Linguistic Anthropology: A Prolegomenon

Gurpreet Kaur[1] Dr. Nirja Singh[2]

Abstract:

Human beings have been utilizing language from the inception of time to encode knowledge, pass that encoded knowledge on to subsequent generations, for communication purposes, and the foremost reason is to entertain ourselves. Linguistic anthropology is a multifaceted discipline that is purely devoted to the study of dialects and vernaculars (language) from an anthropological point of view. In group membership, the establishment of ideologies as well as cultural beliefs, and in social identity, a huge role is played by a language. The study of language socialization, political events, rituals verbal arts, scientific discourse, encounters in everyday life, a shift in language, language contact, media, and literacy events, all of these studies are ventured by Linguistic anthropologists. Language does not view alone, it is looked at as interdependent on the social as well as cultural structures. Language, as a social and cultural practice, is entwined fundamentally with movement's multifaceted dimensions that specify human life. It is an attempt of this discipline of understanding language from dynamism's holistic prospect which is responsible of keeping anthropological linguistics prevalent as well as pertinent to the world.

Key Words: Linguistic Anthropology, Anthropological Linguistics, Language, Dialects.

Authors:

1. *Chandigarh University, Gharuan, SAS Nagar, Punjab, INDIA.*
2. *Principal, National P.G. College 2-Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow -226001, (U.P.), INDIA*

Introduction

Human beings have been articulating or verbalizing apparently for as long as they exist. Human beings have been utilizing language from the inception of time to encode knowledge, pass that encoded knowledge on to subsequent generations, for communication purposes, and the foremost reason is to entertain ourselves. Human civilization's survival depends on the conservation or protection of the languages of the world. The languages of the world form an overarching or broad memory system of species of human, bearing sheath of thought (in their words). In philosophies and religions all over the world, there exists a perception that the arrival or origin of language and advent of sapient survival or life twine together **(Danesi, 2012)**. The definition of language was defined by one of the ancient Greek philosophers as the capability of the brain that had converted the humans from an insentient or insensate brute into a rational, cogent, and sentient brute. Generally, Linguistic Anthropology emphasizes language not merely as a grammatical system, but also as an anthropological occurrence or phenomenon, i.e., as a mean to understand how human beings believe as a part of living all together in groups as well as how language catenate together with social activities, concepts, and forms, for example, how peoples of distinct religion communicate with each other.

Linguistic anthropology is a multifaceted discipline that is purely devoted to the study of dialects and vernaculars (language) from an anthropological point of view. Languages were regarded as a practical, cosmopolitan sign system by the linguistic anthropologists for several years that helps in the constitution or construction of society as well as in the proliferation of particular cultural practices **(Duranti, 2008)**. Linguistic Anthropology is a field or discipline of anthropology that arise with an attempt or strive to document those languages that are in danger or jeopardized languages. Over the past few centuries, this field has grown to encompass and comprehend most of the features of the structure of language and its use **(Duranti, 2004)**. This branch of anthropology also helps in exploring how language forms and build communications, establishes social identity as well as group membership, create and systemize large-scale ideologies and cultural beliefs, and also produces a common as well as prevalent cultural presentation and portrayal of social and natural worlds. This discipline reaches out in every direction to produce a sense of purpose of language in every word's sense. This field goes beyond examining or analyzing the structure as well patterning of a dialect or linguistic for examining the factors or contexts and circumstances in which a dialect is employed. This branch also looks at the beginning of language; how it is learned; how the language changes. This field also concerns about how words are used (or silences) to control conditions/situations or for exerting power or to influence other peoples, and how peoples react to distinct accents as well as ways of speaking. It also looks at ideas peoples have about languages or dialects and how these languages should be used. It wonders whether those words which people employ for things influence the manner people to experience them, and it wonders whether using distinct languages leads to the different perspective of humans as they view the world distinctly from one another **(Ottenheimer, 2)**.

Anthropological linguistics will be represented as the study or analysis of language or dialects as a cultural or racial resource and vocalizing as a racial practice. This branch of anthropology formed partly upon the structuralist linguist's work, while provides a distinct perspective on their study's object, language, and finally casts a new object. Linguistic anthropologists begin from the supposition that there are dimensions of dialects or speaking that can be captured by examining and studying what peoples or humans do with the language, by matching vocables (words), gestures as well as silences, with the factors in which the production of signs occurs. A denouement or outcome of this schemed or the programmatic position has been the invention of several means in which speaking or verbalizing is a social deed and is subject to the restraints of social activities **(Duranti, 1997)**.

A discipline of Linguistic anthropology emanates from the origination of three different paradigms. These three different paradigms set the manner of approaching anthropology of language: the first one is "Anthropological Linguistics", which mainly concentrate on the documentation of distinct languages; the second one, is called "Linguistic Anthropology", which usually focus on the theoretical studies of the use of language; and the third one, is responsible for studying problems arise from the other anthropology sub-disciplines with linguistic stratagem and this discipline evolved over the past few decades. **(Duranti, 2003)**. The objective of linguistic anthropology is to study and analyze distinct languages by data gathering through ethnography, or observation of participants, relating the structure of language to how it reflects social structure as well as how it informs a particular culture. Various anthropological linguists are solicitous with the advent of language as well as with the language's divergence for over several years **(Ember and Ember, 6, 7)**. It is studied by the linguistic anthropologists that how a language utilizes presupposes and forms social links or relations in a cultural environment **(Agha, 145; Duranti 1997; Silverstein, 12; Wortham, 2008)**. For

the previous 4 decades, several methods as well as theories from anthropological linguistics have been applied productively to an educational system or approach **(Collins, 1996; Gumperz, 1986; Wortham & Rymes, 236).**

Review of Literature

Gumperz, (1974) elaborated problems in communication in a post-industrial society which are observed to emanate from interacting aspects such as variability/dissimilarity in between technical and lay language and differences in culture. They are essential outcomes/effects results from weakening of social boundaries and intensifying technological specialization. There is a contribution of Linguistic anthropology to a communication's general theory which in turn re-orient paradigms of research as well as prophesy/estimate the social impact of communication gap.

Hoye, (2006) has examined 2 significant works in the field of linguistic anthropology: the first one is a glossary or lexicon of the fundamental terms in the field of Linguistic Anthropology, and the second one is a collection or compilation of articles which explains the scope of this multifaceted discipline of inquiry. Both of these works look like a springboard in the comparability of the Linguistic Anthropology agenda/program with that of a communally-oriented Pragmatics. According to **Hoye**, a common ground is shared by Pragmatics and Linguistic Anthropology for the way they prioritize the social disputes or problems, even after having variations in their development, theoretical frameworks, and origins. Some of those problems are the influence of language contiguity on a speech communities as well as their concomitant results/consequences like language death; the shift in language; language as a contextualized action; intercultural misapprehension or disagreements; discrimination of gender through a language; and the complicated interrelation in between a language and power. A consolidated or integrated epitome of both the branches as well as their commendatory roles is addressed by him.

Rampton, (2007) describes the establishment as well as the evolution of 'linguistic ethnography' for over the past 5-15 years in Britain. The language was always overlooked by British anthropology and the U.K. LEF (Linguistic Ethnography Forum) has emanated from socio-linguistics as well as applied linguistics, assembling several formative traditions. Linguistic Ethnography rests in the extensive shift comfortably from mono- to inter-disciplinarity in British higher education. Thus, the relation between ethnography and linguistics is hard to take for granted due to the interdisciplinary environment.

Tomlinson and Makihara (2009) elaborated 3 main inquiry paths that are promising. In the first one, an analysis of language ideologies is performed for the ways they shape expectations as well as interpretations of effective action and social identity. In the second one, the examination of contextualization processes is performed with the reference to the translation of the Bible because, in contemporary or modern Oceania, Christianity is a presiding or ruling social force. The third is the reviewing of eminent recent works on the agency as well as personhood is done, and the reconsideration of the classic Oceanic word *mana* is recommended in connection with modifying understandings of the power. All these three paths of inquiry are interrelated which can result in prolific new ideologies understandings and performing transformation and stability practices.

Wortham, (2008) has defined linguistic anthropology through its emphasis on the form of language, domain, ideology as well as the use of language. He also reviewed researches related to linguistic anthropology whose main emphasis is on distinctively valued identities production, the transformation as well as circulation of cultural models, production of differentially valued identities, the circulation and transformation of cultural models, and nation-states' inception of official peoples. According to him, education is effectuated by a language, and accurate analysis of linguistics, as well as strong anthropological theories, is utilized by linguistic anthropologists for describing the establishment of essential social relationships by employing an educational language. Generally, researches on education related to linguistic anthropology also contribute to linguistic as well as cultural anthropology.

Conclusion

Linguistic anthropology is a discipline of anthropology that studies a language's role in the social lives of communities and individuals. How a language shapes communication is also explored by Linguistic anthropology. As discussed by Pier Paolo Giglioli in a "Language and Social Context," the correlation between the semantic fields, grammatical categories, and worldviews, the interaction between social and linguistics communities, the speech's impact on personal relations and socialization. Regarding the effect and influence of language on the world, the spreading rate of language as well as its impact on society/community or multiple societies is an essential measure that linguistic anthropologists will study such as English used as an international language can have extensive-ranging implications for

the societies of the world, which can be compared to the impact of imperialism as well as language's import to several continents, islands, and countries throughout the world.

References:

Agha, Asif. *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Danesi, Marcel. *Linguistic Anthropology: A Brief Introduction*. Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2012.

Duranti, Alessandro. "An Historical Perspective on Contemporary Linguistic Anthropology." *Teaching Anthropology: Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges Notes*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2000, pp. 20–24., doi:10.1525/tea.2000.7.2.20.

Duranti, Alessandro. "Language as Culture in U.S. Anthropology: Three Paradigms." *Current Anthropology*, vol. 44, no. 3, June 2003, pp. 323–347., doi:10.1086/368118.

Duranti, Alessandro. *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Duranti, Alessandro. *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997.

Ember, Carol R., and Melvin Ember. *Anthropology*. 7th ed., Prentice Hall, 1993.

Gumperz, John J. "Linguistic Anthropology in Society." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 76, no. 4, Oct. 1974, pp. 785–798., doi:10.1525/aa.1974.76.4.02a00040.

Gumperz, John J., and Jenny Cook-Gumperz. "Interactional Sociolinguistics in the Study of Schooling." *The Social Construction of Literacy*, 2006, pp. 50–75., doi:10.1017/cbo9780511617454.004.

Hoye, Leo Francis. "Linguistic Anthropology and Pragmatics". *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol 38, no. 6, 2006, pp. 944-967. *Elsevier BV*, doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2005.04.001.

Ottenheimer H. J. 2013. The Anthropology of Language: An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology, pg. 384, ISBN: 9781111828752, 111182875X

Park, Joseph Sung-Yul. "Linguistic Anthropology in 2018: Signifying Movement." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 121, no. 2, 17 Apr. 2019, pp. 403–416., doi:10.1111/aman.13240.

Rampton, Ben. "Neo-Hymesian Linguistic Ethnography in the United Kingdom." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 11, no. 5, 18 Oct. 2007, pp. 584–607., doi:10.1111/j.1467-9841.2007.00341.x.

Silverstein M. 1976. Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description. In *Meaning in Anthropology*, ed. K Basso, H Selby, pp. 11–55. Albuquerque: Univ. N. M. Press

Tomlinson, Matt, and Miki Makihara. "New Paths in the Linguistic Anthropology of Oceania." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 38, no. 1, 21 Oct. 2009, pp. 17–31., doi:10.1146/annurev-anthro-091908-164438.

Wortham, Stanton Emerson Fisher, and Betsy Rymes. *Linguistic Anthropology of Education*. Praeger, 2003.

Wortham, Stanton. "Linguistic Anthropology of Education." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 37, no. 1, 21 Oct. 2008, pp. 37–51., doi:10.1146/annurev.anthro.36.081406.094401.