

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. This study investigates the intricate relationship between language and identity through the lens of sociolinguistics. It emphasizes the role of language as a fundamental means of constructing, expressing, and negotiating individual and group identities. Language is not only a medium of communication but also a symbolic system through which people signal their cultural background, regional belonging, social class, and personal affiliations. The research explores key sociolinguistic phenomena such as code-switching, style-shifting, multilingualism, and language choice, showing how these linguistic practices are closely tied to speakers' social identities and contexts. Special attention is given to how individuals adapt their language use in response to different social settings, highlighting the dynamic and fluid nature of identity. The paper also considers the impact of language ideologies and attitudes, which can either empower or marginalize speakers based on their linguistic traits. Case studies involving migrant communities, youth cultures, and minority language speakers illustrate how language becomes a site of identity negotiation, resistance, and transformation. By analyzing these aspects, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language functions as a tool for both self-identification and social positioning in a multicultural and globalized world.

Key words: sociolinguistics, language and identity, multilingualism, code-switching, language ideologies, identity construction, cultural identity, social interaction, societal dynamics, individual identity.

Introduction: Language is a powerful medium for conveying messages and shaping personal identity. Linguists have identified several key features of language, such as productivity, duality, and cultural transmission. Through language, individuals express both literal and figurative meanings, revealing aspects of their identity and social status. This article examines the importance of linguistic consistency in understanding personal identity and how language interacts with society. Language serves as a carrier of messages and, according to some scholars, is defined as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols. Yule (2006) highlights several characteristics of language, including productivity, duality, arbitrariness, and cultural transmission. The vast number of words stored in a person's mental lexicon contributes to the productivity of language, as speakers only need to retrieve words when communicating. Additionally, Lyons distinguishes between two types of meaning: the speaker's intended meaning and the inherent meaning of the language. Figurative language—particularly non-literal expressions—reflects the speaker's meaning, which often differs from the literal interpretation of the words.

Language, as defined by the Oxford Dictionary, is human communication through speaking and writing. The set of words used for communication is the language. Each language uses phonetic combinations that form the sound and use a set of symbols that is genuine. Moreover, according to the linguistics study, language is the set of all acceptable, well-formed sentences. It is a code agreed upon by the speakers for the generation of meaning. Language is

interactive, it is not something that is just passively transferred from the speaker to the hearer. For instance, a language is a big complicated code that can be learnt completely. However, many people often think the knowledge of the language as background knowledge, this is not right. Knowledge of the language is the knowledge of code itself, not the knowledge to the code. Also, there is a clear statement indicates that linguistics exists for no reason, but that is the way the things are. Noam Chomsky once said, "study of the structure of particular language is for understanding what it means to be human". This shows that languages are too important and not because of something just to communicate with each other. Also, the linguists try to search general principle in the nature of human language mind. He disagrees that learning alone could not provide a full explanation of the language. He claimed that we know how to use language for communication, that's a particular kind of knowledge, but there is a range for creativity, for using language in a novel way to express a new thought, a new idea and for this to occur. Dr. Chomsky came up with a theory called the Universal Grammar which explains the nature of human's inborn language capacity. He suggests that the language learners are born with an innate knowledge with ability of understanding structure and languages. It also provides a guide to the variety of possible human languages. His approach emphasizes the human mind, the innate knowledge and the language capacity which is mainly the thought of idea of human language itself. Given its broad and varied nature, sociologists have struggled to establish a single definition of identity. For the purpose of this essay, I will be using Giddens' definition, which has been widely used in identity theory. According to him, identity is "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her (or his) biography." This definition emphasises the idea that one's sense of identity is a reflexive process, and that this "personal identity" is in fact shaped by the social roles in the "life course" - the "biographical" aspects, that is our past. Giddens also shows that in modern society, the self continues to develop over time and is shaped by the ways in which social structures develop and change - what he calls "late" or "post" modernity. He says that in the context of a "post" modern society, the "narratives of the life course are pluralized and multiple" - that is, as society becomes ever more diverse, the ways in which one's identity can be created and expressed are becoming increasingly varied. To put this in simpler terms, we define our place in society through our memberships in society - as this definition suggests, through social interaction, we achieve our sense of "personal identity"

Language is considered a powerful marker of identity. As Wardhaugh states, language reveals more about a person's identity than cultural elements such as dress or table manners. It plays a central role in shaping how individuals are perceived in society. Linguistic consistency—using language in a stable and predictable way—is important in understanding a person's social and personal identity. Since language reflects both individual and group belonging, its role in society should not be underestimated. According to Yule (2006), social structures influence language use, while language, in turn, can affect social behavior and organization. This mutual influence highlights the deep connection between language and society. Language is not only a tool for conveying information but also a way to express social relationships, attitudes, and values. Meyer (2009) further explains that language operates within a broader semiotic system, which includes non-verbal elements like gestures, music, clothing, and visual symbols. Language helps construct and communicate the speaker's identity through two key functions: the representational (to convey ideas and information) and the

interactional (to manage relationships and express emotions). Figurative language—such as metaphors and idioms—often plays a role in revealing deeper, non-literal meanings that reflect identity and social context. Figurative language recreates meaning when writing poem, a play, a story, or when taking place in a conversation speech, or lecture. It is made very apparent that figurative language occurs in conversation as well. Figurative language can't be employed in every conversation since it suggests a different meaning for the term; It depends on the context and the interlocutor's background. When someone uses metaphorical language with someone they don't know well, miscommunication might occur. Furthermore, the person who is angry may become even more enraged if it is said in that context. Figurative language is typically produced in a particular context.

Sociolinguistics is a field that studies the functions and role of languages in societies. It argues for a variable account of languages in contrast to rationalist and deductive approaches which suggest that languages have certain rules. A sociolinguistic approach to languages put forward a variable approach and the use of a language is argued to depend on diverse social contexts and variables. In this sense, the sociolinguistic approach to languages is a response to prescriptive approaches. Social factors such as status, role and identity are seen as factors which lead to a variable use of languages and what is correct in languages is highly dependent upon the context (e.g. the institution, the addressor and the addressee). For example, the type of language used in a university is different than the one used in a canteen and similarly, word choice and even grammar change when we talk to the boss or an elderly person in comparison to talking to a close friend. Alptekin (2002) initiated a reconceptualization in SLA studies by incorporating sociolinguistic perspectives into the field of Applied Linguistics more robustly and thus a variable approach to the field was underlined. Alptekin (2002) argues that achieving communicative competence and attaining native-like proficiency is utopic. Accordingly, he suggests improving intercultural communicative competence (ICC). As for McKay's study (2011), it sheds light on how to incorporate the findings of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and English as an International

Research in Pedagogy, Vol.10, No.2, Year 2020, pp. 398-416 401 Language (EIL) studies into the teaching of English. These two studies are seminal works in sociolinguistic perspectives in SLA. Alptekin's (2002) study made a break through by challenging the dominant communicative competence approach with a new concept, which is the intercultural communicative competence. He also argued that language is situated within the society and thus, it is immensely affected by social factors. As for the other seminal work, McKay (2011), it is one of the pioneering studies which specially focused on the implications of Sociolinguistics on language teaching. Accordingly, the authors of this study analyzed the implications provided by these two studies and formed the framework that consists of 6 criteria mainly depending on these studies. The goal of the checklist is to assess books in accordance with the requirements and needs of speakers in the global age after the social turn (Firth & Wagner, 2007) in SLA studies. Accordingly, considering the goal of this study, the checklist was developed and via piloting (8 books that are used in public schools were checked to see if the points in the checklist are applicable) and expert opinion was obtained. In the following section, the checklist will be introduced in a point by point fashion and the justifications will be provided.

Language ideology (also known as linguistic ideology) is, within anthropology (especially linguistic anthropology), sociolinguistics, and cross-cultural studies, any set of beliefs about languages as they are used in their social worlds. Language ideologies are conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices. Like other kinds of ideologies, language ideologies are influenced by political and moral interests, and they are shaped in a cultural setting. When recognized and explored, language ideologies expose how the speakers' linguistic beliefs are linked to the broader social and cultural systems to which they belong, illustrating how the systems beget such beliefs. By doing so, language ideologies link implicit and explicit assumptions about a language or language in general to their social experience as well as their political and economic interests. Multilingualism is the use of more than one language, either by an individual speaker or by a group of speakers. When the languages are just two, it is usually called bilingualism. It is believed that multilingual speakers outnumber monolingual speakers in the world's population. More than half of all Europeans claim to speak at least one language other than their mother tongue; but many read and write in one language. Being multilingual is advantageous for people wanting to participate in trade, globalization and cultural openness. Owing to the ease of access to information facilitated by the Internet, individuals' exposure to multiple languages has become increasingly possible. People who speak several languages are also called polyglots. Multilingual speakers have acquired and maintained at least one language during childhood, the so-called first language. The first language (sometimes also referred to as the mother tongue) is usually acquired without formal education, by mechanisms about which scholars disagree. Children acquiring two languages natively from these early years are called simultaneous bilinguals. It is common for young simultaneous bilinguals to be more proficient in one language than the other. People who speak more than one language have been reported to be better at language learning when compared to monolinguals. Multilingualism in computing can be considered part of a continuum between internationalization and localization. Due to the status of English in computing, software development nearly always uses it (but not in the case of non-English-based programming languages). Some commercial software is initially available in an English version, and multilingual versions, if any, may be produced as alternative options based on the English original.

Conclusion: Language is a multifaceted system that plays a crucial role in communication and identity formation. Linguistic consistency serves as a powerful indicator of an individual's identity, while language and society are intertwined in shaping behavior and social structures. Understanding the functions of language, from conveying knowledge to asserting authority, highlights its importance in human interaction and societal dynamics. Language is not only a means of communication but also a reflection of cultural values and social relationships, making it a fundamental aspect of human existence.

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