Language is stored in the brain or mind of a human. It examines how Language has become a component of commonplace human conduct. Sociolinguistics is the study of Language in a given culture by examining how its linguistic components interact with social aspects. Deepti Mahajan and The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica opine that,

Sociolinguists attempt to isolate those linguistic features that are used in particular situations and that mark the various social relationships among the participants and the significant elements of the situation. Influences on the choice of sounds, grammatical elements, and vocabulary items may include such factors as age, sex, education, occupation, race, and peer-group identification, among others. (n.pag.)

It is acknowledged that words are more than just collections of letters; they are social constructs that identify social significance and the connections between a language and its society. It is an investigation of the linguistics and sociology of a community. Because Language impacts social structure and cultural practices, it serves as a communication tool that supports social and cultural aspects. The language is also influenced by social norms and cultural practices concurrently. It is acknowledged that both elements are interdependent and independent and that one would not be able to complete the research without the other's assistance.

The word "sociolinguistic" gained prominence in 1960, the height of modern sociolinguistics. Several authors have been recognized as the pioneers of contemporary sociolinguistics. William Labov founded a school that aimed to demonstrate how linguistic theory may benefit from understanding social drivers of variation. He concentrated on the power and importance of Language in social stratification. When learning a language, social elements and considerations are crucial to the process. His writings demonstrate the significance of social factors influencing variation in linguistic theory and Language social stratification. British sociologist Basil Bernstein worked on class-related codes. He says,

Two general types of codes can be distinguished: elaborated and restricted . . . In the case of an elaborated code, the speaker will select from a relatively extensive range of alternatives . . . In the case of a restricted code the number of these alternatives is often severely limited . . . On a psychological level the codes may be distinguished by the extent to which each facilitates (elaborated code) or inhibits (restricted code) an orientation to symbolize intent in a verbally explicit form. (pp. 125, 126)

Dell Hymes responded to Chomsky's Linguistic Competence in the terms of Communicative Competence, and his work on the ethnography of communication changed the understanding of the Language as a social reality. Chris Baldick, in his *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, states that competence is, the term established by the American linguist Noam Chomsky to denote the unconscious store of linguistic knowledge which enables us to speak and understand our first Language properly without having to think about it, permitting us to utter and comprehend sentences that we may never have heard before. Competence is what we know about the Language we speak (without having to know that we know it), whereas performance is what we do with this knowledge in practice: that is, actual utterances. (pp. 47)

John Gompers pioneered the work in interactional social linguistics language. Charles Ferguson's worked on Diglossia, where this term was coined by him and he studied the functions of linked Language. According to him, the sociolinguistic situation depends on two varieties of the same Language or two different varieties of Language used for two different social domains like formal and informal ones. Alessandro Duranti, in the research article, "Linguistic Anthropology: the Study of Language as a Non-neutral Medium," published in *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociolinguistics* states that, "Ferguson and Gumperz (1960) introduced the notion of variety as a way to rethink the traditional notions of Language and dialect. They proposed several hypotheses regarding, how language varieties are used to perform certain social activities including the expression of solidarity and the communication of the perceived status of one's interlocutors" (pp. 42). Joshua Fishman concentrated on the sociological factors determining language use in his work on the *Sociology of Language*. William Bright is credited for his deep understanding of native languages and cultures. He has conducted his research on Native American languages and cultures. Allen Grimsha got interested in the social context of Language in India, due to his visit in 1961, which encouraged him to undertake sociolinguistic study in Indian languages.

Language studies that were done in India prove that language has always been connected with society. The study of linguistics can hardly be separated from its social background. *Tolkappiyam* in Tamil can be translated as an ancient poem in English. It is the oldest available comprehensive text on grammar. This text is complex to date, yet researchers prove that this piece of literature could have existed in the 1st millennium BCE or earlier. Nadarajah Devapoopathy claims that the earliest layer of the *Tholkappiyam* was probably composed between the second and the first century BCE. During the Sangam age, the Tamil land was broadly classified into five tinai or physiological divisions. These divisions are named Kurinchi (Hilly region), Palai (dry region), Neytal (coastal region), Marutham (agricultural region), and Mullai (pastoral region). Each tinai was associated with particular landscapes and occupations. Sharmalan Thevar, in his research article, "The 5 Landscapes of Tamilakam", writes that,

The ancient Tamil people categorized their land into 5 different landscapes. These are collectively known as Aintinai, the 5 tinai. Each of these tinai has a patron deity. Different tribes dominate each tinai. Interestingly the ancient Tamils also used the 5 tinai as genre for their poems as each tinai represents a particular human mood. The concept of aintinai is unique to the Tamils and it was first mentioned in the oldest surviving Tamil text, the *Tolkappiyam*. This text is estimated to be 2,500 years old. (n.pag.)

The grammar text *Tholkappiyam* divides the land into five groups and explains the life of different clans of people living in that particular region. It uses these connections to explain the emotions or moods of the people in different situations. This proves that the language and people do not belong to a different entity rather, they are interconnected.

The social contract serves as a medium for the life of language. It has a lengthy history and has always been crucial to disseminating knowledge. Language has been evolving, expanding, and

changing over time. The limitless potential of language has been shown via methodical linguistics or language studies. It is acknowledged that Language can only be formed and utilized when people are around each other or in social situations. Language interacts with the community as sound, symbol, and text; it respects the standards of the society's conventions and culture and returns those attributes to the Language. A community's spoken and written language may provide insight into its heart and soul. Although cultural diversity and multilingualism guarantee different social or collective identities inside a language, these differences also provide the language with a distinct identity that might be considered a development. Language is essentially a product of human needs, and it develops or produces new languages based on what is most convenient for humans to convey meaning to others. Since Language impacts social structure and cultural practices, it is a communication factor that preserves social and cultural components within itself. Language is also influenced by social norms and cultural practices concurrently. It is acknowledged that the two components are unrelated. Sociolinguistics is the study of how Language reflects society, including cultural identity, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and way of life.

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