

# Sociolinguistics in English Learning

## 社会语言学与英语学习

谢徐萍/著

At present, the linguistic world generally agrees that there are four viewpoints: (1) Social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behavior. (2) Linguistic structure and/or behavior may either influence or determine social structure. (3) There is no influence of linguistic structure on linguistic structure and each is independent of the other. (4) The influence is bidirectional. (4) The influence is bidirectional. Language and society may influence each other. The fourth point that has got an extensive approval among social linguists. Language may influence society and vice versa. "Speech behaviour and social structure are in a state of constant interaction" (Dittmar, 1976, p.238). Both language and society are complicated systems. All the following are within the studies of sociolinguistics, such as the social function of language, different patterns in using language, language change, language varieties, language levels as well as its relationships with politics, society, culture, education, the

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谢徐萍 著

东南大学出版社

·南京·

## 内容提要

语言是社会组合的工具。社会语言学对语言现象的一个基本认识是语言的变异性。本书着重研究语言与社会、语言与文化、语言与风格、语言与交际、语言与语境的关系;从社会语言学角度观察英语特点;帮助英语学习者了解在跨文化交际方面的知识,掌握英语技能,指导英语实践。

本书可作为英语专业本科生和研究生的教材,亦适用于英语学习者和英语爱好者,对英语教师和英语工作者也有较高的参考价值。

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# 前 言

社会语言学是语言学中的重要研究成果领域或分支之一,虽然确立至今只有不到 40 年的历史,却因其独特的学科性质和极强的发展能力而备受关注。目前,社会语言学已经和句法学、音系学、语义学等一起,成为许多大学语言学专业的核心课程。国外学者编著出版的社会语言学教程虽各具特色,然与我国的英语教育教学关系不够紧密;由国内学者编著出版的社会语言学教程/著作大都用中文编写,并不十分适用于英语专业研究生课程教科书而只能作为课程参考书。

社会语言学主要研究的是语言的变异、变体、语言使用习惯上的差异,以及造成这些变异、变体及差异的社会文化因素。因此我认为,开设社会语言学这门课程的目的是:(1) 向学生介绍作为世界通用语在不同的社会交际中、在跨文化交际中频繁使用的英语与社会、文化、交际、语境等方面的关系;(2) 强调语言使用者必须掌握语言的社会功能、语言的变体、语言的变迁、语言的层次、语言的风格、语言使用的不同方式;(3) 从社会语言学角度,观察英语、强化英语实践的能力,提高英语掌握的层次,指导英语实践。这三点也构成我拟编本教材的主导思想。

本书的主要读者是英语语言专业的学生、语言研究者和语言教师,所以除了介绍一些社会语言学的基本概念以外,本书还运用社会语言学理论深入地讨论英语学习中的实际问题。本书共分 10 个章节。第 1 章绪论:从社会语言学的兴起与现状,社会语言学的研究对象、研究范围和目标,语言与社会的关系以及社会语言学与英语学习的关系等方面去概述什么是社会语言学,并对全书框架作简要介绍。第 2 章语言的变化:介绍了社会语言学中的一些基本概念,如“语项”、“变异”、“变体”、“变项”、“变式”、“语言社团”、“语言网络”。通过语音、词汇、语法、语义上种种变异,分析了语言变化的实质与产生变化的原因。第 3 章语言变化空间与范围:介绍了方言、土语、共通语、口音、同言线、方言连续统等概述,讨论了语言与方言的区别与联系以及标准语、洋泾浜语、克里奥语、语言的消失与复苏等问题。第 4 章语言与性别:分析了语言中的性别语言、性别歧视现象与因素,并推而广之指出英语中存在语言偏见现象。第 5 章英语世界里的英语变体:分析并讨论了各种社会因素影响人们选择和使用特定的语言形式以及黑人英语的形成与特点、形成好英语和坏英语的标准,譬如,不同的区域和社会阶层方面的相关因素影响人们使用语言时的发音、句法和词语特征,以及社会规范影响不同性别的话语模式和交际风格等等。第 6 章语言

与语境:通过介绍语言性语境与非语言性语境,说明语境对语义的变化、选择与确定的重要性。同时讨论了语境与语体、语域的关系及各自的作用。第7章语言的文化变异:此部分侧重于微观层面分析语言与文化的关系、语言相对论——沃尔夫假说、亲属称谓与亲属制度、塔布与委婉语、行话与故意模棱两可的话。结合权力理论、同等关系、认同性等社会语言学理论,通过具体事例讨论跨文化的冲突与融合、词义与文化差异、文化素质与文化心理以及跨文化交际中的话语模式和交际风格等。第8章语言接触:介绍并讨论了双言制、双语、语言的选择与转换等语言现象,特别是英语作为世界通用语的双语能力的获得以及语言的选择与转换中社会政治因素的作用。第9章语言的多重构型:讨论了社会语言学的“变异”研究概念在共时的横向范围上的拓展,包括口语与书面语、读写能力与多样读写能力。第10章语言与交际:介绍了语用学研究中的几个领域,如会话分析与策略、合作原则、礼貌原则、言语行为理论等。

本书的主要特点有:(1)以拓宽学生的知识面为目标,不刻意强调系统性,而是重视知识性和趣味性;力求以实例向学生传授社会语言学理论知识,着重引导学生将社会语言学的理论应用到日常的学习和生活中,提高学生在社会生活的语用能力和语言交际能力。(2)本教材用英文撰写,内容的选择既考虑典型有趣的实例,又选用语言规范的教学材料,做到不仅有利于向学生传授实用的社会语言学理论知识,又有利于提高学生的英语水平。(3)本教材在教学方法设计上体现实用性和可操作性,充分展现教学过程以学生为中心的教学理念,通过师生互动、学生间互动,把社会语言学方面的知识转化为学生分析社会语问题的能力和语言交际能力,提高学生综合文化素质。

在本书的写作过程中,本人重点“剖析”了20余部社会语言学教材和专著。部分例子与练习直接取自某些教材和专著,向这些作者表示感谢。为了帮助读者更好地理解书中的有关概念和理论,每章后面都附有思考题和练习题。在每章后的“进一步阅读书目”中列举的社会语言学著作中,读者可以获得更详细的有关信息。

笔者于2003年作为高级访问学者赴澳大利亚昆士兰大学教育研究生院进修学习社会学、二语习得、教育心理学,并接触了社会语言学的理论。经过这些年的积累、阅读和研究,特别是从2007年开始,本人为南通大学英语语言学专业研究生开设了社会语言学课程,对社会语言学作了比较系统的研究,结合教学实践有了自己的研究心得。本书的内容主要是在本人讲课笔记的基础上整理和补充而成的,部分章节的内容已在国内期刊发表;同时也难免存在“一家之言,论述不全”之处,甚至可能会有错误之见。所有这些不足之处,衷心盼望各位专家学者加以指正。

在本书全稿完成之际,我要特别感谢我的母校南京师范学院(今南京师范大学)的老师们,是他们的严谨治学精神一直滋润、激励我在学术科研教学道路上不断地攀登一个又一个台阶,特别是外文系(今外国语学院)朱淑琴书记、傅俊教授,两位先

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谢徐萍

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# An Introduction to Sociolinguistics

## 1.1 What is Sociolinguistics?

If the main concern of this book is the social dimension of English learning, the primary question which must first be answered is what exactly the subject Sociolinguistics refers to and what it offers.

The hyphenated name of the discipline immediately points to its two central concerns: society and language. Simply put, it investigates and theorizes on the relationship between these two areas, which is a relationship long tabooed by a traditionally dehumanized linguistics. What then is this relationship between language and society?

At present, the linguistic world generally agrees that there are four viewpoints:

- ① Social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behavior.
- ② Linguistic structure and/or behavior may either influence or determine social structure.
- ③ There is no relationship between linguistic structure and social structure, and each is independent of the other.
- ④ The influence is bi-directional; language and society may influence each other.

It is the fourth point that has got an extensive approval among social linguists. Language may influence society and vice versa. "Speech behaviour and social behaviour are in a state of constant interaction" (Dittmar, 1976, p. 238). Both language and society are complicated systems. All the following are within the studies of sociolinguistics, such as the social function of language, different patterns in using language, language change, language varieties, language levels as well as its relationships with politics, society, culture, education, the law, the population, psychology, communication, etc.

Admitting the close relationship between language and society is the fundamental foothold for linguistic studies. As is well known, language is the unique characteristic of human beings, who constitute societies. As a special phenomenon and a communicative way, language exists in any human society and in various forms. People speak

differently based on their background and it is frequently possible to relate aspects of a person's speech to his birthplace, education he receives or social group he affiliates himself to or even occupation he is in, etc. Consider the following two sentences:

Pass me the salt.

Would you mind passing the salt?

Which way you choose depends on whom you are talking to and what kind of social situation you think it is. You might use the first utterance either because you are on close personal terms with the person you are talking to, or because you are in a clear position of authority over that person. By putting your request this way, you show that you are so confident that the other person is willing to carry out your request and will not be offended that you asked. Using the second request, you are not sure you are close enough to, or have enough authority over the other person such that he or she will willingly do what you have asked. In either case, it is clear enough that the content of your message is that you want the other person to bring an item, but the setting and social relationship assumptions cause you to convey that message in two strikingly different ways.

Sociolinguistics is the field that studies the relation between language and society, between the uses of language and the social structures in which the users of language live. The approach to sociolinguistics is that it should encompass everything from considering "who speaks (or writes) what language (or what language variety) to whom and when and to what end" (Fishman, 1972, p.46). However, some scholars in the field emphasize the manner in which social and political forces influence language use, often referring the relation to the sociology of language or macro-sociolinguistics, whereas others focus on how language and language use reflect the large society, at times referring it to sociolinguistics or micro-sociolinguistics. In large part, the distinction rests on whether one emphasizes the society or the language. Hudson (1996) has described the difference as follows: sociolinguistics is 'the study of language in relation to society,' whereas the sociology of language is 'the study of society in relation to language.' At the same time, he expresses his idea a little further: "...it (macro sociology of language) raises issues such as the effects of multilingualism on economic development and the possible language policies a government may adopt. However, such 'macro' studies generally throw less light on the nature of language than the more 'micro' ones described in this book, because the notion of 'language X' is usually left unanalyzed" (p.4). Generally, Fishman is regarded as the man who

takes the lead in macro-linguistic studies, since he mainly studies bilingual communication, bilingual education, language policy, language planning, etc., while Labov's main objective is to learn more about language and to investigate topics such as the mechanisms of linguistic change, the nature of linguistic variability, and the structure of linguistic systems. He studies the interaction between class, race, occupation, sex/gender, age, education degrees, communicative situations, etc. and language variation through a deep investigation into the city dialects. Therefore, Labov lays slight stress on micro studies. According to Sandra Lee McKay and Nancy H. Hornberger (1996), it's useful to distinguish between a macrolevel and a microlevel of social analysis and a macrolevel and a microlevel of linguistic analysis, as shown below (see Table 1.1):

Table 1.1 Levels of Social Analysis

	Macro	Micro
Macro	Language and society	Language and culture
	Language attitudes, motivation, and standard	Ethnography of communication
	Societal multilingualism	Speech acts
	World Englishes	Literacy and literacies
	Language planning and policy	
Micro	Language and variation	Language and interaction
	Regional and social variation	Ethnography microanalysis
	Pidgins and creoles	Interactional sociolinguistics
	Language and gender	Intercultural communication

## Levels of Linguistic Analysis

Trudgill's view is that "all work in this category is aimed ultimately at improving linguistic theory and at developing our understanding of the nature of language" (1978, p. 11). For him this is genuine sociolinguistics.

It is recorded that there are thousands of languages in the world, a quarter of which have fewer than one thousand native speakers; half of which have fewer than ten thousand native speakers. Some larger languages may be shared by 100 million people, while only several hundreds of people may use smaller ones. Linguistically, there are no languages or dialects inherently 'better' than others. The scientific study of language has convinced scholars that all languages, and correspondingly all dialects, are equally 'good' as linguistic systems (Trudgill, 1990). Linguists recognize that some varieties of languages are considered by some people to be better than others, but they point out

that each variety displays characteristics common to all human language, such as being complex and rule-governed, and that even the least prestigious language varieties reveal an impressively rich set of structural patterns. The bias towards language or dialect reflects people's attitudes. It is the social factors that form the prejudice rather than linguistic itself.

Take [r] for example, in the pattern of vowel plus [r], [r] pronunciation cannot be heard in Received Pronunciation (RP). The distinction between the vowels in such pairs of words as *lore*, *soar*, *sword* and *law*, *saw*, *sawed* is disappearing. By contrast, in Standard American English, [r] dropping is considered non-standard, so there is quite a clear distinction between *lore* and *law*, *soar* and *saw*, *sword* and *sawed*. In the history, American English was once called 'boorish English' or 'non-standard English'. Even nowadays in some places or communities of Britain, [r] dropping is a prestige feature. When [r] pronunciation is heard in syllables like -er-, -or-, -ur-, -ir-, the speaker is considered humorous, vulgar or uneducated. Imitate a Brit saying, *bird* or the word *car* and you'll see that the [r] is dropped. So, here you have [r] dropping as a marker of non-standard American English but standard British English. In fact, one's language attitude reflects his or her attitude towards the language user. Objectively, there is no inherent good or bad language or pronunciation in nature. Linguist Garner pointed in 1985 that attitude is composed of cognition, emotion and intention. In other words, attitude includes beliefs of the things around, emotional reflection as well as behaviour inclination. Broadly speaking, attitude may be the thing that is first strongly impressed and that may constrain one to evaluate the others' behaviour in a certain way.

The language attitude is not only influenced by social factors but also by political ones. A good example of this can be found in the former Yugoslavia. The majority language in the former Yugoslavia was called Serbo-Croatian. This language was spoken throughout most of the country. Anyway, now that Croatia has broken off into its own independent state, the language of Croatia is officially Croatian, and the language now spoken in what is still called Yugoslavia is officially called Serbian. These are now officially two completely different languages, due to the fact that there is a political border between Croatia and Serbia.

An example of politics working in the other direction is the case of China. There are quite a few languages spoken in China, but the Chinese government refers to them all as dialects of Chinese. Two of these so-called dialects are Cantonese and Mandarin. Though these two languages are both historically related, they are NOT mutually intelligible. Yet the Chinese refer to them as dialects of a single language as a means of

enforcing a vision of cultural and political unity.

Essentially therefore, sociolinguistics studies the correlation between the language use and the social structure, emphasizing the use of language in different social situations. Sociolinguistics takes as its primary task to map linguistic variation on to social conditions. This mapping helps understand not just synchronic variation (variation at a single point of time), but also diachronic variation (variation over time) or language change. Sociolinguistics is all about variation, and seeks socially relevant explanations for regular patterns of variation in language use.

Social linguists claim that the use of language is a social phenomenon. They also claim that there is causality between society and language. For example, a certain language plays an important part in forming a community. On the contrary, a community plays an important part in standardizing and changing some language. British social linguist Trudgill (1983) thus defines sociolinguistics: Sociolinguistics is that part of linguistics that is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon. It investigates the field of language and society and has close connections with the social sciences, especially social psychology, anthropology, human geography, and sociology. Hudson's definition is much more succinct: "We can define sociolinguistics as *the study of language in relation to society*" (Hudson, 2000, p. 4). The two definitions have received widespread recognition.

## 1.2 History of Sociolinguistics in the West

In his research paper *The Evolution of a Sociolinguistic Theory of Language*, social linguist Le Page has incisively analyzed the development of sociolinguistics in almost two thirds of the century. The 20th century saw the rapid growth of linguistic researches. In the first half of the century, there appeared different linguistic disciplines, such as Historical and Comparative Philology, Descriptive Linguistics, Dialect Geography, Geolinguistics, Dialectology. The *Oxford English Dictionary Supplement* (1986) records the term 'sociolinguistics' as first used by Eugene Nida in the second edition of his standard work *Morphology* in 1949. In fact, ten years earlier than Nida, 'sociolinguistics' as a discipline was first referred to in 1939 in T. C. Hodson's paper 'Sociolinguistics in India'. In 1952 American scholar Haver C. Currie published a paper first drafted in 1949, entitled *Projection of sociolinguistics: the relationship of speech to social status*. In 1953 Martinet used the term in his preface to Weinreich's thesis *Languages in Contact* (1953). It was in the 1950s that the research studies in





both the US and Britain were springing up vigorously. As anthropologists, British Malinowski and J. R. Firth, American Boas and Sapir, made great contributions to structuralist descriptions of exotic languages. Chomsky's thesis, published later as *Syntactic Structures* (1957) received very little attention since he emphasized linguistic function while language as an analysis tool received very little attention. Two years later, Ferguson published his notable paper on 'diglossia,' a functional analysis of different registers of 'the same language'. Labov's work on the social dynamics of Martha's Vineyard and then of New City opened the eyes of some sociologists to the possibilities of such 'scientific' analytical methods. In the summer of 1964, the committee on Sociolinguistics of the US Social Science Research Council (SSRC) called a group of linguists and other social scientists together for an eight-week interdisciplinary seminar and the British SSRC also began to take linguistic research under its wing. As Chomskyan theory showed little concern with variation in language by focusing exclusively on 'competence' in a language, Hymes and other anthropologists/ ethnographers reacted by requiring linguistics to complete its scope by describing the 'communicative competence'. Towards the end of the 1960s Hymes and DeCamp organized the 1968 international conference on Pidgin and Creole languages at Mona, Jamaica. In the conference, many eminent scholars delivered speeches, such as Labov's *The Notion of System in Creole Languages*, DeCamp's *Analysis of a Post-Creole Speech Continuum*, Gumperz and Wilson's study of *Convergence and Creolization* on the Indo-Aryan/Dravidian border in India, Samarin's *Salient and Substantive Pidginization*, Tsuzaki's *Co-existent Systems in Hawaiian English*. They thought that English varieties could not be fitted into the Chomskyan paradigm. In their studies of creoles and pidgins and of Black English at Mona Conference they claimed that between standard and non-standard languages or between two or more language varieties existed Code-switching, Code-mixing and Use of mixed codes, greatly carrying forward sociolinguistics.

In the study by Blom and Gumperz (1972) of code switching in Hemnes, Norway, between Standard Norwegian and varieties of the local dialect, they found the working-class networks more local and more tightly-knit than those of the elite, and the local dialect more focused. In the same year, Trudgill put forward the concept of 'covert prestige' as opposed to 'overt prestige'. In 1974, he published *Sociolinguistics: Introduction to Language and Society*, inclusively summarizing the relationships between language and society, language and nationality, language and sex, language and environment, language and social communication, language and states,

