University of Djelfa   Level: Master 1

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Module: Sociolinguistics

Lecture 02: Micro-sociolinguistics and Macro-sociolinguistics

1- Difference between Micro-sociolinguistics and Macro-sociolinguistics:

The issues explored by sociolinguistics can be investigated according to one more dimension: whether or not they concern individual speech performance, or the language behaviour of whole social formations or networks of people. Accordingly, a distinction is drawn between **micro-sociolinguistics** and **macro sociolinguistics**.

Micro-sociolinguistic studies typically focus on very specific linguistic items or individual differences and seek for possible wide-ranging linguistic and/or social implications (e.g. code-switching, diglossia and certain practical concerns such as various aspects of teaching, language behaviour in the classrooms, studies in linguistic change).

Macro-sociolinguistic studies examine large amounts of language data to draw broad conclusions about group relationships (e.g. relations between society and languages as wholes).

2- Types of Sociolinguistic studies and Methodology:

Like other subjects, sociolinguistics is partly empirical, partly theoretical - partly a matter of going out and amassing bodies of fact and partly sitting back and thinking. However, data collected for the sake of collecting data can have little interest, since without some kind of focus - i.e. without some kind of non-trivial motive for collection - they can tell us little or nothing. A set of random observations about how a few people we happen to observe use language cannot lead us to any useful generalizations about behaviour, either linguistic or social.

Empirical research has provided plenty of evidence about exotic communities: e.g. it may seem really surprising to learn that there are societies where one's parents must not have the same mother tongue; other evidence may bring about a change in traditional attitudes towards well-established societies, e.g. it has been discovered that differences between

social classes are as clearly reflected in speech in America as they are in Britain, although the US has an image of being much less class-conscious.

Since sociolinguistics is an **empirical science** it must be founded on an adequate database. That database is drawn from a wide varieties of **sources:** census, documents, surveys, interviews. Some data require the investigator to observe 'naturally occurring linguistic events', e.g. conversations; others require the use of various elicitation techniques to gain access to the data we require and different varieties of experimental manipulation. Some kinds of data require various statistical procedures, particularly when we wish to make statements about the typical behaviour of a group.

End of Lecture Two!