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Silence! The Court is in Session

The Vultures
Chapter-II

Sociolinguistics: The Theory

"Sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society; it studies the interactions between language as a network of relations and society as a network of relations"

(qut. in Rastogi 27).

2.1. Sociolinguistics: Background and Scope

R. A. Hudson defines sociolinguistics as "the study of language in relation to society"

(1). Sociolinguistics has become a recognized part of the study of language from the point of view of both teaching and research in recent times. Most of the growth in sociolinguistics has taken place since the late 1960s but this does not mean that it is an invention of the 1960s. There is a long tradition of attempts being made to study the relations between word-meaning and culture, both, in the study of dialects and in general study which can be counted as sociolinguistics according to Hudson's definition. The fascination for sociolinguistics arises from the realization of the fact that it can unravel the unnoticed aspects of the nature of language and the nature of society. Sociolinguistics is partly empirical and partly theoretical like other subjects. The empirical discoveries made in the course of systematic research projects has aroused the widespread interest in sociolinguistics as they are unexpectedly different from what is already known about the familiar world. Here, it is important to know that the interest in sociolinguistics has come from people (such as educationalists) who have a practical concern for language. Large scale research projects, connected with the speech of underprivileged groups, were funded in United States in 1960 and 1970 so that on the
grounds of the findings a more satisfactory educational policy may be implemented.

A widely held view is that linguistics differs from sociolinguistics as it takes in to account only the structure of the language and excludes the social context in which it is learned and used. According to this view, the task of linguistics is to work out the rules for a particular language where as sociolinguistics studies the points at which these rules make contact with society, for instance, whether different social groups choose different ways of expressing the same thing. This view is typical of the whole 'structural' school of linguistics which have dominated twentieth-century linguistics, including transformational-generative linguistics (the variety developed since 1957 by Noam Chomsky). However, another view put forward believes that it is not possible to study speech without referring to society as speech itself is a social behavior.

There are two good arguments developed by two renowned linguists in acceptance of this view. The first reason is developed by William Labov and proposes that the notion 'language X' is itself a social notion as it defines language X in terms of a group of people who speak X. The second reason is that speech has a social function, both as a means of communication and also as a way of identifying social groups, and to study speech without reference to the society which uses it is to exclude the possibility of finding social explanations for the structures that are used. This view is typical of J. R. Firth who founded the 'London School' of linguistics. R. A. Hudson believes that the findings of sociolinguistics are highly relevant to the theory of language structure and 'sociolinguistics' and 'linguistics' are simply terms to reflect the relative amount of attention given to the social side of language. He observes:

There is no denying that remarkable progress has been made in the study of language structure within the structural tradition, by people who would call themselves 'linguists' and
not 'sociolinguists'. Moreover, it is clear that some areas of language . . . relate more directly to social factors than others do. Those who concentrate on other areas, taking a more or less 'asocial' approach, we can call 'linguists', as opposed to 'sociolinguists'. (4)

The value of sociolinguistics lies in the light which it throws on the nature of language in general, or on the characteristics of some particular language, after all no other characteristic of a society is as distinctive as language and equally important for its functioning. Peter Trudgill endorses this when he observes:

. . . two aspects of language behavior are very important from a social point of view: first, the function of language in establishing social relationships; and, second, the role played by language in conveying information about the speaker. . . . it is clear that both these aspects of linguistic behavior are the reflections of the fact that there is a close inter-relationship between language and society. (14)

Sociolinguistics is' defined as ' the study of language in relation to society, in the beginning of the chapter. The converse of this definition i.e. 'the study of society in relation to language' is called ' the sociology of the language'. Hudson explains that the difference between the two is that of emphasis- whether the investigator is more interested in language or in society and is more skilled whether in analyzing linguistic or social structures. Hence, it can be concluded that a large area of overlap exists between the two.

Sociolinguistics deals with language in relation to society so it is expected that large scale social units like tribes, nations and social classes are to be dealt with. But the fact is that the society is comprised of individuals and that individuals are to be kept firmly in the centre of interest, while talking about large-scale abstractions and movements, is essential, is accepted by both the sociolinguists and the sociologists. It is important in sociolinguistics to
understand how an individual speaker behaves so that how collections of individual behave can be understood. As Trudgill observes: "... people from different social and geographical backgrounds use different kinds of language" (14). Hudson proposes one more reason for focusing at individual linguistic behavior:

... no two speakers have the same language, because no two speakers have the same experience of language. The differences between the speakers may vary from the very slight and trivial (in the case of twins brought up together, for instance) to total difference within whatever limits are set by universal characteristics of language. ... the individual speaker is presumably molded much more by experience (as a listener) than by genetic make-up, and experience consists in fact of speech produced by other individual speakers, each of whom is unique. (11)

The sociolinguistic past of an individual is not the only factor responsible for the uniqueness of his language. A person constructs unconsciously a mental map of the community in which he lives and in which people are arranged around him in a multi dimensional space i.e. showing similarities and differences relative to one another on a large number of different dimensions or parameters. This map also covers the variables of other types. This is explicitly explained by Hudson's statement that:

The particular map which each individual draws will reflect their own personal experience, so people with different sociolinguistic backgrounds will be led to construct correspondingly different maps relevant to language and society. ... Rather individuals filter their experience of new situations through their existing map and two people could both hear the same person talking, but be affected in different ways. (11)
Apart from these variations, a certain amount of agreement is also found among the speakers which often goes well beyond what is needed for effective communication. The best instance to display this conformity is the use of irregular morphology, where the irregular structure of verbs and nouns pose difficulty for the speaker, the hearer and for the language learner but are still in existence. The only explanation for the continued use of this irregular morphology is the need to be seen to be conforming to the rules that were taken as models. It is well known that children mold their speech as they grow old in order to conform with older people. These two forces, one leading to individual differences and the other leading to similarities among individuals may be termed as individualism and conformity.

2.2. Aspects of the Theory of Sociolinguistics:

While the study of Sociolinguistics covers a wide spectrum of aspects, few fundamental aspects are considered significant. These are the concepts which are taken into account universally while pursuing Sociolinguistic inquiries.

2.2.1. Speech Communities:

The concept of speech community in Sociolinguistics describes a more or less discrete group of people who use language in a unique and mutually accepted way among themselves. Linguists have been interested in speech communities since Leonard Bloomfield wrote a chapter on it in his book Language (1933: ch,3). However, there has been considerable confusion over what exactly is meant by a speech community as it is quite difficult to delimit such communities on sheer language basis. They can be studied only when they can be delimited as, the criteria of this delimitation varied from person to person. Several renowned
sociolinguists have attempted to define speech communities emphasizing different aspects of it. John Lyons gave the simplest definition of a speech community: "Speech community: all the people who use a given language (or dialect)" (qut. in Hudson 24).

This definition allows the speech communities to overlap but exempt them from having any social or cultural unity. If this view is taken into consideration, it is possible to delimit speech communities only to the extent of possibility of delimiting languages and dialects without referring to the social or cultural background of the community that speaks them. Charles Hockett has proposed a more complex definition: "Each language defines a speech community: the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language" (qut. in Hudson 24).

This definition includes the criterion of communication within the community via a common language but what if two communities have the same language but do not have any contact with each other? The next definition, however, shifts the emphasis from shared language to communication. A simple version of it was given by Leonard Bloomfield: "A speech community is a group of people who interact by means of speech" (qut. in Hudson 25).

This view opens the possibility that some interact by means of one language, and others by means of another, within a speech community. This possibility is also explicitly recognized in the definition given by John Gumperz (1962): "We will define [linguistic community] as a social group which may be either monolingual or multilingual, held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication" (qut. in Hudson 25).

Another later definition by Gumperz (1968) defines speech communities as: "the speech community: any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant
A different view asserting shared attitudes and knowledge, rather than shared linguistic behavior comes from William Labov, the most influential of all sociolinguists:

The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage. (qut.in Hudson 25)

Dell Hymes (1972) and Michael Halliday (1972) gave a similar view which refer to shared norms and abstract patterns of variation rather to shared speech behavior. These later views of Labov, Hymes and Halliday emphasize speech community as a group of people who feel themselves to be a community in some sense, rather than a group that can only be differentiated by linguists. If above views are reconciled, it is found that they define a set of people who have- something in common linguistically, interaction by means of speech, a given range of varieties and rules for using them, a given range of attitudes to varieties and items. Different phenomena are, in fact, emphasized in each of the view. Moreover, Hudson also believes that the word 'community' implies more than the existence of some common property:

To qualify as a 'community', a set of people presumably needs to be distinguished from the rest of the world by more than one property, and some of these property have to be important from the point of view of the member's social lives. . . . it is hard to imagine such a community having nothing but the common language or dialect to set them off from other people - nothing in their culture, nothing to do with their history, and so on. As soon as the factor
of interaction comes in, of course, it goes without saying that there will be other shared characteristics in addition to the interaction. (27)

This leads to the conclusion that different speech communities intersect in complex ways with one another. An approach, advocated by Robert Le Page (Le Page and Tabouret Keller-1985) can be taken as the most precise notion of speech communities as it subsumes all the other definitions proposed above. The approach follows:

Each individual creates the system for his verbal behavior so that they shall resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he may wish to be identified, to the extent that

a. he can identify the groups,

b. he has both opportunity and ability to observe and analyze their behavioral systems,

c. his motivation is sufficiently strong to impel him to choose, and to adapt his behavior accordingly,

d. he is still able to adapt his behavior.(qut.in Hudson-26)

Speech communities can be members of a profession with a specialized jargon, distinct social groups like high school students or hip hop fans, or even tight-knit groups like families and friends.

2.2.2. Social Network:

Understanding language in society requires the understanding of the social networks in which language is embedded. A social network is another way of describing a particular
speech community in terms of relations among the individual members in a community. A network could be loose or tight depending on how members interact with each other. For instance, an office or factory may be considered a tight community because all members interact with each other. A large course with many students would be a looser community because students may only interact with the teacher and may be with few other students. A multiplex community is one in which members have multiple relationships with each other. For instance, in some neighborhoods, members may live on the same street, work for the same employer and even intermarry. A social network may apply to the macro level of a country or a city, but also to the inter-personal level of neighborhoods or a single family. In present times, formation of social networks is quite frequent on the Internet, through chat rooms and other online services.

2.2.3. **High Prestige and Low Prestige varieties: Impact of the Social class:**

The concept of prestige is an important aspect for sociolinguistic studies as certain speech habits have been graded to have positive and negative values in general which are applicable equally to the speaker also. Language as a social phenomenon is closely tied with the social structure and value systems of society, hence different dialects and accents are evaluated in different ways. However, the scientific study of language has proven that all languages, and correspondingly all dialects are equally 'good' as linguistic systems and it is incorrect to consider that one variety is superior to other. This aspect is explicitly explained by Peter Trudgill in the following statement:

> All varieties of a language are structured, complex, rule-governed systems which are wholly adequate for the needs of their speakers. It follows that value judgments concerning the correctness and purity of linguistic varieties are
social rather than linguistic. . . . Any apparent inferiority is due only to their association with speakers from under privileged, low-status groups. In other words, attitudes towards non-standard dialects are attitudes which reflect the social structure of society. In the same way, societal values may also be reflected in judgments concerning linguistic varieties.(20)

Sociolinguistic theories imply that speakers 'choose' a variety, either consciously or unconsciously, when making a speech act.

2.2.4. Internal and External language:

Chomskian linguistics distinguishes between I-language (Internal language) and E-language (External language). Internal language, in this context means the study of syntax and semantics in language on the abstract level; as mentally represented knowledge in a native speaker. External language applies to language in social contexts i.e. behavioral habits shared by a community. The basis of Internal language analysis the assumption that all native speakers of a language are quite homogeneous in the way they process and perceive language. Many sociolinguists reject the distinction between I-language and E-language on the ground that it is based on a mentalist view of language. According to this view, grammar is first and foremost an interactional (social) phenomenon.

2.3. The Social Functions of Language:-

The social functions of language are the ways in which language is used to give a view of one's relationships to others. This can be done either directly or indirectly. The direct method involves the use of words that communicate the meanings directly such as friend,
boss, father. The indirect method is concerned with word-forms, not with word meanings, for instance, use of 'what's' for 'what is' etc. Sociolinguistics is the sole discipline responsible for the indirect method of communicating information about relationships i.e. social information. Hudson (230) has assigned seven social functions to the language which are summarized as follows:

### 2.3.1. Face:

The social information, as discussed above, is the information about the speaker, though it is relevant indirectly. The speaker's 'face' i.e. the public image of the speaker presented to the rest of the world, is comprised by various kinds of information. The speech is not the only source of social information, in reality it is also contributed by the other parts of observable behavior like the way one gets dressed up, walks and stands, organize one's hair etc.

The 'face' is a complex cluster of characteristics which, on one hand, is linked to observable behavior and on the other is also linked to various personal and social characteristics which may not be directly observable. If the observable behavior changes the face projected also changes. Thus, face can be compared with a 'word', which is a combination of an observable form and an unobservable meaning. The result of combining observable and unobservable characteristics in a prototype is that, the way one speaks tells the rest about one's face i.e. about the kind of person one wants to be thought of by others. The concept of face has also been dealt with in chapter IV.
2.3.2. Solidarity and Accommodation:

There are a number of ways in which solidarity can be expressed-through choice of language, subtle 'accommodation', use of purpose-built solidarity-expressers such as names and pronouns. The concept of solidarity will be dealt with in detail in chapter IV. The solidarity relationship is an important aspect of social relationships. This has also been endorsed by Hudson:

The solidarity relationship is . . . probably the most important of all social relationships, at least as far as language is concerned. This is because it is the relationship that reflects shared experience, which is necessarily tied to linguistic similarity. People who have spent all their life together, sharing the same experiences of language, are bound to be very similar in their language; and conversely, similarity of language is a good (though not infallible) basis for guessing similar experiences. (232)

The sociolinguistic perspective offers that language is adapted to its functions, and one of its functions is to communicate social information like solidarity.

2.3.3. Networks and multiple models:

It seems that the precision in acquiring language is for asserting solidarity, with countless acts of accommodation as driving force. Every time a child talks to a 'significant other', his output is pushed a little nearer to that of the listener by the desire of accommodation. However, the child is not equally close to every other person whom it meets. The social world may appear to be organized in networks from the child's point of view. A lot of individuals and solidarity differences among them are recognized by it, consequently it
accommodates more to some people than to others. The child, thus, builds a 'mental community' in an abstract sense.

As already discussed, in a face to face interaction between two people, a particular degree of solidarity is defined by one person's speech which, among other things, presents a 'face'. The accommodation theory predicts that the higher the solidarity intended the more the speaker's speech matches to the person addressed. The word 'intended' explains that the solidarity seek depends upon the speaker's subjective view of the world rather than with the objective facts. This is explained by Hudson as:

According to accommodation theory, the degree of accommodation depends on how much the speaker wants the other person to like them, which is a matter of personal values and personality. Two different people could be in the same objective relationship to a third, as defined in terms of kinship, working together, being neighbors and so on; and yet they may feel very different degrees of solidarity to that person. (235)

An individual may be linked to several distinct networks, each with its own linguistic norms. Hudson explains that in such a case:

. . . accommodation will make that person fluent in each of the norms, and able to switch among them according to the situation. . . . The result is multilingualism, 'multi-dialectism' and 'multi-registerism'. The literature is full of case-studies of communities where most people have vast 'linguistic repertoires' from which they choose with great skill and speed. (236)
2.3.4. Social types and acts of identity:

As discussed above, the social network model is comprised of relationships among individuals who know each other and talk to each other. Linguistic influence is the result of accommodation by one individual to another individual. The case is not so simple as far as our modern urban societies are concerned. Our knowledge of society is organized in terms of social stereotypes—general 'types' of people as 'business-men', 'female', 'rough' or 'foreigner' etc. Each of these abstractions helps to generalize across a range of people even about strangers. The benefit of thinking in terms of social types is explained by Hudson:

One of the main benefits is in dealing with strangers, when the social type acts as a collecting point for observable and unobservable information. A person's observable behavior, including their speech, gives us a clue as to their social type, which in turn gives us unobservable characteristics which we need to know in planning our own behavior and attitudes towards them . . . . (237)

In other words, responses are shaped accordingly: whether to treat them as a fellow or to avoid them, whether trust them or fear them. This also helps to build a mental map of society and to identify one's clear place in it without which one feels lost. Hudson explains this phenomenon in the following words:

It is an act of identity because it provides observable clues which other people can use in order to work out how speaker sees their place among the various social types that are relevant to speech. The social space is multi-dimensional because it contains a (large) number of different social types, each of which provides a separate 'dimension' of classification - not only namable dimensions like age, sex and social class, but also others like 'English-ness', 'Londoner-ness' or 'linguist-ness'. (239)
According to Hudson, there are two parts of 'face', one part is concerned with interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the person addressed, while the other is concerned with the social classification of the speaker alone. They are connected as people who are socially similar (classification) are more like to feel socially close to each other (interpersonal), and conversely, accommodation theory says that the more you like a person (interpersonal), the more you want to be like them (classification). This means that different self classifications are presented by the same person on different occasions depending upon the company they are in. This a normal sociolinguistic behavior in which self classification is driven by the desire to accommodate to the person addressed. But this not the case always, sometimes some speech habits, like accent are pretended or 'put on' merely for the sake of status associated with it.

2.3.5. Power: The interpersonal relationship of power may be important socially but as far as sociolinguistic models are concerned it is secondary to solidarity because it has fewer consequences for language. There are various ways in which the choice of words can show whether the person addressed is seen as a superior, inferior or equal by the speaker (dealt in chapter IV). Power is important for the basic organization of society in terms of social classes, with the rich and powerful at the top and the poor and powerless at the bottom. All the urban societies have social class as a powerful influence on language, however egalitarian the society may claim itself to be, the social classes are responsible for the difference between 'overt' and 'covert' prestige. This aspect of language is explained by Hudson as:

Some linguistic forms have overt prestige because of the high social status of their speakers in the social-class hierarchy. Furthermore, these same forms may have extra prestige from their association with professions that have
official power - doctors, teachers, publishers, managers, judges and so on.

Among all the alternatives of which a person is aware these forms have special status, and may be officially recognized by the title 'standard language.' (240)

2.3.6. Analogue relationships and variability:

The links in social networks vary in strength as solidarity varies from minimum (total stranger) to maximum (most intimate), power varies from most superior, through equal, to most subordinate: and a person's membership in a social class varies from total to marginal. Hudson endorses this:

In other words, our social relationships are all 'analogue' (more/less) rather than 'digital' (present/absent). This is a consequence of the general idea that the relevant concepts are prototypes, organized around clear cases but allowing members that depart from the typical to varying degrees. Analogue relationships (in our minds) are a true reflection of the complexity of social life, full of uncertainties and ambiguities.(241)

2.4. Language, Culture and Thought:

Culture: Many of the properties of language are also the properties of culture in general and meanings can be best studied in relation to culture and thought. To understand the concept of linguistic and cultural relativity, some terminologies have to be discussed. It is better to start with the concept of culture. According to cultural anthropologist, culture is something that everybody has, in contrast with the 'culture' found only in 'cultured' circles - in theatres, opera houses etc. The term is used differently by different anthropologists, but always refers to
some characteristics shared by a community, especially those which might distinguish it from other communities. A more precise definition is given by Ward Goodenough, who considers culture as socially acquired knowledge:

As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members . . . Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end-product of learning: knowledge, in a most general . . . sense of the term. (qut. in Hudson 71)

As Goodenough points out, the view allows the comparison of culture with language, which is also taken to be a kind of knowledge. Hudson believes that the knowledge included in a culture need not be factually or objectively correct in order to count. He goes on to explain that both, lay man's knowledge, often referred to as 'common-sense' and the specialist knowledge of scientist or scholar are parts of the culture equally and study of culture is about the relations between common sense and specialist knowledge, since influence goes in both directions.

Thought: Culture is defined as 'socially acquired knowledge', and is a part of memory, namely the part which is 'acquired socially' in contrast with that which does not involve other people. Thus two kinds of propositions may be distinguished- one which comes to be true from one's own experience and those which are learned from other people. Some concepts are cultural and others are not. The former are created as they are seen being used by other people in their thinking in the same way as students build up concepts because they find that their teachers are using them. A non cultural concept is build without reference to other people as a convenient way of interpreting one's experience. Hudson differentiates between cultural and non cultural knowledge as:
. . . it concerns the source of such knowledge. If it means an approximation to the concepts or propositions in other people's minds, it is cultural otherwise not. One of the most interesting things about cultural knowledge is the extent to which people can interpret each other's behavior and arrive at more or less the same concepts or propositions. . . . it does not follow that non cultural knowledge must differ from person to person, since different people can arrive at similar conclusions on the basis of similar experiences of the universe or similar genetic predispositions. (73)

Vast amount of research has been carried out about the possibility of actually studying thought, as opposed to speculating about it in recent times. One such approach is 'the classical theory of concepts' which states that each one consists of a set of features (criterial features) which are necessary and sufficient for something to count as an instance of that concept. But the most promising theory is based on the work of the psychologist Eleanor Rosch, who showed that at least some concepts are organized around clear cases, or Prototypes. In this theory, a concept has a feature-based definition, but the definition applies to the prototype, an abstract description of the most typical examples, with other examples fitting in as best they can. There are three prominent aspects that make prototype theory attractive from the sociolinguistic point of view. Firstly, it makes easy to understand how people can learn concepts from each other. Secondly, it allows for the kind of creative flexibility in the application of concepts which are found in real life-in other words, it predicts the boundaries of concepts to be fuzzy which in fact is the case in reality. The most fascinating aspect of this theory for sociolinguists is that this theory offers the possibility of being used in explaining how people categorize the social variables to which they relate language - variables such as the kind of person who is speaking and the circumstances in which this is being done. This is explained by Hudson in the following words:
. . . people learn that certain linguistic items are associated with certain types of people or circumstances . . . If concepts are based on defining features, any speaker or set of circumstances should be equally easy to classify. On the other hand, if they are based on prototypes, all we need do when learning a new linguistic item is to work out what kind of speaker typically uses it, or what are the typical circumstances under which it is used, leaving the unclear, borderline cases to look after themselves as the need arises. (77)

This is also the basis for the well established system of analysis developed by Joshua Fishman, in terms of what are called DOMAINS - concepts such as 'home', 'school', 'work', 'religion' and so on. Hudson observes: "The assumption underlying this system is that the choice of language in a bilingual community varies from domain to domain, and that domains are congruent combinations of a particular kind of speaker and addressee, in a particular kind of place, talking about a particular kind of topic" (78).

If a teacher is explaining the concepts of chemistry in school, the contributory factors are congruent and define the 'domain' of school and there would be no difficulty in deciding what kind of language is to be used. However, if one of the factors is made congruent and the scenario is shifted into the student's home, the interaction is no longer covered unambiguously by any one domain, so the intelligence and imagination has to be used by the speaker in deciding which language is to be used. Here, it is very clear that sociolinguists learn a lot from cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics, consequently any effort to separate 'the psychological approach' from 'the sociological one' will be detrimental to both.

**Linguistic and Cultural Relativity:** Having discussed the terminologies related to culture and thought, the concept of language should be discussed - to be more precise, a relationship among the three has to be established. Culture has been defined as a kind of knowledge learnt
from others, either directly or by watching their behavior. Since culture is learnt from others, it can be assumed that it is also shared with others and this kind of knowledge plays a major role when people communicate among themselves, particularly in the use of language. The same will be true for any kind of knowledge that is shared with other people, regardless of whether it is learnt from them or not. This shared knowledge can be broken down into small units called 'concepts' and 'propositions'. Language also consists of concepts and propositions, a point of contact between language and culture. As distinguished anthropologist, Goodenough, said, 'a society's language is an aspect of its culture . . . The relation of language to culture is that of part to whole'.(qut. in Hudson 79)

Understanding and using speech involves the knowledge of the whole. As discussed earlier, speakers and circumstances are categorized in terms of concept based on prototypes. It is also argued that speakers locate themselves in a multi-dimensional space in relation to the rest of their society, and locate each act of speaking in a multi-dimensional space relative to rest of their social lives. It can be suggested each 'dimension' is defined by a particular concept of a typical type of person or typical situation. Many phenomena of sociolinguistics, such as 'domains', the 'metaphorical code-switching' and the different degrees to which people's speech identifies them with particular groups can be predicted by this view.

Having clarified some of the connections between language, culture and thought, the study of language in relation to culture and thought can be attempted. The question that dominates the study is, to what extent do cultures including language differ from one another? Are they in some sense the same, or do they differ from one another, reflecting the fact that different people live in very different intellectual and physical world? This is the question of relativity which is concerned with the difference of meanings from variety to variety and the question of connections between differences in meaning and differences in culture. This is endorsed by Hudson when he observes:
One aspect of relativity is very easily demonstrated since we can point to items in some languages which certainly express meanings not expressed in others. This can be seen in the difficulties of translating between languages that are associated with different cultures, and consequently have names for different ranges of customs (birth-day party), objects (hovercraft, sausage), institutions (university) and so on. (81)

If scrutinized, it will be observed that a large proportion of our day to day vocabulary is filled with culture-specific concepts - concepts which simply do not exist in other cultures. (for example, the English words brown, monkey, chair, jug and carpet are all more or less untranslatable into French, in the sense that no single French word expresses precisely the same concept as the corresponding English word; different words must be chosen on different occasions even though it is apparently the same concept that is expressed in each case by the English word.)

The examples like these assert that different languages provide different ways of expressing the same ideas and more fundamentally and interestingly differs in the sense that the ideas that can be expressed differ from language to language. Hudson calls this kind of variability 'Semantic Variability'. English has a word for 'carpet', but French does not. Thus, the meanings that languages can express vary about as much as the associated cultures do. For example, kinship terms reflect the kinship systems of their users, and vary to the extent that these do; if every language has a word which (basically) means 'father', this is because every culture recognizes a special place in a person's life for their father. This will be dealt further in the upcoming section.

**Language and Socialization:** Another point at which language makes contact with thought is its use by an older generation to transmit its culture to a younger one. In other words,
speech is an instrument of Socialization - the process by which children are turned into fully competent members of their society. However a good deal of culture is transmitted verbally, and it is often said the development of the faculty of language by the human species made it possible for 'biological evolution', working on genes, to be replaced as the dominant factor in our development by 'cultural evolution', working on our minds.

There is no need to labor the point that speech is a crucial component in the process of socialization as many concepts are learnt by simply being told about them. In other words, they are learnt through language, especially during one's formal education. One of the main functions of education is to teach concepts, and technical terminology is the most important teaching aid of a teacher in this task. Examples such as communism, feudal, metabolism, peninsula depends on the existence of some lexical item in the language's vocabulary which guides the learner to a new concept and its meaning, which otherwise would have been difficult to explain. The extent of the effect will depend on how often the item is used. For instance, terms like 'east' and 'west' exist in familiar western languages but are not often used as it is not easy to think in such terms. In contrast, the terms 'left' and 'right' are more frequently used to make such distinctions.

This discussion will rather seem to be incomplete without a mention of the much celebrated but still controversial Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. The hypothesis is approximately that a speaker's native languages sets up a series of categories which act as a kind of grid through which he perceives the world, and which constrain the way in which he categorizes and conceptualizes different phenomena. A language can affect a society by influencing or even controlling the world-view of its speakers. The view remains controversial as- thought is actually constrained by language -cannot be accepted. Peter Trudgill believes that it is less controversial to accept the one-way relationship that operates in the opposite direction i.e. - the effect of society on language, and the way in which environment is reflected in language.
The values of a society can also have an effect on its language. The most interesting way in which this happens is through the phenomenon known as 'taboo'. Peter Trudgill explains the meaning of 'taboo' in context of language:

Taboo can be characterized as being concerned with behavior which is believed to be supernaturally forbidden, or regarded as immoral or improper; it deals with behavior which is prohibited or inhibited in an apparently irrational manner. In language, taboo is associated with things which are 'not' said, and in particular with words and expressions which are not used. In practice, of course, this simply means that there are inhibitions about the normal use of items of this kind - if they were not said at all they could hardly remain in the language.(29)

Taboo words occur almost in all languages, and failure to adhere to rules governing their use can lead to punishment or public shame. Many people will never employ words of this type, and most others will only use them in a restricted set of situations. However, the persons who use taboo words, may have connotations of strength or freedom 'in breaking the rules' which they find desirable. Generally, the taboo words of the language in question gives a good reflection of the system of values and beliefs of that society. In some communities, word-magic plays an important part in religion, and certain words regarded as powerful will be used in spells and incantations. Some words are much more severely tabooed than others. In English speaking world as well as in Indian society also, the most severe taboos are associated with words connected with sex, closely followed by those connected with excretion and religion. This is a reflection of the great emphasis that these cultures traditionally placed on sexual morality.

The other aspect of the taboo words is that although their use is prohibited but they
very frequently occur in the speech of some sections of the community. This is largely because taboo-words are frequently used as swear words, which is in turn because they are powerful. An interesting fact about the use of taboo words is observed by Trudgill:

The use of taboo-words in non-permitted contexts, such as on television, provokes violent reactions of apparently very real shock and disgust. The reaction, moreover, is an irrational reaction to a particular word, not to a concept. It is perfectly permissible to say 'sexual intercourse' on television. Taboo is therefore clearly a linguistic as well as sociological fact. It is the words themselves which are felt to be wrong and are therefore so powerful.

(31)

A further interesting point is the secondary effect that taboo have on language itself. Because of the strong reluctance of speakers to utter taboo-words, or words like them, in certain circumstances, words which are phonetically similar to taboo-words can be lost from a language.

These are some of the ways in which society acts upon language and, possibly, in which language acts upon society. It has been observed that there are a number of ways in which language and society are inter-related, and in the following chapters some further aspects of this kind of inter-relationship will be investigated. Language is very much a social phenomenon and a study of language without reference to its social context inevitably leads to the omission of some of the more complex and interesting aspects of language and also, to the loss of opportunities for further theoretical progress. Peter Trudgill also endorses this:

One of the main factors that has 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 linguistics has now arrived at a stage where it is both possible and beneficial to begin to tackle this complexity. Sociolinguistics, then, is that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomena. (32)
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