社会语言学导论

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学者书屋系列

社 会 语 言 学 导 论

An Introduction to Sociolinguistics

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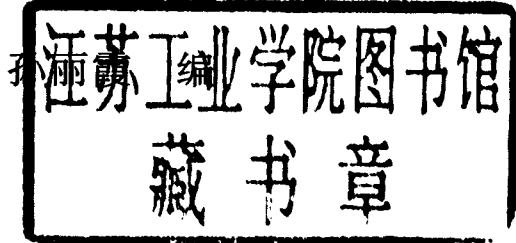
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内 容 简 介

《社会语言学导论》(An Introduction to Sociolinguistics)共有11章,主要从微观社会语言学的角度来探讨社会语言学所涉猎的基本概念。从第1章到第11章分别介绍:社会语言学的含义和研究范畴;语言变异;语言与文化;语言与政治;语言与媒体;语言与性别、年龄和社会阶层;语言与身份地位;语言变化;语言规划;21世纪语言问题探讨;语言预测。本书在每章的结尾处还附有参考文献方便读者查阅。附在本书后面的社会语言学相关专业词汇表也便于广大读者参照。

前　　言

　　社会语言学(Sociolinguistics)是一门新兴的、综合性的边缘学科,是研究语言与社会或语言与语言之间的关系的学科。它从社会生活的变化和发展中,来探究语言变化发展的规律;又从语言的变化和发展中,来探究社会生活的某些倾向和规律。社会是不断发展变化的,它的发展、变化促使语言发生变异。社会语言学研究各种语言变异,帮助人们探讨和了解社会、发展、变化、分化以及冲突等的情况和原因,并以正确的态度和方法去看待、处理这些社会问题,有效地调整社会关系和人际关系,促进社会的稳定和进步。不同的国家、种族、民族或地区,有着不同的语言状况和语言生活,研究这种不同的社会语言,有利于制定和实施合乎实际的语言政策和语言规划,加强语言规范化,发挥语言的功能和作用。

　　据有关文献记载,"社会语言学"一词最早出现在美国语言学家 H. Currie (1952)撰写的《社会语言学的设计:言语和社会阶层的关系》(*A Projection of Sociolinguistics : The Relationship of Speech to Social Status*)一文中。不久之后,前苏联的一些语言学论著也用到了这一术语。但是社会语言学作为一门独立研究的学科,一般认为是于 20 世纪 60 年代在美国正式诞生的。1964年,美国先后出版了由 D. Hymes, J. Gumperz 等人编写的一系列著作;同年 5 月,美国语言学家 W. Bright 主持召开了首次社会语言学研讨会;此后不久,在由 C. A. Ferguson主持的美国语言学会语言学讲习班上,参会专家一致赞成以社会语言学命名这门新兴的交叉学科。

　　社会语言学发展至今已经有 40 多年的历史, N. Dittmar 曾经将它的发展分为以下五个阶段:(1)1964 年社会语言学作为一门独立的学科建立,出版第一批著作;(2)1964—1967 年对社会语言学的地位进行系统地讨论;(3)1966 年起对

有关问题进行有计划地、综合性地大规模实验性研究;(4)1968—1972 年对社会语言学的理论进行总结(这一工作至今仍然在继续进行),解决一般的社会问题和某些特殊的语言问题;(5)1972 年以后逐步进入社会语言学的应用研究,对已经提出的各种理论进行深入的检讨和修正。

布莱特(Bright,1966)指出,社会语言学研究语言变异,研究内容涉及七个方面:说话者的社会身份、听话者的身份、会话场景、社会方言的历时与共时研究、平民语言学、语言变异程度、社会语言学的应用。Hymes(1974)认为社会语言学有三个目标:语言和社会,即指向社会的、具有现实目标的语言研究;社会现实的语言学,涉及语言变异和各类社会集团以及社会形式的语言学,以语言理论而不是语法理论为目标研究语言运用。对社会语言学的研究也可以分为五种类型:(1)语言学的社会语言学,它的研究对象是人们在日常生活中所说的言语,核心问题是语言变异;(2)民族学的社会语言学,其研究核心是人类的交际能力,最终目标是建立综合性的人类交际学;(3)社会学的社会语言学,即语言社会学,研究重点是语言和社会之间的全局性的相互作用,主要任务是解决社会所面临的重大语言问题;(4)社会心理学的社会语言学,研究重点是全社会或某个社会集团对使用某种语言变体的评价和态度;(5)语言学的社会语言学,以会话为主要的研究对象,探讨会话原则和策略,研究会话结构和风格。

Fishman(1972)将社会语言学的研究范畴分为宏观与微观两方面。微观社会语言学以语言为出发点,研究社会方言和语言变异,考察社会因素对语言结构的影响。宏观社会语言学则以社会为出发点,研究语言在社区组织中的功能。

中国学术界对社会语言学的关注和研究始于 20 世纪 70 年代末 80 年代初,经过许多语言工作者的努力,20 多年以来社会语言学的研究已经取得了很大的进展。很多大学的语言专业,尤其是英语语言专业开始开设社会语言学方面的课程,研究国外最先进的语言发展动态,了解语言的变化规律。目前,有关社会语言学的书籍并不很多,许多高校英语专业的研究生和高年级的学生以及对社会语言学感兴趣的英语爱好者可以学习和借鉴的书籍十分有限。笔者利用在美国讲学期间收集了大量最新出版的有关社会语言学发展最新动态的资料,回

国以后潜心研究,整理出版了《社会语言学导论》(An Introduction to Sociolinguistics)一书。希望此书能够为英语专业学生和其他想了解社会语言学的爱好者提供帮助。

　　《社会语言学导论》(An Introduction to Sociolinguistics)共有11章,主要从微观社会语言学的角度来探讨社会语言学所涉猎的基本概念。从第1章到第11章分别介绍:社会语言学的含义和研究范畴;语言变异;语言与文化;语言与政治;语言与媒体;语言与性别、年龄和社会阶层;语言与身份地位;语言变化;语言规划;21世纪语言问题探讨;语言预测。本书在每章的结尾处还附有参考文献方便读者查阅。附在本书后面的社会语言学相关专业词汇表也便于广大读者参照。

<div align="right">编者</div>

目 录

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1   *What is sociolinguistics?*

Sociolinguists study the relationship between language and society. They are interested in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts, and they are concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the way it is used to convey social meaning. Examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community.

<div align="right">Janet Homes (1992)</div>

1.2   *General understanding about language and society*

Language and society are related in various ways. Many investigators have been confused by the possible relationships. If we look back on the history of linguistics, it will be hard to find investigations of any language which are entirely cut off from concurrent investigations of the history of that language, or of its regional and/or social distributions, or of its relationship to objects, ideas, events, and actual speakers and listeners in the "real" world. That is one of the reasons why a number of linguists have found Chomsky's

asocial view of linguistic theorizing to be a rather sterile type of activity, since it explicitly rejects any concern for the relationship between a language and those who use it. (Suzanne Roman 1994)

Hudson (1996) believes that language is primary a set of linguistic items, such entities as sounds, words, grammatical structures, and so on. However, sociologists attempt to understand how societies are structured and how people manage to live together. To do so, they use such concepts as social class, media, gender, age, politics, identity, ethnicity, etc.

Ronald Wardhaugh (1998) in his *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* points out that the possible relationship between language and society can be shown in several aspects.

One is that social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behavior. Certain evidence may be adduced to support this view: the age-grading phenomenon whereby young children speak differently from older children and, in turn, children speak differently from mature adults; studies which show that the varieties of language that speakers use reflect such matters as their regional, social, or ethnic origin and possibly even their sex (or gender); and other studies which show that particular ways of speaking, choices of words, and even rules for conversing are in fact highly determined by certain social requirements.

A second possible relationship is just contrary to the first: linguistic structure and/or behavior may either influence or determine social structure. This is the view that is behind the Whorfian hypothesis, the claims of Bernstein, and many of those who argue that languages rather than speakers of these languages can be "sexist".

A third possible relationship is that the influence is bidirectional: language and society may influence each other. One variant of this approach is that this influence is dialectical in nature, a Marxist view put forward by Dittmar (1976), who argues that "speech behaviour and social behaviour are in a state of constant interaction" and that "material living conditions" are an important factor in the relationship.

A fourth possibility is that there is no relationship at all between linguistic structure

and social structure and that each is independent of the other. A variant of this possibility would be to say that, although there might be some such relationship, present attempts to characterize it are essentially premature, given what we know about both language and society. Actually, this variant view appears to be the one that Chomsky himself holds: he prefers to develop an asocial linguistics as a preliminary to any other kind of linguistics, such an asocial approach being, in his view, logically prior.

Gumperz (1971) has observed that sociolinguistics is an attempt to find correlations between social structure and linguistic structure and to observe any changes that occur. Chambers (1995) echoes that view: "The correlation of dependent linguistic variables with independent social variables ··· has been the heart of sociolinguistics ···," Social structure itself may be measured by reference to such factors as social class and educational background; we can then attempt to relate verbal behavior and performance to these factors. However, as Gumperz and others have been quick to indicate, such correlational studies do not exhaust sociolinguistic investigation, nor do they always prove to be as enlightening as one might hope. It is a well-known fact that a correlation shows only a relationship between two variables; it does not show ultimate causation. To find that X and Y are related is not necessarily to discover that X causes Y (or Y causes X), for it is also quite possible that some third factor, Z, may cause both X and Y (or even that some far more subtle combination of factors is involved). We will therefore always have to exercise caution when we attempt to draw conclusions from any such relationships that we observe.

Hymes (1974) has pointed out that a mechanical amalgamation of standard linguistics and standard sociology is not likely to suffice in that adding a speechless sociology to a sociology-free linguistics may miss entirely what is important in the relationship between language and society. Specific points of connection between language and society must be discovered, and these must be related within theories that throw light on how linguistic and social structures interact.

Holmes (1992) says that "the aim of a sociolinguist is to move towards a theory

which provides a motivated account of the way language is used in a community, and of the choices people make when they use language." For example, when we observe how varied language use is we must search for the causes. "Upon observing variability, we seek its social correlates. What is the purpose of this variation? What do its variants symbolize?" (Chambers, 1995). For Chambers these two questions "are the central questions of socio-linguistics".

Types of inference from speech acts

Personal   Stylistic   Social   Sociocultural   Sociological

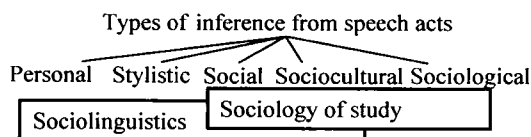Sociolinguistics   Sociology of study

Figure 1   The complex role of language in society, and the division into over-lapping domains of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language (definitions based on Wardhaugh 1992 and references therein)

Please study the following figure (Figure 1), we can find out that social structure and linguistic structure are related to each other in the possible terms. Studies of the various aspects—personal, stylistic, social, sociocultural and sociological—are subsumed by either sociolinguistics or the sociology of language, depending upon the purposes of the research. The difference is largely a matter of emphasis, as the definitions in the figure indicate, and the area of overlap at the boundary of the two aspects is considerable.

The scope of sociolinguistics mainly involves stylistic and social aspects and also takes in some personal and some sociocultural aspects. The subject matter focuses on the core area: linguistic variation and its social significance.

1.3   *History of sociolinguistics in the west*

Sociolinguistics as an academic field of study, as a discipline if you like, only

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developed within the last fifty years, in the latter part of the last century. Certainly, an interest in the social aspects of language, in the intersection of language and society, has been with us probably as long as mankind has had language, but its organized formal study can be dated to quite recently. The word sociolinguistics was apparently coined already in 1939 in the title of an article by Thomas C. Hodson, "Sociolinguistics in India" in Man in India; it was first used in linguistics by Eugene Nida in the second edition of his Morphology (1949), but one often sees the term attributed to Haver Currie (1952), who himself claimed to have invented it. When sociolinguistics became popularized as a field of study in the late 1960s, there were two labels—sociolinguistics and sociology of language—for the same phenomenon, the study of the intersection and interaction of language and society, and these two terms were used interchangeably. Eventually a difference came to be made, and as an oversimplification one might say that while sociolinguistics is mainly concerned with an increased and wider description of language (and undertaken primarily by linguists and anthropologists), sociology of language is concerned with explanation and prediction of language phenomena in society at the group level (and done mainly by social scientists as well as by a few linguists). But in the beginning, no difference was intended, as no difference is intended in the essays by Shuy and Calvet. Sociolinguistics turned out to be a very lively and popular field of study, and today many of its subfields can claim to be fields in their own right, with academic courses, textbooks, journals, and conferences; they include pragmatics, language and gender studies, pidgin and creole studies, language planning and policy studies, and education of linguistic minorities studies.

Sociolinguist Le Page has ever mentioned clearly and sufficiently in his article *The Evolution of a Sociolinguistic Theory of Language* about how sociolinguistics gestated, emerged and developed in the recently more than half centuries.

Research of linguistics thrived in the 20th century. All kinds of branches of linguistics emerged in the first half of the 20th century, for example, historical and comparative philology, descriptive linguistics, dialect geography, and dialectology.

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Oxford English Dictionary Supplement tells us Eugene Nida was the one who first used the term sociolinguistics in the second edition of his work *Morphology* in 1949. In fact, ten years earlier than Nida, i.e. in 1939, T. C. Hodson firstly used "sociolinguistics" to be a name of a subject in his thesis sociolinguistics in India.

In 1952, American scholar Haver. C. Currie delivered a thesis named Projection of Sociolinguistics: the Relationship of Speech to Social Status, the first draft of which was formed in 1949. And in 1953, for Weinreich's article *Language in Contact*, Martinet wrote a preface, in which the term "sociolinguistics" was also used.

In 1950s, sociologists and linguists of Britain and America did a lot of research work vigorously. The British Malinowski and J. R. Firth, together with the American Boas and Sapir were Anthropological-linguists then, and they all made great contributions to the description of the structures for foreign languages. In 1957, American linguist Chomsky published a book *Syntactic Structures* in which he emphasized the functions of language. However, linguistics was seldom used as a tool of analysis by sociologists. In 1959, Ferguson published a thesis about language and gave functional analyses to different usages in the same language. Meanwhile, Labov did substantive research on the changes of language in different regions and social environments, which enlarged the outlook of sociologists and made them to believe that Labov's method may be the "scientific" method of analysis. In the summer of 1964, sociolinguistics committee of social science research council of the USA held an eight-week cross-disciplinary seminar with both the linguists and sociologists as the conferees. And social science research council of Britain also involved the linguistic study into its own field. The theory of Chomsky did not explain the varieties of language, but focuses on the functions of language. Hymes and other anthropologists and raciologists studied the communicational function of language. In 1968, in the city Mona of Jamaica, Hymes and DeCamp organized the second international seminar which specialized in the study of Pidgin and Creole. Many famous scholars published theses, for example, Labov's *The Notion of System in Creole Language*, DeCamp's *Analysis of a Post-Creole Speech Continuum*, Gumperz and Wilson's

Convergence and Creolization about the boundary of Aryan and Dravidian in the southern India, Samarin's *Salient and Substantive Pidginization*, Tsuzaki's *Coexistent Systems in Hawaiian English*, etc.. They believed that the variety of English and Chomsky's viewpoints of grammar are difficult to diffuse. The research work of Creole, pidgin and Black English at Mona seminar made great progresses in sociolinguistics that code-switching, code-mixing and the use of mixed codes exist in the standard and non-standard languages, as well as in two or more varieties of language.

In 1972, in the city Hemnes of Norway, Blom and Gumperz made the typical research about code-switching between standard Norwegian and variety of dialects. They found that the social network of working-classing was more parochial and denser than that of the upper-class, and dialects were more popular in working-class. In the same year, Trudgill pointed out the non-standard variety of language holds covert prestige, which is opposite to overt prestige of the factors are the factors with standard variety. In 1974, Trudgill published the book about sociolinguistics: *An Introduction to Language and Society*, in which he comprehensively introduced the relationships between language and society, language and nation, language and sex, language and environment, language and social intercourse, language and country, language and geography, language and civilization. In 1978, Bernstein mentioned in his thesis that the relevant social factors of language-differences varied according to different cultures, no matter how geographical, national, economical, or of social-classes the factors are. Many sociolinguistics use social-network to be a tool of exploration, for example, Russel in 1981, Schmidt in 1985, Lippi-Green in 1989, Salami in 1991, Edwards in 1992, etc.. However, Romaine challenged to the viewpoint of social-network as a tool, and he argued that this kind of research could only reveal how the society worked, other than anything linguistical. Fishman and Le Page ever pointed out in Quebec, the social drawbacks there could not be solved by forcing everybody to speak French; language was simply the symptom of the social problems there, not the reason and language at best could find its position in certain relationship which co-existed with other social factors. Coulmas argued that a language was best

thought of as a game in which all the speakers could covertly propose and try out rules, and all the listeners were umpires.

As noted previously, sociolinguistics is a new branch of cross-disciplinary science. It took more than 10 years from the emergence of the term "sociolinguistics" until the acceptance of the term. And up to the middle of the 1960s, sociolinguistics was just well recognized to be a branch of sociology and developed its own academic publications, seminars, monograph and readers.

When sociolinguistics just came into being, the scholars who participated in the discussions and researches could be divided into two parts. Some of them focused on the social factors of languages, the others paid more attention to the linguistic features of society, which formed micro-and-macro-sociolinguistics. The problems in micro-dimensions were emphasized by linguists, dialectologists and scholars who took languages as research focus; while the problems in macro-dimensions were examined by sociologists and social psychologists, and that's the history of *Sociolinguistics and Sociology of Language*. Of course, for the sake of comprehensively understanding languages as a kind of social phenomenon, these two aspects were both indispensable.

But, from the overview of the development of sociolinguistics during the last 40 years, no matter what problems they are, micro or macro dimensions, it seems as if they can both be covered into sociolinguistics, however, which can be divided as micro-sociolinguistics and macro-sociolinguistics? What are the differences between micro-and-macro-sociolinguistics? The famous sociolinguist Florian Coulmas has already answered the question in the preface of his book *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. He said that: "···micro-sociolinguistics investigates how social structure influences the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlate with social attributes such as class, sex, and age. Macro-sociolinguistics, on the other hand, studies what societies do with their languages, that is, attitudes that account for the functional distribution of speech forms in society, language shift, maintenance, and replacement, the delimitation and interaction of speech communities."

1.4　*Five main subjects of sociolinguistics*

It is generally believed that we use language in our social interactions in considerable ways for they are very common in our daily affairs. It is sometimes difficult for people to understand that a brief telephone conversation could possibly be of interest as an object of serious linguistic study. It is also hard for them to understand how much we reveal about ourselves—our backgrounds, our predilections, our characters—in the simplest verbal exchange.

In fact, the best kind of conversation for us to think it over is one in which the information is almost only linguistic, as when you overhear a conversation between strangers sitting behind you in a bus or when you receive a telephone call from a total stranger. On those occasions, you begin the exchange with the minimum of knowledge and presupposition. And after hearing only a few sentences, you find yourself in possession of a great deal of information of various kinds about people whom you have never seen.

The kinds of inferences can be roughly divided into five general categories. They are personal, stylistic, social, sociocultural and sociological.

1.4.1　Personal information

For personal information, you may first pay attention to the voice quality of the individuals you are listening to. F. K. Chamber (1995) put forward the following often heard questions in his book *Sociolinguistic Theory*: "Is the voice high-pitched or low? Nasal or open? Does the pitch move up and down the scale or is it relatively monotonal? Does the speaker lisp?" Like all the other linguistic observations we make, even those at much more sophisticated levels, these take place spontaneously, with very little consciousness on our part. And they are very often accompanied by spontaneous judgments, partly culture-driven and partly experience-driven. One obvious one is that monotonal speech is monotonous. Indeed, those two words—monotonal and monotonous—

are etymologically almost identical as adjectives derived (by different Latinate suffixes -al and -ous)from a complex noun meaning "one tone".

The inferences about the speaking ability of the individual you are listening to is also at the first personal level. Is their speech fluent or hesitant? Is it articulate or vague? These are among the simplest, most superficial observations we make but, even at this level, the observations interact to give strong (though not necessarily accurate)impressions of character. A speaker who is fluent but vague will seem to us to be evasive, perhaps deceitful, and one who is articulate but hesitant will seem pensive and thoughtful. And there are of course many other possible judgments at this level. Is the person's vocabulary current and slang-inflected or ornate and careful? (F. K Chambers 1995)

Johnstone (1991)shows that even in circumstances in which people are expected— actually required—to adopt a linguistically neutral, self-effacing manner, they cannot resist revealing their personal styles. She studied inter-viewers in the *Texas Telephone Poll*, a standardized, state-wide survey in which the interviewers speak to individuals whose numbers are dialed at random and lead them through a series of questions for which both the order and the wording is fixed. Even though the interviewers are trained and their interviews are supervised, they "make changes in the scripted introduction and add unscripted answer-acknowledgements and commentary throughout the interviews, the effect of which is to point up their identities as individuals rather than merely fillers of the interviewer role" (1991). Anyone who has answered one of these seemingly interminable polls is well aware that the hints of personality revealed by the interviewer are among the few incentives to complete it, and Johnstone sees that as the interviewers' main motivation in cajoling the respondent to stick with it.

Johnstone also notes, as have other discourse analysts, that conversation is always a kind of personal expression, a form of verbal art less self-conscious than story-telling or joking but nevertheless a performance in its own right. This comes through very clearly in certain circumstances, as Tannen (1984)shows in her analysis of *Thanksgiving Dinner Conversation* or Johnstone (1990)shows in her analysis of *Autobiographical Interviews*. But