**Lesson 02: SOCIOLINGUISTICS CONCEPTS AND**

**THEORIES :**

**1-CONCEPTS AND THEORIES :**

The field of Sociolinguistics is mainly focused on to study on pragmatics. Holmes defines Sociolinguistics as the study of ‘the relationship between language and society’ . It is an interdisciplinary area of research strongly associated with culture through the study of

language and sociology. Sociolinguistics is a broad area of research hence it is important to learn what Sociolinguistics is. There are number of linguists who defined Sociolinguistics relevant to their understating and research: according to Spolsky (2010) ‘Sociolinguistics is the study of the link between language and society, of language variation, and of attitudes about language’,

Hudson (1996) ‘a study of the relationship between language and social factors such as class, age, gender and ethnicity’, and Bell (1976) ‘a branch of anthropological linguistics that examines how language and culture are related, and how language is used in different social

contexts’. [[1]](#footnote-2)

Fishman defined sociolinguistics as the study of varieties, function, and speaker of the language. According to him, they are changeable, interacting, and modification in language society. According to Grimperz (1971), there are four kinds relationship between language and society as follows (1) language determine society; (2) sociocultural determine language; (3) co-variance between social facts and language; (4) language and society is determined by other factors such as culture, abstract structure or biological nature. Sociolinguistics is a discipline that links sociology with linguistics, and it focuses on language use like when, where and how. The different sociolinguists opined in various aspects for a better understanding of sociolinguistics. Gumperz (1971) has observed: ‘Sociolinguistics is an attempt to find correlations between social structure and linguistic

structure and to observe any changes that occur’ .

Peter Trudgill emphasized that the sociolinguistic research helps in getting a better understanding of the nature of human language by studying language in its social context. It also provides a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between language and society. He further defines Sociolinguistics as: ‘Sociolinguistics... is that part of linguistics which 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’[[2]](#footnote-3) These are also areas most susceptible to scientific methods such as hypothesis formation, logical inference, and statistical testing. The above definitions by the expert sociolinguists indicate that Sociolinguistics is known as a branch of study that assumes that human society is made up of many related patterns and behaviours.

**MODERN PERSPECTIVES:**

Sociolinguistics has become a mandate field of study in language education and research and everyone awakes the role of language not just as a means of communication, but also a creator of social identity. [[3]](#footnote-4)Sociolinguistics is an interesting area of language for teachers because\it deals with how the language is used and thought of in the real world. When teaching English, it is therefore critical to ignore any kinds of intolerance of class differentiation toward the existing culture of the child and English culture. The notion of upper-class language or more prestigious language derived from several aspects which Kloss (1966) has categorized to rich heritage, high degree of language modernization, considerable international standing, or the prestige of its speakers. [[4]](#footnote-5) Once English was taught and learned for social interaction and business, but now the condition is in inverse; for higher education it is mandatory, most of the business communication happens via English, becomes corpus language, speaking in English is respected and prestigious.

The study of language and linguistics has been classified into divergent contexts and divisions, correspondingly number of researchers are initiated. With a view to aggrandizing the second language competences, there are lots of methods and approaches have been founded. Richards and Rodgers rightly comment: ‘the history of language teaching in the last one hundred years has been characterized by a search for more effective ways of teaching second or foreign languages. The commonest solution to the “language teaching problem” was seen to lie the adoption of a new teaching approach or method’ . Therefore, it is needed good initiations by researchers, governments and academies. [[5]](#footnote-6)

Language learning and teaching become technology based, elevating the traditional setup to present milieu, respective governments have to revise the language education policies, and grant fund for improving the traditional classroom into technology based. Language teaching shall be done with individual interest and great desire. Richards and Rodgers aptly suggest: ‘Teaching has sometimes been described as artistry rather than science and is often shaped by the influence of powerful individual practitioners with their own schools of thought and Followers’ . Also, it is required good research and projects to face the current impedimenta in language teaching and learning. Despite different motif in language education there are number of possible scopes available while considering the rapid growth of science and technology.[[6]](#footnote-7)

**2-What is a ''vernacular language'':**

A vernacular language might be defined as the indigenous language used as the primary means of socialization within the family or tribal unit within a certain area. In a monolingual setting such a definition is not problematical, whereas it can pose some problems in a multilingual context. What, for example, is the vernacular language in the quinquelingual villages of Rodenas and Neukirchen in NF where Frisian, Jutish and Low German can all be considered indigenous in contrast to the High German and Danish standard languages also spoken here . All these languages can be used within the family unit, as each language can be used for addressing specific members of the family group.

Thus, for example, a boy may address his father in Jutish, his mother in Frisian and his brother-in-law, who comes from the same village, in Low German. As all languages are in daily use in the family and in the surrounding neighbourhood, and as it is not possible to ascribe each language an exclusive set of domains generally valid for the two villages, they must presumably all be considered vernacular languages of more or less equal standing. However, although the Frisian case may be of some theoretical interest, we should like to adhere to the above definition of vernacular language and contrast this concept with those of the regional language,official language ,national language, and international language.[[7]](#footnote-8)

**3-The Subject of Sociolinguistics:**

Fishman (1971) defined sociolinguistics as the study of varieties, function, and speaker of the language. According to him, they are changeable, interacting, and modification in language society. According to Grimshaw 1971, there are four kinds relationship between language and society as follows (1) language determine society; (2) sociocultural determine language; (3) co-variance between social facts and language; (4) language and society is determined by other factors such as culture, abstract structure or biological nature.

**4-Sociolinguistic Approaches:**

At least there are three approaches of sociolinguistics: (1) de Saussure approach. Fishman stated connotation and a variety of language is associated with speech and individual not by language and society. The successful of communication because of uniformity and homogeneity society used the same symbols; (2) the approach was pioneered by William Labov that emphasized to language varieties. The misconception between speakers occur because they do not have an equal sociocultural background. (3) Stylistic variety approach. The speakers use the language varieties in communication adapted to the situation.

**Micro Sociolinguistics and Macro Sociolinguistics:**

The major study of sociolinguistic is divided into two: micro sociolinguistic and macro sociolinguistic. Micro sociolinguistic refers to study of the language phenomenon in social context symbolized by micro factors, its scope of interpersonal communication (person to person) Three main principles of interaction between individual in a group: (1) attainment interaction of communication; (2) acquisition and modification communicative competence; and (3) language attitudes.

Macro sociolinguistics tends to study of sociolinguistics phenomenon, including wider variable, population, language deployment, or the continuity of language, it refers to bilingualism, language attitudes, planning, variety, choice, accent, shift, accent, education, etc. Three major terms are noteworthy in macro sociolinguistics as follows: (1) language contact; (2) language conflict; (3) language and social change.[[8]](#footnote-9)

**5-Why a Social Study of Language?**

Saussure (1916) posed the question: “But what does a language look like, what is it like at a particular moment?” We know languages change from one moment to another, but what are their characteristics, if we could hold them still, freeze them, at one moment in time? The

question was posed in a series of lectures Saussure gave at the University of Geneva between 1903 and 1904. After his death, several

of his students produced, from lecture notes that they had made, *Course in General Linguistics* in 1916. Of course, ideas of such significance donot occur in isolation, even if we can identify one individual as the seeming originator of them – they are 'about' at the time, however subtly that may be. It is that ‘aboutness’ which ensured that out of the rich and complex set of questions in the *Course* (many of them social and historical), this one became focal for linguistics in the 20th Century. [[9]](#footnote-10)The strand of linguistics that it gave rise to is generally referred to as ‘structuralist’. It became the dominant mode of intellectual inquiry, notonly in that century nor only in linguistics, but throughout the humanities and beyond. The fundamental question posed in structuralism is that of the characteristics of the system. What are theelements of a structure (whatever it may be), and what are the relations between the elements? Saussure himself gave a complex answer inwhich the focus was on the sign, and on the all-encompassing entity in which signs exist, language as such or what Saussure called *langue*.

For Saussure, individuals make use of the structures and elements that are there, but they do not change them. The arrangements and elements are pre-given by society. This question of agency has been one of the central issues in the turn to a social view of language. A second consequence, perhaps the central one in structuralist linguistics, is that of meaning. If, in arranging the comfortable corner, I only have the *one* *easy chair, coffee table and sofa,* I simply use what I have. Of course, I can arrange them in different ways, and that makes a difference in how the room feels in its 'meaning'. But as I had no choice in what to use, no meaning attaches to my use of the three items. [[10]](#footnote-11) Meaning of one kind arises from the possibilities of selection from a range of elements within one paradigm. A second kind of meaning arises from the fact that different types of *chairs* are, in fact, cultural encodings of different possible forms of behaviour: *A stool asks me to sit differently to an easy* *chair*. *Setting up the room for a job interview with a stool for the* *interviewee and easy chairs for the interviewers – to make a ridiculous* *example – would set the tone decisively*. The elements in systems of choice have meaning because they refer to elements (objects or[[11]](#footnote-12) practices) in other systems of choice. For Saussure, both kinds of meaning were important. On the one hand, to put it too simply, the sign is based on the relation of reference. The sign is a device for permitting form to express meaning because it is a means for allowing one element to be the form (the signifier) through which another element, the meaning (the signified) finds its realisation; its expression. A *rose* can be the form for the expression of the meaning ‘love’. A connection is made between an element in the system of language, and an element in the system of culturally salient values. The former 'refers' to the latter.

*Langue*, the system of a particular language, is the expression of a social force both by making the arbitrary connection and in sustaining it in convention. The individual may make use of the system, in *parole*; but the individual cannot change the system, the language. The relation of form and meaning is motivated, not arbitrary, and, at the same time, it is sustained by convention in particular ways. However, the significant point here is that Saussure’s views on the characteristics of systems, structure, signs, on *langue* and *parole*, shaped the development of mainstream and non-mainstream linguistics in the 20th Century. In the mainstream, these views allowed emphasis to be placed on relations within the system rather than on reference; on structure rather than on function; on arbitrariness, thus eliminating the force of individual agency, whether from the individual sign or from the system of signs, the langue; and to treat langue as a phenomenon not directly connected to the social.[[12]](#footnote-13)

1. Dr. K. Sankar : **A Theoretical Review: Sociolinguistics in Second Language Education** , *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 7(1)-2022,*  P215, 216 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Dr. K. Sankar : **A Theoretical Review: Sociolinguistics in Second Language Education** , *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 7(1)-2022,*  P215, 216 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Dr. K. Sankar : **A Theoretical Review: Sociolinguistics in Second Language Education** , *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 7(1)-2022,*  P215, 216 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Dr. K. Sankar : **A Theoretical Review: Sociolinguistics in Second Language Education** , *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 7(1)-2022,*  P215, 216 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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6. Dr. K. Sankar : **A Theoretical Review: Sociolinguistics in Second Language Education** , *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 7(1)-2022,*  P215, 216 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. *A.* G. *H. Walker:* **Applied sociology of language:**

**vernacular languages and education,** ACADEMIC PRESS, INC., 1984, P160 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. **Ahmad Faizin HS : *SOCIOLINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING***  **(SOSIOLONGUISTIK DALAM PENGAJARAN BAHASA) ,**Mabasan, Vol. 9 No.2, Juli—Desember2015 , P68, 69 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Anthony C. Oha et all, :**COURSE TITLE:INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS**  , NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA , 2010, P05 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Anthony C. Oha et all, :**COURSE TITLE:INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS**  , NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA , 2010, P05 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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12. Anthony C. Oha et all, :**COURSE TITLE:INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS**  , NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA , 2010, P06 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)