Sociolinguistic Features and English Language Uses in some Non-native and Developing Countries

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Abstract

In this paper three important tasks have been looked at: presenting the relationship between language and society from the sociolinguistic perspective in non-native and developing countries; the impact of culture and other social factors on the communication of people in those countries; and the nature of English language communication across cultures as being difficult or easy. Drawing on examples from some references in sociolinguistics and public discourse in those countries, many sociolinguistic features have been highlighted which will be invaluable for researchers wishing to understand the many different factors that underlie the shaping of the nature of sociolinguistic features and English language uses in those non-native and developing countries. The following paragraphs address the above three tasks so evidently and finally highlight the conclusions of this paper.

1. Introduction

Most of the work done on the relationship between language and society has relied on one form or another of sociolinguistic enquiry (see below), and of this a great deal has involved some form of conversational analysis. It partakes in some sense, therefore, of the sort of characteristics which Stubbs (1983) sought to make explicit. Sociolinguistics, he said, will have to incorporate analysis of how conversation works: that is, how talk between people is organized; what makes it coherent and understandable; how people introduce and change topics; how they interrupt, ask questions, and give, or evade answers; and in general, how the conversational flow is maintained or disrupted. Stubbs elaborates this point of view, saying that sociolinguistics requires correlational studies which

relate linguistic features to large-scale socio-economic variables, and also general ethnographic descriptions of cultural norms of speech behavior in as wide a range of situations and cultures as possible (ibid).

It is in this kind of context that this paper is presented. It is hoped that by looking, in particular, at some areas Stubbs highlights, and which are standard in conversational analysis, it will be possible to reach some understanding of the nature of the societies in non-native and developing countries and some understanding of the context to which it resembles in their cultures, and the uses of English language in those countries .

2. Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is in essence a descriptive science. Crystal (1987: 281) defines it as a branch of linguistics which studies all aspects of the relationship between language and society . He adds :

Sociolinguistics studies such matters as the linguistic identity of social groups, social attitudes to language, standard and non-standard forms of language, the patterns and needs of national language use, social varieties and levels of language, the social basis of multilingualism, and so on (see also Gumperz and Hymes, 1972; Trudgill, 1984, Trudgill, 2000, Gumperz, 2008).

In Chomskyean terms Sociolinguistics deals exclusively with performance and not at all with "competence". This is not to say that it is uninterested in underlying patterns. On the contrary , the essence of Sociolinguistics is to offer coherent explanations for the fact of linguistic variation, and to do so by reference to the social variability which provides the context of language use. This general view has been accepted since Labov (1965). Thus by the early 1970s when Fishman, in particular, was looking at sociolinguistic variation in language use in different societies and different cultures, it could be taken for granted that any speech community of moderate complexity would reveal several varieties of language which were functionally differentiated from each other (Fishman, 1972). Fishman, therefore, could define sociolinguistics as the study of the characteristics of language varieties, their functions and their speakers; he added that sociolmguistics examines the interdependence of speech communities and their varieties and is likely to think of entire languages and entire societies as susceptible to typological categorisation.

More recently the study of language variety has developed a number of sub traditions, of which two of particular importance are, firstly, the psychological and, secondly, the sociological tradition. The first of these traditions is characterised by scholars such as Tarone (1979) and Preston (1989), much of whose work is concerned with the extent to which the minutiae of language use in highly localised contexts can give insight into both the psychology and the sociology of language use.

The second sub-tradition is concerned with the way in which language can throw light on the society in which it is used. Hudson (1980) contains a good account of the relationship between the two (see also Wardhaugh, 2006: 13 for a discussion; Hymes, 1974: 75). Much of

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what follows in the present paper is part of this sub-tradition .

3. Multilingualism

Multilingualism is defined as a term in sociolinguistics to refer to a community or individual in command of more than two languages (see Gumperz and Hymes, 1972: Ch.15; Trudgill, 1984; Crystal, 1987: 202). It focuses upon those multilingual settings in which a single population makes use of two (or more) languages or varieties of the same language for internal communicative purposes (see Fishman, 1972).

Multilingualism has many causes. In today's world it is facilitated by communications and the already existent linguistic diversity of many societies. The fact of multilingualism creates both trivial and serious problems - from the need to put up road signs in several languages to the risk of competition among the various languages and/or dialects, which in turn may lead both to linguistic tension and to political tension (see Kachru, 1981: 69). A few examples of the different possibilities follow.

An interesting example, perhaps the most extreme form of multilingualism to be found, exists among the Tukano of the northwest Amazon, on the border between Colombia and Brazil (see Gumperz, 1972). He elaborates:

> multilingualism in the Tukano community is taken for granted, and moving from one language to another in the course of a single conversation is. very common. In fact, multilingualism is so usual that the Tukano are hardly conscious that they do speak different languages as they shift easily from one to another. They

c&habt readily tell an outsider how many languages they -Speak, and must be suitably prompted to enumerate which languages they speak and to describe how well they speak each one (quoted in Wardhaugh, 1986:95-96).

However, Aitchison (1987: 116) argues that the acquisition of such skills does not mean that the speakers of such a society or any other multilingual societies are proficient in all the languages spoken as, quite often, one language or simplified language in a multilingual society is adopted as a common means of communication (see also Trudgill, 1983; Kuo, 1985; Pattanayak, 1985; Gibbons, 1987).

It may be presumed that multilingualism in some non-native and developing countries is a much more conscious phenomenon, but the presence of many languages together is, it would seem, a fact of daily life. It is just a normal requirement of daily living in those countries that people speak several languages; perhaps one or more at home, another outside home, another for purposes of trade , and yet another for contact with the outside world of wider social or political organization. The case of the Tukano is of interest because it appears to represent an extreme case of a multilingual society in which language differences and issues are not problematical . They stand at one end of the scale , While at the other end would be the politicised language use of, for instance, certain groups of Welsh speakers (see Whitely, 1971; Krysin, 1979; Nelde, 1980; Troike, 1982; Fasold, 1984).

Of course, to say that multilingualism is a norm in a particular society is not to say that its precise form is static. Multilingualism is a process, and a multilingual situation can produce a variety of other effects on one or more of the languages involved. It can lead to language change among immigrants, for example, over a generation or more. It can result in diffusion; that is, certain features apparently spread from one language to the other (or others) as a result of the multilingual situation, even certain kinds of syntactic features. Thus it is clear that the English spoken in the Arabic countries retains elements of Arabic structure . Other factors that affect multilingualism are the linguistic and social environments which lead individuals in a given situation to make language choices on the basis of both those factors (see Preston, 1989) .

However, hi many multilingual countries, effects such as language loss among immigrants and diffusion may not happen and the multilingual situation may be considered stable since the different linguistic systems are geographically, socially, and functionally non-competitive (see Stewart, 1972; Krysin, 1979). It is not clear to what extent this is true of the language situation hi some non-native and developing countries. The rapidity with which these countries have become multi-cultural and multilingual (over a period of 20-30 years) suggests a situation of rapid change and development, but this is hard to quantify in our present state of knowledge.

Multilingualism can have serious political consequences (see Karam, 1979; Spencer, -1985). Plurality of languages within a nation state is, it has been said, not normally conducive to the peaceful and harmonious progress of its people (see Pattanayak, 1985), though sometimes it seems likely that multilingualism serves to unite and develop a nation (see Mahapatra, 1990; Pattanayak, 1990). Multilingualism, for instance, in the Arabic countries, certainly, is not a political issue, and, of course, its expansion has accompanied high or very high per capita gross national products, and that development has been rapid despite the variety of languages represented.

The political difficulties, in other words, are not inevitable. In areas of extreme multilingualism, as Todd (1984) remarks, multilingualism may allow more extensive inter-group contact than had previously been possible (see also Trudgill, 1984: Ch.3, 7; Crystal, 1987: 234) .

4. Multilingualism and English in Non-native and Developing Countries

In this section I want to discuss two points: English as a sign of prestige and the use of English in different settings.

Only in the last three decades has the use of the English language in the non-native and developing countries begun to take shape as the principal means of communication among the great majority of multilingual people there. Indeed, it is the vehicle for communication between non-native speakers and native speakers (see Campbell et al., 1983: 35; Kachru, 1986). The mass of multilingual immigrants in the Arab world, who are

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enthusiastic to communicate hi society, have adopted the English language for communicative purposes since the primary purpose of language in society is communication (see Karam, 1979; Edwards, 1982).

It is well known that the English language has a real or apparent functional power (Spencer, 1985:392) and prestige in many parts of the world (Kachru, 1982; Kuo, 1985; Todd, 1982) and the acquisition of a prestige language is regarded by many people as one of the essential keys to success and social advancement (Nida and Wonderly, 1971:73). It is likely that the use of English in the Arabic world is no different. In fact Arab people use the English language to locate themselves in their societies (see Russell, 1982; Hudson, 1980: 20).

The status of the English language in the Arab world has given impetus to study and research in this region because the English language has attained an important role in the life of Arab people on the basis of prestige and modernity. As I have argued, the reasons are hi part similar to those identified by Kachru (1982: 357) for South Asia: "English symbolizes elitism, prestige, and modernity".

English does not have the status of an official language in the Arabic countries even though a large number of speakers make regular use of it in the fields of trade, diplomacy, and science and technology as in European and Latin American countries (see Bailey, 1982). Most Arabic institutions, in particular the oil companies, foreign affairs and health sector favour English-speaking experts

and workers, whether they are Arab nationals, immigrants, or expatriates who use English fluently in the process of communication and other activities pertaining to those sectors . This situation may agree, relatively, with the occupation structures in other countries which generally favour the English-educated, i.e., those who have gone through school using English as the major language of instruction (see Kuo, 1985: 342).

5. English as an International Language

The term "international language" has been proposed as English is learnt in many countries across the world, not only within specified English-speaking territories, but as a means of international communication across national boundaries among speakers of other languages (see Stern, 1987).

This exporting of English began in the seventeenth century, with the first settlements in North America (see John and Sears, 1992). The rapid spread of English throughout the world has generated a great deal of interest hi the English language (Cheshire, 1991) and enhanced its major role as an international language in the process of communication across cultures (see Todd, 1982; Fernando, 1982).

In Singapore, for instance, Kuo (1985; 390) found the percentage of English users hi the 15-20 year age group to be about 87.7% and the situation is still developing. English hi Singapore has been very successfully introduced and made the major language of education and much day-to-day communication: it

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is not, or at least not only, an elite language (see Platt, 1982). It is of great importance throughout the public domain (Tay, 1982:51), and great stress is laid by the media on its politically neutral status, and on its ability to bind together a linguistically and ethnically diverse people. Not dissimilar situations exist in many other parts of the world, though the precise role of various languages may differ, and though the settings in which English is spoken and the number of people who speak it well, or at all, are extremely varied. Nigeria is one such country, and one which has been researched (Richard, 1982 and Bamgbose, 1982). The latter divides Nigerian English into four levels as in table 1.

Table 1

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
(Pidgin) Spoken by those without any formal education.	Spoken by those who have had primary school education. Most speakers belong to this Level .	Spoken by those who have had secondary school education. Marked by increased fluency , wider vocabulary, and conscious avoidance of Level I usage.	Close to standard English but retaining some features of Level II and III. Spoken by those with university education.

(see Bamgbose, 1982:100)

In the Arabic countries, for instance, the position of English may be, in some respects, like English in Nigeria where speakers of English can be subsumed under three levels: Level I,
Level HI and Level IV and those people with university education in Level IV retain some features of Level III only.

In spite of debates and controversies about the position of English in South Asia, Kachru (1982) claims that English has attained the status of an important intranational and international language in the area (see Smith, 1981; Stern, 1987 for distinction between "intranational" and "international"). He argues that English has now acquired four major functions in South Asia: instrumental, regulative, interpersonal, and innovative (or creative) (ibid: 357-358). What Kachru actually means is (hat the situation of English in South Asia is rather different from that in other parts of the world (see also Stewart, 1972 and Bamgbose, 1982). In the Arabic countries, for instance, the position of English does not exist in all of these categories. It may be represented in the "instrumental" category, although English is used as the medium of learning in addition to Arabic especially at the higher stages of education. It may also be represented in the "interpersonal" category as it provides a code of communication to linguistically and

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culturally diverse groups for interpersonal communication as well as symbolising prestige and modernity.

6. Influences on the English Language hi Non-native and Developing Countries

One may suggest that the English language in the Arabic countries is functionally different in its phonological as well as in its lexical and syntactic features as the English language in Cameroon (see Todd, 1982: 130). These features reflect the first language or regional -; background of Arab speakers as in Nigeria (see Bamgbose, 1982: 105).

A major noticeable feature of English in the Arabic countries, in particular the Gulf area, is the Indian accent which some local Arabs develop. One may discover that a speaker of English is Indian by marking his phonological shifts and the lack of reduced vowels and weak forms hi his accent and it appears (though this has not, to my knowledge, been demonstrated) that these phenomena exist in the EL production of native Arabic speakers. This feature can also be traced in other parts of the world such as West Africa (see Todd, 1982).

One may find a wide range of lexical shift and lexical borrowing (Crystal, 1987) throughout the style of the English language in the Arabic countries as Arab people tend to replace a known English word by a word from a local language when the speech event calls for communication style (see Stubbs et al., 1983). For instance, the use of the Arabic expression " Ya'ni" (which means "mean" in English) by the Iraqi or

Egyptian citizens may indicate this linguistic feature.

It may not be surprising to find that the speech style of the non-English-educated people in the Arabic countries is more colloquial and informal than that of the English-educated people. This, perhaps, results from the choices of words from local languages rather than the English words as hi Singapore (see Richards, 1982: 164). However, one may perceive that the English-educated people in the Arabic countries are, sometimes, obliged to use an informal style, especially hi in-group contacts, as an English-speaking person hi the USA (see Nida and Wonderly, 1971).

However, one might suggest that Arab people must articulate clearly to secure the attention of the hearer and to make the utterance known and clear (see Halliday, 1976; Burton, 1981). Furthermore, they must adapt their style of speaking to suit the social situation hi which they find themselves (Stubbs, loc cit; Brown and Yule, loc cit) and interact with that situation since it is in interaction that people encounter, experience, and learn the principles, institutions, and ideals that characterize then" society and culture (see Moerman, 1988: 2).

7. Analysis of Cross-cultural Communication

Heritage (1984: 135-178) summarises interaction through communication analysis in terms of three assumptions: (1) interaction is structurally organised; (2) contributions to interaction are contextually oriented; and (3) these two

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properties inhere hi the details of interaction so that no order of detail can be dismissed, a priori, as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant . Watson (1983: 91-120) emphasises on the use of audio- or video-recording of naturally occurring, naturally situated communication by stating that:

It reflects the ethnomethodologist's and communication analyst's refusal to proceed aprioristically on the basis of often unexplicated hypothetical-typical social scientific models of organisational structure or operations, or of substantive stipulations concerning their purported normative or other bases. .... The invocation and representation of rational organisational schemes is unspecifiable hi advance - or ..... is intuitively nonapparent.

In doing so, the analyst ends up with an account of a particular feature of communication, such as an explanation of how people close conversations (Schegloff et al, 1973: 289-327). In fact, communication offers an invaluable analytical resource: as each turn is responded to by a second we find displayed in that second an analysis of the first by its recipient (Levinson, 1983: 356-399).

In other words, one piece of evidence for how participants analyse each other's speech is to see how they respond to it. Levinson quotes the following as an example:
1- C: So I was wondering would you be in your office on Monday (.) by any chance?
2- (2 seconds)

3- C: Probably not.

The utterance in line 3 gives us evidence for how speaker C has interpreted the pause in line 2: as an indication of a negative response on the part of the other speaker. Heritage (1984: 255) offers two further examples of this point:
1- B: Why don't you come and see me sometimes?
   A: I'm sorry. I've been terribly tied up lately.
2- B: Why don't you come and see me sometimes?
   A: I would like so.

In each case, the second utterance shows us how speaker A has interpreted speaker B's utterance - as a complaint in (1) and as an invitation in (2). Generalising slightly further from this point, I might say that the evidence for a particular classification may be found , not in the utterance itself but in the utterances preceding and following it . One may be in agreement with Fisher's (1984: 201-224) criticism of communication analysis from a sociologist's point of view. She believes that social structure, including cultural factors, provides the context of action, whereas functions, as an unexamined background resource, sustain an argument about the methods people use to create meaning.

In order to take into consideration comparisons and contrasts between two different cultures while analysing communication, we should begin by asserting the importance of context and by asserting that each utterance is not

only conditioned by the context in which it occurs but itself takes a part in constructing that context . Heritage (1984: 255) believes that "context" is something created hi and through a talk. He warns us that we should explain how the communication constructs the context rather than using the notion to explain the communication as in the case of communication between a doctor and a patient which re-creates the context of doctor-patient interaction.

As an example of this, consider the fragment of communication below, taken from a telephone conversation between two Singaporean speakers:
1- C: He - do you have his new number or not .
2- B: No don't have .
3-   He doesn't know .
4- C: He doesn't know ah .
5- B: He can't remember his new number .
6- C: He can't remember ah .
7- B: Ah .

4 and 6 utterances illustrate the repetition of the other speaker's last utterance, or part of it, with the addition of the particle "ah". One might say simply that in each case the formulation follows a giving information by speaker B and hi each case it is followed by giving of more information, also by speaker B. In the first instance, this information is new, although related in a particular way to the information previously given, in the second it is confirmation of information previously given. We therefore have evidence that speaker B treats the formulation as a request for information that is related to

the information that immediately precedes it. The nature of the relation is different hi each case, which might lead to further searching for evidence as to how B knows what kind of response is expected (Heritage, 1984: 135-178).

The use of repetition "ah" may be contrasted with another phrase hi the same conversation which seems to have a similar function, but plays a different role as hi the following example (Heritage, ibid: 256):
1- B: He thought he's supposed to meet you at two thirty .
2- C: Is it .
3-   Oh no he mixed up the tune because two thirty I got tutorial .

In this fragment, "Is it" is not followed by further information from B but by further information from C. It is therefore treated as a "reaction" rather than as a "question".

However, it must be admitted that when the analyst is a foreigner it is relatively easy to be estranged from the social group one is investigating. The assumption of ignorance comes naturally and therefore he/she intends sometimes to use his intuition in his analysis as hi the above instance.

Moreover, we should identify and take into account one of the participants in a conversation as possessing authority of a kind over the other one; the nature of that authority is different in each case and is expressed differently. Fisher and Todd (1986: 91-120), for instance, used the conversation as a demonstration of the operation of authority, not as a construction of it.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, one of the most difficult things to master across cultures is how people describe things like feelings, thoughts and symptoms in a medical consultation. In other words, feelings, thoughts, syndromes and symptoms may be described differently in different cultures as in the case with the syndrome **"dil ghirda hai"** among Hindu and Sikh Punjabis, living in Bradford, England and how it is described.

The image of **"dil ghirda hai"** (sinking heart) links together physical sensation, emotions and certain social experiences into one illness complex, which has specific meanings for the community. "Sinking heart" - certain physical sensations in the chest - can happen repeatedly to the same individual, and eventually result in heart "weakness", heart attacks, or even in death. Among its many causes are: excessive heat from food or climate, or from excessive emotions (such as anger) that make the body "hot"; other emotional states such as shame, pride, arrogance, or worry about one's fate, all of which are seen as evidence of self-centredness; hunger, exhaustion, old age and poverty - which all make people "weak", and therefore unable to fulfil their moral and social obligations, and bad experiences, such as an accident, death or shameful behaviour in the family - which may in turn, result in worry and sadness. "Sinking heart" is thus especially linked to "a profound fear of social failure", and to cultural values which stress the importance of carrying out social obligations, being able to control one's personal emotions, being

altruistic and not too worried and self-absorbed, and - for men - of being able to control the sexuality of their female relatives. Failure in any of these - for example, being unable to prevent the disrespectful and promiscuous behaviour of one's daughters - may result in a loss of "izzat" (honour of respect) in the community, and result in udil ghirda hai". Like many folk illnesses, therefore, the syndrome blends together physical, emotional and social experiences into a single image (see Krause, 1989: 563-575).

In order to analyse such images, however, one might suggest that the analyst should have the knowledge of different cultures and of the ways in which feeling, thoughts, illnesses are described, in particular in a multicultural society where participants have not a single word of each other's language. Fuller and Toon (1988: 46-47) suggest that one of the main strategies that might help in this case is the use of interpreter. They believe, that when using an interpreter, we must look for someone who:

- is fluent in both languages
- has some training in interpretation
- has a good knowledge
- has a good memory and pays attention to detail
- can translate fine shades of meaning
- is aware of the cultural expectations
- is able to carry the responsibility

8. Conclusions

It has been found that the multicultural situations in non-native and

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developing countries are, to a certain extent, similar to each other, in particular South Asia and Singapore in that the cultural background of each community plays a great role in the communication of their people. On the other hand, it has been found that the multicultural environment of those countries have not been influenced by the British culture, but have preserved, to a certain extent, their own identity and their cultural background as in the case of Arabic and Muslim countries.

However, this paper suggests that the English language, which is considered as a foreign language in non-native and developing countries, plays a great role in the life of the people of those countries. It has been observed that local people hi those countries whose mother tongue and first languages are Arabic are inclined to use English when they meet an Asian immigrant whose first language is English as the English language provides a code of communication to culturally diverse groups in those countries for interpersonal communication.

It has been maintained in this paper that although the English language is regarded officially as a foreign language in most of non-native and developing countries, it has been used in building up a powerful communicative relationship among its multicultural users in various aspects of their life, both professional and private. However, there are some problems of using English by multicultural people of those countries. Some of these are thus:

a.   strong   accent   which   leads   to misunderstanding;
b.   - their grammatical mistakes;
c.   inadequate vocabulary to express themselves;
d.   lack of ability to understand English;
e.   lack of ability to use English for interaction.

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ملخص البحث:

ملامح علم اللغة والمجتمع واستعمالات اللغة الإنكليزية في بعض البلدان النامية وغير الناطقة باللغة الإنكليزية

هناك ثلاث مهام أساسية في هذا البحث، هي: عرض العلاقة بين اللغة والمجتمع ضمن إطار علم اللغة والمجتمع في بعض البلدان النامية وغير الناطقة باللغة الإنكليزية، وتأثير الثقافة والعوامل الاجتماعية الأخرى على التواصل بين أفراد المجتمع في تلك البلدان، وطبيعة التواصل باللغة الإنكليزية عبر الثقافات المتعددة كونه من الأمور الصعبة أو السهلة.

وعلى ضوء ذلك تم في هذا البحث إبراز العديد من الملامح التي لها علاقة بعلم اللغة والمجتمع من خلال بعض الأمثلة التي تم اقتباسها من المصادر في علم اللغة والمجتمع واللغة المتداولة في تلك البلدان ، والتي ستكون بجملها ذات فائدة كبيرة للباحثين الذين يرغبون في التعرف على العوامل المختلفة التي تدخل في صياغة طبيعة ملامح علم اللغة والمجتمع واستعمالات اللغة الإنكليزية في تلك البلدان .