

Applied Linguistics
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Lecture 3
Language in Society

So far, we have looked at introduction to language. We also underlined several aspects of language and several issues involved in understanding language as a technical object of investigation. This is relevant to underline that foundation in understanding language and its aspect is relevant for understanding what we have got in linguistic theory of as in output of research in several domains of study of language that is linguistics.

And what is it that we apply in solving issues related to language in the domain of applied linguists and this is why we are working on language. Before we move on to understanding the apparatus of language acquisition and how humans acquire language, we want to understand language in society that is language in real-world. We have discussed it as part of 2 aspects of language, 'I' language and 'E' language.


'I' language is as long as language remains in matter of investigation within its part of 'E' and formal properties, it is part of 'I' language. Formal properties of language the issues which deal with language as rule governed system and issues that help us understand how language is how language is a rule governed system? How language is system by itself? How it is so complex in nature?

All these things are part of formal properties of language, studies of formal properties of language. Today, we want to see some of the aspects of 'E' that is, how language is in society. How does it look in society and what are the issues that intersect with language and society. This is what we are going to be looking at today in little bit more details. So there are 2 parts; language and society.

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LANGUAGE in SOCIETY

- Society
- Social Context
- Function of language
- Language and varieties
- Continuum and fluidity



We understand by now little bit about language, and then we want to understand society, social context, function of language, language and variety, how it is a matter of continuing, how is language not accountable entity, rather it is a fluid system, how does multilingualism become part of language and how language is not different from multilingual.

In other words, multilingualism is not $n + 1$ in terms of, where n is language rather it is an unaccountable entity. We are going to be looking at these aspects of language in order for us to understand language in a better way that is understanding language from the perspective of functional aspects of language. What is society when we look at entire discipline of sociology that studies society from various perspectives where language is also one of such perspectives?

We can define society in a very complex way; there are several aspects of society that are relevant in understanding it. For the purpose of simplicity in understanding what we mean by society in terms of understanding language and society, it is pretty simple. It is about a group of at least 2 people and no upper limit intended for language, it constitutes society.

You have recently just seen that when we were trying to make the distinction between ‘E’ language and ‘I’ language, we said the moment we start interacting, it becomes external and that is the language in real world that is the language in the society. So for us, even when we are interacting with 1 person, we take that as society. It is about a group the one of the ways to understand society is a group drawn together for a purpose.


And this these 2 things put together that is a group of at least 2 and 2 of them put together for a particular purpose in this case communication become society, because 2 people together with no purpose does not constitute society. And that this is why crowd is not society. And when we look at it through the lens of language, you can understand that the society is defined only when we communicate with people.

Culture is part of society, where it is way of life and where people share norms together in groups or across groups that constitutes culture. That is, culture is a complex issue to discuss in itself. And there are several fascinating aspects to discuss about culture and language. We come back to that part little later when we discuss certain issues related to that.

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India as a linguistic area

- This term was used first by MB Emeneau in 1956.
- Refers to common traits/features across language families




Because that has huge role to play in understanding applications of the study of language in understanding several issues in applied linguistics. Let us understand language that is language in society from the perspective of function of language and external aspects of language. One of the early studies is correlated to Amino and it talks about common traits and features of languages in India and it discusses several other things.

The term is, India is a linguistic area and we get back to this town with its relevance in applied linguistics shortly. So, in this study and several other studies also support the idea that there are 4 major families in India. That is, all the languages spoken in India belong to 4 major language families. And this classification is done genetically across languages.

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India as a linguistic area

- According to genetic classifications of languages, there are five major language families in India
 - Indo-Aryan
 - Dravidian
 - Tibeto-Burman (Himalayan)
 - Munda (Austro-Asiatic)
 - Andamanese




There is a new 5th major language family added, it could be discussed, debated however, it does not hurt add 1. So now the 5 families are Indo-Aryan family of languages, Dravidian family of languages, Tibeto-Burman or Himalayan family of languages, Munda or Ostracitic family of languages and Andamanese family of languages.

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Number of languages

- 1652 as per 1961 Census of India
- According to an estimate one third of total languages spoken in the world is spoken in India alone.
- Five language families?



According to this early estimate and another done by George Grierson in linguistic survey of India, the total number of languages spoken in India was 1652. Now this is a number and one has to trust this number as output of this research. However, it is pretty normal to believe and understand that nobody knows names of all these 1652 languages spoken in India. According to the estimate, this is one third of the total languages spoken around the world.

And this is spread over 5 language families, genetically speaking. Now all this is relevant for several theoretical discussions related to language. The first point being, we not knowing the names of 1652 languages, this is a very significant part. We do not know the names of all these languages and in fact, we do not know even one fourth of all this.

We do not know the names of probably this is based on my findings, research and observation that it is possible to find speakers in India who speaks 6 languages comfortably and again I am speaking about it numerical perspective. People will tell you that they speak 6 languages, of course they do it. However, they do not give you names of another 6 or definitely not more than 12.

I have not come across so far in my study of language so far, where one individual has given me names of more than 12 languages at a stretch. This is of practical relevance in this course and we will definitely get back to this idea little later, when I have faced an and I have interacted with people with sets of questions like how many languages are spoken in Tamil Nadu or how many languages are spoken in the State of Kerala or Karnataka, for that matter Maharashtra.

I am mentioning Maharashtra here because we do not want you to get the idea that I am only talking about Dravidian languages. Take name of a particular any particular state because we also believe that most of our states have been given geographical boundaries according to their linguistic significance. So you ask people of Uttar Pradesh, one of the largest states of the union, nobody knows more than 5 languages spoken in the entire states.


I have done this in particular, I have questioned people, I have asked people, I have received answers and I discuss those answers little later in a different context. People have not been giving me more than 2-3 names of languages spoken in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and for that matter Kerala and Karnataka.

Therefore, I conclude by saying that people never give at a stretch more than 12 languages from what they speak and sometimes when they claim and they rightly do so that they speak around 6 languages. Therefore, it is possible to believe that nobody knows the names of 1652 languages. Also, nobody knows the total number of languages spoken in India.

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Typological classification of languages

- Typological classification of languages is based on the structure of sentences independent of genetic proximity.
- SVO
 - English, Khasi
- SOV (Most languages spoken in India fall in this category)
- VSO
 - (Arabic)



There is another way of looking at language which is according to Typological classifications, where languages spoken in India are either verb medial or verb final. There are only 3 types of languages possible structure. If we take verb as a central aspect of sentence and sentence being the most crucial aspect of language, then we classify language according to the position of verb in a sentence.

We find that some languages of the world are verb medial that is to say where verb is in between subject and object. Some in some cases, languages are verb final, where verb in a sentence occurs as the final constituent of the sentence. And in some languages, verbs are initial components of a sentence.

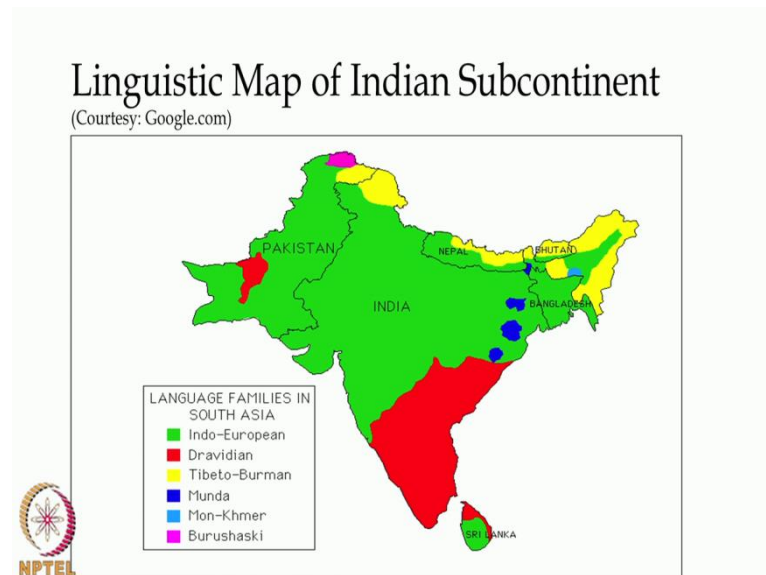
In India, we find verb medial languages like English of course and Khasi, one of the languages spoken in Garo hills of Meghalaya as verb medial language. Most of the other languages spoken in India that is 1652 precise are a verb final language that is other than English.

So, and verb initial languages are like Arabic of course, Arabic is spoken in India of course, very few people speak Arabic as a language of communication, but definitely that could be counted as one of the languages spoken in India. So topologically speaking as well, all 3 types of languages are spoken in India. Genetically, according to genetic classification, there are 5 different language families, such as the breadth of languages spoken in India.

It is like wholesome of languages, too many languages spoken. And we often ask this question and we find that nobody speaks just one language and in order to break this myth

that there are some people who are monolingual, we need to understand these issues in little bit more technical details to believe so. Trust me; we know that nobody speaks just one language.

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And this is where we have the genesis of multilinguality; we will come back to that issue as well little later. So this is the this is the map, which shows us Indian subcontinent, this is not a political map, this is linguistic map, it shows different languages spoken in different parts of the subcontinent, it includes parts of it includes Bangladesh, it includes Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Nepal as well.

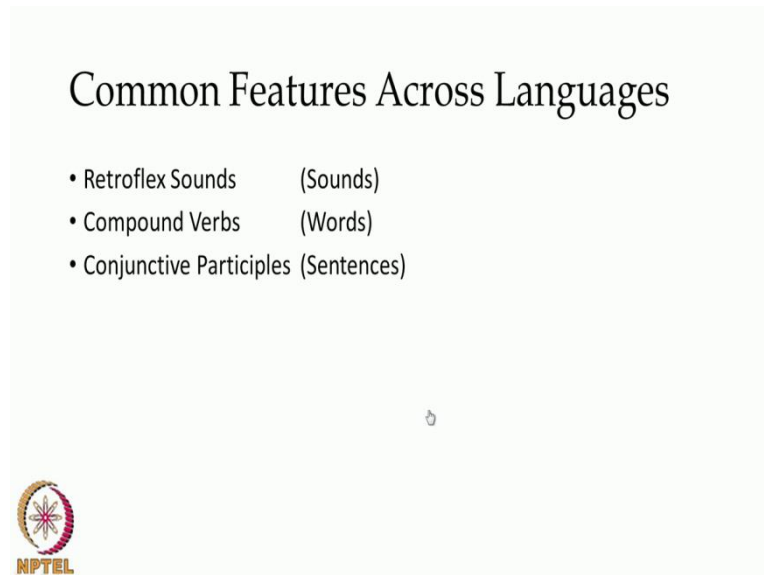
So you can see the green part is the Indo-European belt, which Indo Aryan embedded in it and then you have red as Dravidian zone and blue is the patches of noncommittal Monkhamer and Munda and then you have low mark as Tibeto-Buram. There are some parts at the top where Brosaski is spoken and in some parts of Pakistan, we do find some Tibeto-Burman languages as well.

At the same time, in Sri Lanka we do find Indo-Aryan languages being spoken singly in particular. So why that is relevant for us to understand so many languages are spoken across the country from so many families, so many types and they still constitute a collection of certain traits.

Some very generic introduction of common features across languages spoken in India and keep in mind that their total number of one third of the total languages spoken around the

world, so all of them have acquired retroflex sound, all of them have acquired compound verbs and all of them have acquired conjunctive participles.

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The reason I am talking about these 3 features in particular is because we find complex we find retroflex sounds when we study language at the level of sounds, we find compound verbs when we are looking at words and conjunctive participles appear when we when we study language at the level of sentence.

So the formal study of language that is, study of formal properties of language abundantly substantiate the issue the point that languages spoken from different families, languages spoken with different structural orientations with the coexistence of these things together, they have acquired features from each other at the level of sounds, words and sentences together.

A study of such level, such features at different levels was termed... On the basis of this, I may not term India as a linguistic area even though languages from several families are spoken in this subcontinent. So now we turn to another aspect of language in society and in particular here I mean by society in India and I want you to understand little bit more of sort of general understanding of language that we have started.

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Language in Constitution of India

- No national language of India
- In the VIIIth schedule, the Constitution of India recognizes some language as a list
- There are 23 languages in that list.
- Hindi is recognized as the first official language of the union.
- English is recognized as associate official language.



And then we get to the interaction of language with society. So to understand nuances of language little bit in more details, we need to understand that India is a country does not have a national language, Hindi happens to be one of the official languages of India and even in that list official languages, Hindi is not alone. Probably, at best Hindi could be termed as 1st official language of India, where English being associated as official language of India.

And then it is it followed by a list of several which that is schedule of the Constitution of India recognizes scheduled languages and this is an open list, where the government of India includes 1 or the other time to time. None of them have been removed from the list so far. There are 23 official languages listed in this 8th schedule of the Constitution and out of them, English and Hindi happens happen to be too prominent official languages.

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Dialect

- a particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group
- a variety of a language that is a characteristic of a particular group of the language's speakers
- a regional speech patterns,
- dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class



So it is crucial for us to understand that no, probably no country lists language in its constitution and Indian Constitution happens to be one of them. The discussion about language and number of languages gives birth to several issues. We would not go into details of several issues however, we do want to turn to one in particular and that is the issue of dialects.

This requires our specific attention in order to understand the language in technical sense. When we say 1652 languages or when we say I speak several languages, often we are subjected to a question that out of 1652, only few are languages and rest of them are dialects. This is a very generic if I may say objection that comes up. And that objection is often unfounded that is, based on nothing to substantiate.

So what is a dialect and how do people understand dialect and why do people want to be particular about dialect is what we need to understand in the context of language that is in other words, any discussion on language has to include a discussion on dialect. So the way people term something as dialect, some of the common things is as follows.


Particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group is called dialect. It could be a variety of a language that is, characteristics of a particular group of the speakers of that language. Regional speech pattern is also termed as dialect sometimes and dialect may also be defined by other factors such as gender, class, workplace, et cetera.

There are there are lots to discuss about language and we by no means we mean to underestimate this discussion or brush this discussion aside. Let me let me take you step wise to understand dialect.

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Some Domains of language use/function

- Family
- Friends
- Community
- Business
- Religion
- Government
- Media
- Education




Some of the domains in which people use language that is, we function with language are families, friends, community, business, religion, government, media and education to name a few. So when we interact in these domains, we use different kinds of languages.

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Dialect

- Socially loaded term
- Superficiality of the distinction
 - All natural languages that people speak are acquired in the same manner; then how could one be language and the other dialect.
- A famous quote:
 - A language is dialect with an army and navy.



And this will become relevant in our discussion pretty soon. So dialect happens to be a socially loaded term; that is, if we define dialect on the basis of a particular region, or specific structural variation that leads to superficiality of the distinction.

And we mean to say by what I mean by superficiality of this distinction is in particular to say, with all natural languages that people speak are acquired in the same manner. These listen to this again, all languages that is to say all natural languages that humans speak across the world are acquired in the same manner. To understand this part of language acquisition that is how language is acquired, we are going to discuss in the next module pretty soon.

So and then you will get to understand when I will urge you to come back to this point to understand how all languages are acquired in the same way. If all languages are required in the same way, then how language of a smaller group, language of a weaker section or language of a smaller number of speakers, language of a particular domain of our life, language of a particular caste, language of a particular social group becomes a dialect.

It does not stop here, we are going to see further. At a lighter note, sometimes in a famous quote, language is also defined as a dialect with an army and navy, you will understand these things. So some of the myths about dialect, one of the particular myth about the dialect is, if we are talking about a dialect, it has to be off standard. That is, we make a distinction between standard language and dialect.

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Myths of 'Standard' Language

- Language has got **script**.
- Language has got **literature**.
- Language has more **number of speakers**.
- Language of **formal domains**.
- Wide spread of the language
- Lack of intelligibility.



So what is this notion of standard? That is why I begin with saying myths of a standard language, so that it is easy for you to understand that there is nothing serious about it. Yet,

nothing serious about it, I do not mean we do not need to look at it, we need to understand it, it is a very serious issue for us to understand.

However, the notion according to which people make the distinction between standard language and dialect is pretty much if I can use the term baseless. Here are some of the ways in which people make distinction further. So when we talk about standard language, people mean that standard language has got script and often dialects have no script.

Please understand, when you understand language acquisition, I am in particular and purposely pointing you out these issues before we have discussed language acquisition, the process of language acquisition in generative framework. The process of how it is embedded, how it is part of human mind, what is the role of universal grammar and issues like that. I am raising the issues to you so that you can relate these things.

The issue of a script is a technical one in the sense that it is an acquired, it is a learned skill, it is a skill we learn scripts, where as we acquire languages. Script is important for the purpose of writing; script is not relevant or important at all for the purpose of speaking. It is important to mention to you and it is important to point it out to you that we do find thousands of people across the world who speak language, but they do not need they do not write.

Or they never got a chance to learn to write that language. The only difference is, they do speak the language, and the same time they did not learn the script and the script that is used to write things that language. Therefore, the requirement of a script for a language is totally superfluous one. It is completely superficial distinction; there is no requirement of a script for a language as far as the ability to speak the language is concerned.

Language has got literature, where literature is the next step of script. Again, if you extend argument, you will get to see that it is possible that a particular speech community and the languages spoken by a particular social group may not have abundance of literature produced in it however, people speak the language, so there is no requirement as such for a language that it must have literary tradition.

Language must have huge number of speakers. In other words, a language which is spoken by a lot of people is considered a standard language and something which is spoken by a smaller number of people is considered dialect, that itself is another problematic issue. Language at the formal domains like schools, offices, court, classrooms are called language.

Rests of them are aberrations or language of the informal domains and sometimes we term them as dialect. Languages spoken in wider geography, dialects are spoken in smaller geography. Lack of intelligibility is also termed as, when we do not understand something then that must be language and as far as some sort of intelligibility is visible, then that must be the dialect of that language.

None of these things hold, when we run them through a careful examination. Therefore, these distinctions that hold between language and dialect that is, standard language and dialect is really based on myths, there is no substance or there is no foundation to substantiate this idea.

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Standardization

- Standardization is to reduce variation and eliminate diversity.
- Diversity and variation is natural to language.
- Standard English
 - Used in print
 - Normally taught in Schools
 - Learned by non-native speakers
 - Spoken by educated people
 - Used in news broadcast



The standardization is to reduce variation and eliminate diversity. The entire notion of standardization, one of the damages that it does is it reduces variation. It has no scope for variation and it eliminates diversity. We know the fundamental feature of any society is its diversity and variation; there is no society which is devoid of these 2 features. Therefore, if language is a social phenomenon as well, the variation within and beyond language and diversity within and beyond is pretty normal and natural.

It will be of some sense to mention here that it is only language; it is only discussion about language which begins with every human being equally. Every human being is equal and every society being equal in terms of its variation and diversity. Diversity and variety is natural to language as well, so the entire notion of a standardized language and standard language is not viable in fact, they do not exist.

Some of the claims about standard language namely English is such that it is used in trend, normally thought in schools, learned by non-native speakers, spoken by educated people and used in news broadcast let say. I mean, these things are no definitive features of language. In other words, for us to understand language in society in its real sense, we need to understand variation within and its diversity.

The embedded variation within language and its diversity is what makes language multilingual and this is what I meant earlier, when I mentioned that language is not $1 + 1$. That is, multilinguality is not $n + 1$ in the sense that multilinguality is not a notion based on numerical values. So there is no concept of monolinguals, so in general if we look at it mathematically, (we) someone who just speaks one language is called monolingual.

Bilingual differs to 2 languages and multilingual prefers to $2 + 1$. Here, what we need to understand from our discussion of standardized language, dialect, variation and diversity is to understand that standard language and pure language and language in particular, standard language is not a viable concept.

Monolingual is not a viable concept in fact, multilingualism is not where multilingualism is not really $2 + 1$ because it is not a numerical value. Here, numerical value is not important, what is important and one of the most significant features of the functional aspects of language that is the aspect of 'E' language is to look at variations within and variations of language.

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Dialects

- Local/Regional language
- Vernacular, Non-standard
- Language of the poor, under-privileged, non-prestigious
- Subordinate variety of a language
- Standard is not formal language.
- Dialect continuum
 - Regional, Social, Political, Linguistic



This is what is fundamental to language and this is what makes language a challenging issue of study. There are terms used for this that is local or regional language is dialect, vernacular and non-standard formats or ways of speaking is called dialect. Language of poor people, underprivileged and non-prestigious varieties of dialects, subordinate variety of language is dialect, something that is not formal is dialect.

The point is, whatever you will find in this list is what constitutes society. Local, regional, vernacular, non-standard, poor, underprivileged, non-prestigious and subordinate variety, this is what exists, this is what constitutes society, this is what constitutes real world. Therefore, the language that is spoken in the real world is multilingual, multilingualism, multilinguality and dialect.

Monolingualism, standard language and language are mixed. We need this requires further elaboration, I do realize that this may sound little bit provocative. However, this is based on not vim; this is not based on the urge for sounding nice. This is the on the basis of scientific evidence and this is going to make the study of language. Considering these aspects of study of language is going to make the study of language more interesting and challenging.

So in the next module, to understand all these that we have discussed, we are going to formalize it in for us to understand language acquisition from generative perspective. And then we move on to understanding language as a rule governed system in understanding the structure of language and the level sounds, words and sentences. Thank you.