

## Introduction

The relation between language and society has loomed large over the present-day sociolinguistic deliberations. This relationship is twofold — functional and existential. Considered functionally, language and society are autonomous, while existentially, they are interdependent and inseparable. They are the two sides of the same coin. A society without language or a language without society is quite as inconceivable as a coin with one side blank. The relationship between the two is of inseparable duality which in effect leads to a synthesis of the monistic and dualistic points of view. It was perhaps in the same vein that Hymes remarked, “There cannot be no relation between language and culture nor can there be a total correlation” (Hymes 1970, p. 291).

The social man had never been such a focus of scholarly attention as in the 1970s. The linguist’s pre-occupation with man in relation to other men during the last decade has moved in several new directions and unfolded several new dimensions of speech in interpersonal relationship. There has been a marked shift from the Whorfian concept of language as determiner of culture to the Goffmanesque formulation of social relationship as a major determiner of verbal behaviour. Explorations in the interplay of speech and interactional setting have opened up new vistas of the ethnography of speaking and subsequently brought to a sharper focus the ethnography of encounter. Interaction and not the individual, therefore, has been suggested as the natural unit of analysis in sociolinguistics as in present-day Social Anthropology. Interactions of this kind, which invariably involve social encounters, are organised, skilled and strategic performances governed by a set of sociocultural values and situational constraints. They contribute in a big way to building a profile of the social man.

The recent sociological focus on the understanding of everyday life has brought a corresponding focus on the understanding of peripheral language material, variously described as “casual utterances” (Voegelin 1960, p. 62); “linguistic routines” (Hymes 1961, p. 5); and “social phraseology” (Verma 1965, p. 57) which were earlier dismissed as being too trivial and commonplace to merit any serious linguistic attention. “Whether we like it or not,” Labov strikes a truism, “the major current of linguistic research in the past four decades has carried

us further away from the speech of everyday life" (Labov 1971, p. 41). It is common knowledge that Malinowski's persistent plea to include phatic communion in the research strategies of his colleagues and pupils failed to get the desired effect. Firth also took a serious note of the neglect of the "study of conversation" by both linguists and psychologists of his time (Firth 1957, p. 32). It is all the more unfortunate that this subject should find only passing and perfunctory references rather than full-length treatment in the socioanthropological linguistics of the 60s. Sociolinguists have not shown the same enthusiasm in exploring and explaining modes of greeting and the language of conversation; call phraseology and cant words; curses, oaths and abuses; hesitation forms; and forms of request; the language of flattery and insult; of welcome and farewell, of kidding and joking, of threat and reproachment, of persuasion and propaganda and of gossip and scandal as they have done in the case of colour terms, kinship terminology and forms of address in various cultures and races. Much seems to have been taken for granted in this sphere, although it is often realised that from within its apparent triviality lurks "a frame of reference for all behaviour" (Hall 1955, p. 84).

The present monograph makes a modest attempt to give a sociolinguistic description to some of these neglected areas. The four papers included in this volume are linked by a common concern and a common approach. Here we have a description of speech forms and speech events as filtered through the interactional grid in a highly stratified and segmented society. All four studies are laid in the same socio-cultural context of the Hindi speakers of North India, particularly those residing in and around Varanasi, my native town and an important religious and commercial centre. Furthermore, the four are linked by a common approach of what is popularly known as the ethnography of speaking which, as Hymes put it, "looks simultaneously at language in social matrix and at society in its linguistic medium." All four studies are empirical; the data being derived from extensive field work, gleanings from literature both old and new and the personal observation and experience of the writer.

The first paper, Language of Buying and Selling of Silk Goods, is based on tape-recorded material and demonstrates how aspects of commercial interaction between members of different ethnolinguistic groups put a variety of constraints on the linguistic code, its lexicon and grammatical structure. The trade talk under reference provides an interesting case of interpersonal speech accommodation which, in the present case, does not involve accommodation to values contrary to the stand taken by Giles and others in the matter. The peculiar style of bargaining with its characteristic features like habitual negation, ar-

gumentation, repetition and saying things on oath leads to a high frequency of interruptions, incomplete sentences, hesitation pause, and stereotyped statements with a high degree of predictability. The short duration of time at the disposal of traders accounts for a considerably large number of deletions, brief statements, fast speed of utterance, faulty grammar and mutilated syntax. This analysis of the raw data of face-to-face communication shows the extent to which linguistic patterns are dependent on the patterns of interactional strategy.

The second paper presents an analytical account of the differential usage of the kin and non-kin address forms in Hindi including honorifics and titles in relation to the dynamics of face-to-face interaction. One cannot but be impressed by the wide range of these forms, the patterns of their distribution and their remarkable fluidity which have all been examined here with ample illustrations. The paper also contains a situational analysis in which the author has placed himself in a series of hypothetical situations and examined the address forms used in those situations and the factors determining their choice. Two important but often neglected aspects of this speech event—use of deviant forms and avoidance of any form of address—have been examined in the light of the sociopsychological factors involved. An attempt has also been made to illustrate the multiple uses of address forms while summoning, greeting, invoking and so on. The forms of address in Hindi are so complex that the theories put forward by Brown, Ford, Gilman and Ervin-Tripp and others seem to have only partial relevance insofar as they do not provide satisfactory explanation to many of the “observed facts and effects.”

The third paper examines aspects of the verbal and non-verbal modes of greeting in Hindi of both symmetrical and asymmetrical dyads. The wide range of greeting phraseology has been discussed in detail in the framework of sociolinguistic variables, particularly from the standpoint of indexicality. The patterning of greeting formula is found to be intimately connected with the hierarchical gradation and status differences on the one hand and with interactional strategies on the other. Change in sociocultural norms brings in a corresponding change in greeting forms. It is observed that the more complex a society, the simpler and the shorter the modes of greeting.

The fourth chapter examines the stock of personal names and nicknames in Hindi from a sociolinguistic perspective. Names are scrutinised both as individualisers and classifiers. There are certain linguistic markers which distinguish the names of a particular class or caste. Hindi names have a strong indexicality aspect suggesting, among other things, religious leanings, geographical features, tradi-

tional values, folk-beliefs and sociopolitical developments. An attempt has also been made to explore and explain the mechanics of name-change and the sociocultural factors responsible for it. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of popular nicknames which are found to be more individualisers than classifiers. An interesting feature of nicknames is their structural pattern which is examined in detail. The interplay of sociocultural factors and forces in Hindi names and nicknames highlights the complex relationship between language and society.

India has often been described as a sociolinguistic giant. This metaphor has in the main served to inspire awe and wonder and consequently dissuaded scholars in our country and abroad from approaching it and measuring its strength and vitality. The Indian heritage even in the field of sociolinguistic speculations has been of considerable value. The germs of many of the current trends in the field can be discovered in the ancient Indian linguists. It was more than 1300 years ago that the Indian grammarian Bhartrihari propounded the theory in his *Vakyapadiya* that the meaning of an utterance is determined not merely by its form but also by contextual factors such as the time, place, purpose, subject, syntactic relation and the context-of-situation, each of which has been given a specific term and definition in Sanskrit. Another Indian linguist, Yaska, who lived long before Pāṇini, was well familiar with the language differences caused by the spatiotemporal factors. Coming to our own time we notice that the term sociolinguistics was for the first time used, not in the United States as is often claimed (Currie, 1952, 1980), but in India as early as 1939 in an article "Sociolinguistics in India" published in an Indian journal *Man in India* (Hodson 1939). The Indian subcontinent offers both a mine of information and a challenging field of enquiry which is so vast and varied that we can venture to till only a corner of it—each man at his plough in his particular furrow.

## Bibliography

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