

**Tools and Technologies of Language Documentation**  
**Prof. Bornini Lahiri and Prof. Dripta Piplai (Mondal)**

**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**IIT Kharagpur**

**Week-02**

**Lecture-09**

Lecture 09 : Evaluating Language Attitude

Hello everyone! This is Dripta and you are attending the SWAYAM NPTEL course, Tools and Technologies of Language Documentation. This is the 9th lecture of module 2, which is Various Attributes of Language Documentation and the title of today's lecture is Evaluating Language Attitude. So I have been talking about 'language attitude' from the previous class and if you remember, I also tried to relate 'language vitality' and 'language attitude'. So in today's class, we will be basically trying to understand the notion of attitude and how to evaluate it when you are working with a community. So, if you are a community member, if you are an outsider for both the cases you have to understand the attitude of the community towards languages; towards the language that you speak if you are a community member and also if you are an outsider, the attitude of one language and the neighboring languages. So, you need to have an overall idea of the total picture.

So we will be discussing different approaches for measuring attitudes, how people have been doing different kind of attitude measurement by using different approaches. I will be briefly introducing 'Speech rating scale' which you can also create for yourself and I will discuss some sample questionnaire that we have prepared for our own work. And I will also talk about some theoretical background which will be related to all these. So, if you remember I briefly introduced the idea of 'language attitude' in the previous class, but here I am again trying to talk about it.

So, if you look at the first bullet point, it says attitude towards languages derives from the attitude towards its speakers. So, this is not only the language, but also the speakers. So, we need to pay attention to both. And here I am using Trudgill and Giles, and also for the social context where I am using Labov, 2001. So, it is not only the language, but speaker and the social context that you have to keep in mind.

This is the first background note that you have to remember. And here is a very

interesting example from Lippi-Green's work in 2012 which is basically the analysis of accents in Disney films. So, if you are familiar with Disney films they use different kind of Englishes right. So, what Lippi-Green tried to show is how do the bad guys speak. So, if they have a foreign accent.

So, it was found that they actually have some kind of foreign accent which is not an American accent. So, the bad guys do not speak American accent was the result of the study. So, I think you can understand why I am mentioning this particular study, because you know there is some kind of relationship between bad guys and negative attitudes. So, before we start conducting an evaluation for language attitude for any community, we have to keep a few things in mind. For example, why do we need to do an evaluation on attitudes? Of course, we need to understand it for the sake of analyzing the level or layer of endangerment.

But we also need to understand it for policy contexts. For example, in school domain what is the choice of second language, for example. And when we talk about any minority language, we know that it is valued for identity and solidarity by the speakers, but also weakly endowed for status of linguistic capital. So, the notion of linguistic capital is very important. So, this is at quote from Bourdieu, 1991 and the status or linguistic capital is something that you have to keep in mind.

What do we mean by linguistic capital, which is there in the society and how the identity questions and its solidarity questions are also there when we are considering the evaluation of language attitude. We at times we find that there is a tension between language right when we are on field or even when we are doing some background studies about the speech community before going to the field. We understand that there is a some kind of tension between different languages in a landscape, in a linguistic landscape. But it is not easy to solve this puzzle, it is not very easy to come to a generalization that this is how the tension can be you know generalized. But it is very important for us to understand that identity, solidarity and linguistic capital, all these are important issues when we want to study the attitude of different speech communities.

And if you are a native speaker and you are working on your own community, you have an additional responsibility that you have to be neutral. You should not project your negative attitude towards other speech communities around your own speech community or if you have some perspective which is like community-internal perspective which has some kind of negative attitude that should not be projected. So, it is an additional responsibility. So, when we talk about attitude we have a sociological perspective and psychological perspective. In terms of sociological perspective, I can give an example of the bilingualism surveys.

There is nature of bilingualism which is an attitude survey in Canada, conducted by Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1965. So, it had a sociological perspective, while conducting the surveys of bilingualism and when I am talking about psychological perspective, I am talking about speaker evaluation. So, you have different psychological factors in mind. When we do content analysis today, I have planned to talk about the different types of evaluation on attitude. So, you can do content analysis of societal treatment.

So, content analysis of whatever document you can receive from your field or you can collect you can gather from different sources. So, content analysis can help you to understand the attitude towards different languages. The societal treatment approach is overlooked at times in contemporary discussions, but societal treatment or content analysis, these are useful methods. At times, we also have direct measures. I will give you some examples and speaker evaluation.

So, now it is your call to choose a particular method for evaluating and analyzing attitudes. So, there are some traditional anthropological techniques following participant observation and ethnographic studies are there, which you can of course, consult. You can also adopt these techniques for your own study- participatory observation. But you have to keep in mind that in order to understand the attitude among different speech communities, you definitely need an interdisciplinary technique. You cannot have one dimensional approach which is helping you to create your own questionnaire or method.

So, direct approach is survey and interview. I will give an example of such questions which are used for these direct approach. And you can also look at some references like the national language attitude surveys conducted in Ireland. And, if you have surveys, they are sort of talking about certain opinions on policy right. So, we can learn from them.

What kind of opinion people are giving on the existing language policies? If they are talking about some kind of changes, suggesting changes. So, we can learn from them in order to understand the attitude. And as I told previously, we have to focus on social status and solidarity, because it is important to analyze these two before like starting your actual work on language attitude. So, what is the community members' perspective, is my question at this point, because if you are a community member and you are trying to understand the solidarity that your community actually has, then what are the factors that you are considering? And what is your thought about the social status of your community? Are you biased? Are you getting or are you trying to translate the idea of social status and solidarity which is borrowed from a dominant language perspective? So,

all these questions are important for you to understand. I already talked about the relationship between language vitality.

So, here I am also bringing the ideology issue, which is there, which is always there right? I mean be it the idea of language shift or attitude or you talk about the ideological issues, it is it is always there. So here, I am using one quote by Woolard and Kroskrity, "What most researchers share, what makes the term useful in spite of the problems, is a view of ideology as rooted in or responsive to the experience of a particular social position". So, social position is of course, important and you know what kind of ideology you are already getting through the responses of your informants is important, is critical, but you need to stop and think about it. And if needed, while conducting the field work in between, you need to look at certain theoretical perspectives if you need. So, at times when we are at field, we collect some data related to attitude, we think that we need some more clarity of theoretical tools and theoretical literature available.

So, we read and try to sharpen our thoughts in order to go back to the field with the same kind of questionnaire that we are using; at times we also modify them based on our changed idea on ideology. So, language ideologies are of course, related to the attitudes of individual speakers. This is something we have to keep in mind. If we assume that attitudes are always related to a whole community's ideology or whole community's thought, it is not the case always. So we will focus more on individual speakers and when we will talk about the attitude of individual speakers, collect data from one speaker, we will think about you know the ideologies behind them.

We already discussed about vitality. I hope you remember the factors related to the attitude issues. When we talked about vitality, there are some factors which we also discussed in the other class, where we specifically related vitality and attitude if you remember. So, here I will suggest one kind of data collection, which you can try before going to a field, which is understanding attitudes through speech rating scale. So, what do we mean by speech rating scale? This is very this is a very good suggestion to begin with.

You can start with this and then move to a more complex questionnaire or method, whatever you are adopting. So if you ask a person to narrate a story or talk about his or her personal experience in his or her home language and record it, and ask a speaker of a dominant language of that area to comment on the language of the narration, then you look at the opinion of the person, the data given by the speaker of a dominant language based on the following points and you can evaluate them based on a 5 point scale which you can create. So, what are the pointers that I am mentioning here? This is not something that I am creating; this is people have already created, I am just presenting it for your reference. Pleasant, attractive, self-confident, likable, fluent, reliable, sincere,

ambitious, friendly, intelligent, good sense of humor, leadership skills, highly educated, high status job. So, these will be at one end of a scale and you can have exactly the opposite at the other point of the scale, like un-pleasant, un-attractive, not confident, not likable, non-fluent, all these things.

So, if you create this scale and also ask the ask your informant to talk about them and put the responses based on the scale, you will get some idea of the attitude towards the language. This is this will be an useful way to start with and then we will move to a more detailed kind of questionnaire. So, how do we collect data to understand attitude towards the languages after this? Can we also access some pre-existing data? If there are studies on the language on which you are working you can of course, look at it. If there are no studies available, maybe you can look at similar studies on other languages maybe neighboring areas. And if we want to understand attitude, we can employ direct method, as I said and ask some questions directly to the speakers which will reveal their attitudes.

But you have to be very cautious while asking these questions because you know there are ethical issues and you should not break the sentiment, you should respect the speaker's views and should not say something which may hurt the speaker. So you will have to be very careful. So, when you will collect the data, keep in mind that what are the social discourses and ideologies. There can be indirect studies and results may differ. So, you can ask the participants to listen to recordings of different languages and ask to evaluate them, similar to what I have asked you to do in the beginning part, but if you have recording of different varieties of a same language or different languages and ask someone to evaluate them then you will get some idea and you can also compare them.

So, this pair or set of different accents of a same speaker which is technically known as 'matched guise' and data from different speakers which is known as 'verbal guise'. So, these are very important and if you are doing both, like I have done a lot of studies on the first one, pair/set of different accents of a same speaker, because I try to understand variation as well, but from different speakers you have to keep certain other things in your mind and you can get all these details from the questionnaire that I will discuss. So what are the steps for evaluation? You have to select a context and what do you think about this language, etcetera. Then you have to create a stimuli, like a topic. You figure out a topic and you do not know which will work, maybe you will select a topic and then it will not work.

So you have to select a topic and which is where respondents are willing to talk about it. And then you have to test the stimuli like questions like "Is this language like authentic?" And also, the other social attributes like status and solidarity, as I have mentioned before. And if you are preparing for a written survey, you have to think these questions like what

do you think about the guises and also the details of participants. Finally, we test it, conduct the survey and process the data. So here, I will be presenting the questionnaire that I have created with my colleagues which was published.

I will show you the reference towards the end for understanding the attitude of speakers. And initially of course, we will get all these details which is common for all other questionnaires. You are learning about other questionnaires from Dr. Lahiri's lectures. So, all these things you collect before getting the data.

And then there are the other questions which will be important for us. So now, we will focus on these particular questions which are directly asking about the language attitude. For example, do you want your children to learn your language? If the answer is yes, then you will understand that there is a positive attitude right? And if they say no, so, it means that they want to shift. Now again, I am relating it to the idea of shift. And if there are many varieties in your language, which variety is the most prestigious one, is again related to their choice, related to attitude among different varieties and their preference.

And if they are saying that this particular variety is the prestigious one, you have to ask why. There will be reasons behind it. So maybe, you will see that there is some kind of linguistic capital that I have mentioned previously and you can use your theoretical understanding here to understand that what kind of linguistic capital is making the particular variety more prestigious. We already talked about the idea of prestige, I hope you remember that. So, do people from neighboring villages try to learn the prestigious variety? So, it will help you to understand the dominance of one over the other varieties.

So, I work on languages where there are several varieties and I am not naming them. So, one particular area, which is probably culturally and economically a more important hub, so they may try to project that their variety is the prestigious variety and other neighboring villages will try to learn them. So, the next question is also very important, "Do you think your language is a barrier in social and economic domains?" So, if they think.. actually I remembered that I got some feedback from a coming speech community that they think that their language is a barrier in social and economic domains.

So, it is a barrier; please remember this term. So, it will definitely compel them to shift right, they will shift to a more dominant language and which also gives you a direct response regarding the attitude. And what kind of barrier? You can ask these following pointers, barrier in talking to higher authorities of the village, barrier in facing job related interviews, barrier in talking to higher caste people. You have to refresh this question. You cannot ask directly that "How do you talk, if you think it is a barrier to higher caste people?" You have to rephrase it.

And also talking to higher economic class people, you have to rephrase it according to your own way. And you can add questions according to the situations. Like I remember, when I was asking this question to some informants and they said that they face barrier in job related interviews, they cannot incorporate their language for jobs. Then they wanted more layers to this particular question, what kind of job, where they are going, in which location, what is the educational status, etcetera. So, I had to continue this question, and add more questions.

So now, coming to the literacy level of the different generations of your family, you can take individual details like how many family members are there, you already have in the beginning part of your survey, but you can have a data from different generations, generation-based data which is again related to some kind of vitality status. Then you can ask, do different generations use newspaper in different languages, if they are literate? Then you can understand a choice and you can understand whether there is a different preference, whether the younger family members are choosing newspaper in dominant languages and not opting for local newspapers. This is very important for you to understand. So, the next question in the same thread is "How do you wish to use your language for education?" So, this is also an opinion related to policy right, that I have mentioned previously. So, you can say that whether you want to see your language as first language, as second language, as a medium of instruction.

So, we often find the response that we do not want our language as medium of instruction because our kids will not get a job if they learn our language. So, maybe like as far as I have understood, mostly people say that they want it as second language if they have some kind of positive attitude associated with them. And, otherwise they say we do not want any kind of education in our language and for different levels: primary, upper primary, secondary, high secondary, college or university. So, it differs from one community to another. This is a very interesting question if you ask, "Do you think one language can be used for all purposes?" So, this is giving you an idea of prestige and if there is only one specific language in the area which is gaining the status.

So, it will directly help you to understand the entire scenario and if yes, is it your language? So in most cases, if you are working on a language which is falling under some kind of endangerment layer then of course, it is no. But one language can be used for all purposes; it can also vary for people who are going out to work in a government office or going to a different town to buy stuff for business, etcetera. It will be different for women who are staying at home. So, you have to understand all these layers in between one single question and through snowballing method you can get more layered data. So, "do you think one language can be used?" one language, if yes it is your

language, if no, then which language? It is also another layer of it.

So, you are going to a different layer of it. And then the last question is, "Is your language difficult to learn?" This is a small question, but it gives you a very, very deep insight. If they say that it is difficult to learn, it means they are not giving access to other speech communities to learn their language and creating a cocoon. And if the language is difficult to learn, yes it is difficult. So, only my speech community will learn this language and you cannot learn this. So, there is some kind of you know barrier, you have to understand.

And if they say that yes my language is easy to learn, it is not difficult, it means that you know they are open to it. So, it will also help you to think that if they are creating the barrier, why they are creating this barrier and what kind of attitudinal issues are related to that? So, I will come to the conclusion part of this lecture and I will say that different techniques for collecting data on attitude were discussed in today's class. We said that when we collect data based on some questionnaires, when we do not collect in terms of questionnaire, but maybe you know we try to get a recording and recording based-opinion from the speaker, all these things are important for us right. But it is very important, I will emphasize that you need to understand the theoretical background of the speech community, you need to brush up your theoretical skills in terms of sociolinguistics and also these contact issues, multilingualism, endangerment and the relevant theoretical ideas which will help you before going to the field. And you of course, do a background research, not only in terms of the theoretical ideas, but also the community background.

I am sure before conducting an attitude research, you by then will already collect some words, sentences, some other sources that you are designing. And by then you will get some idea about the nature of the language and from the very beginning stage, you will have the community profile, profile of the individual speakers, family based data, and if you already collect vitality data before collecting attitude data, it will be super useful because you will already have some kind of mapping inside your head. And, then you know after doing the background research, you can formulate your own questionnaire before going to the field. You can also modify your questionnaire as I have said because it is not the case that I am going with this questionnaire and I will only use this, I will not go beyond it. It will not happen; this is not done for any kind of sociolinguistic survey, you need to modify them based on the situations.

And, this is a golden rule for you if you are a community member that you have to be neutral. You cannot impose either positive or negative attitude towards your community



through this questions that you are going to ask or conducting surveys. So, here are the key references and thank you!