

LIGN177: Multilingualism

September 29, 2009

Multilingualism

- Society – Today's topic
- Individual – Thursday's topic
- Society level
 - linguistic density and stratification
 - official languages
 - diglossia

Multilingualism is not exotic

5000~6000 languages in ~190 nations implies high degrees of multilingualism

- Papua New Guinea (860 languages)
- Indonesia (670)
- Nigeria (427)
- India (380)
- Cameroon (270)
- Mexico (250)

Multilingualism stratified

- Languages (and dialects) can be *horizontally* stratified, distributed geographically
 - rural, village, town, city, coast, mountains
 - varying degrees of multilingualism depends on trade and other movement patterns

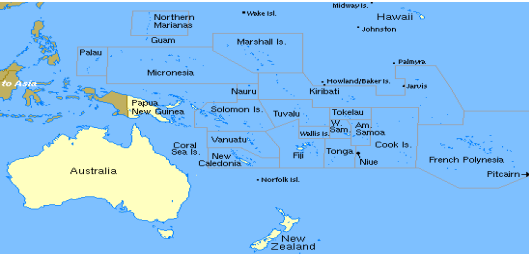
Multilingualism stratified

- Languages (and dialects) can be vertically stratified, distributed in social hierarchies
 - government, royalty, official functions
 - workplace, houses of worship
 - social networks
 - home

Roots of societal multilingualism

- long-standing co-existence of language groups
- population movements
- education

Papua New Guinea



human habitation dating back 40,000 years

Multilingualism in PNG

Co-existence of language groups

- Ecosystem and subsistence economy encourages small population groups and self-sufficiency
- *Multilingualism is common* - villagers know their own language and one or two neighboring languages, or one that is used in larger trade areas
- However, strong identity with local group and its territory
- → importance of the local language has led to a system of stable multilingualism, a kind of *linguistic equilibrium*

Multilingualism in PNG

Population movements (colonialism)

- New Guinea was last major land area to be colonized by European powers (Dutch, British, German, Australian) → geography and disease did not result in large colonial settlements
- Arrival of Europeans resulted in a pan-PNG *lingua franca*, or language of widespread communication:
Tok Pisin, a pidgin language based on English, predominant in towns

Tok Pisin

- *Yupela isi tasol kisim i kam wokim na sidaun na em kukim yupela kukim long pawa tasol em isi*
- 'Everything comes easily to you. You sit down and cook with power. That's easy.'

Multilingualism in PNG

Education

- Early education policy favored English
- Shifts in language policy have resulted in a multi-tiered system
- Local languages at elementary level (~200 in some degree of usage, including Tok Pisin)
- English at higher levels

Official languages

- An **official language** is a language accorded **legal** status - chosen by the government to be used in administration, courts, etc.
- Official languages support one or more languages over others
- Official languages may be
 - a) the most widely spoken **native** language in the country or
 - b) may be the language of 'important' minority populations

Finland

- Most widely spoken **native** language in the country
 - – **Finnish** (92% of population)
- **Minority languages**
 - **Swedish** (5.5% of population) is a minority population, but is the main language of neighboring Sweden
 - **Sami**, the indigenous Uralic language of northern Scandinavia, is not accorded official status (although language rights are protected under the constitution)

New Zealand

- Official languages: te reo Māori, English and New Zealand Sign Language
 - **English** is spoken by around 95% of population
 - **Māori** is spoken by only 4% of the population
 - **NZSL** by 0.6%
- Official recognition of (importance of) *multilingualism*

Official languages

- May reflect colonial past in two ways:
 - 1) Language shift to colonial language
 - Spanish in many South American countries
 - 2) Use of colonial language in official capacity only, with no language shift
 - English, French or Portuguese in many African countries

Domains of language use

- *Domain* of language use refers to the situations or settings in which language is used
- On a societal level, community language use may be split in terms of domains (and functions, interlocutors)
- Domain may be defined as location or social situation

Domains of language use

- **Geographical location**
 - Vernacular language in village
 - Lingua franca in town, marketplace
 - National language in capital city
- **Social situation**
 - Place of worship, workplace, school
 - Local neighborhood
 - Gathering of multilinguals

Diglossia

- *Diglossia* = two languages or dialects used by a community in different domains
- Joshua Fishman introduced the term in 1959 to refer to dialects, but extended its use to refer to different languages
- One language (or dialect) is called the H (high) and on the L (low)

Diglossia

- H is used in formal situations, official institutions, education, work, religion, literature
- L is used in informal situations, among friends and family, at marketplace

Arabic diglossia

- Classical Arabic is the standard formal Arabic used in the Quran → religious and cultural language
- Dialectal Arabic are the different spoken varieties of Arabic – Moroccan Arabic, Yemeni Arabic, etc..
- Moroccans learn dialectal Moroccan as children and Classical or standard Arabic in school

Arabic diglossia

- Classical vs. Moroccan Arabic
- Sounds:
 - CA katab-a MA ktāb 'he wrote'
- Word formation
 - walad-un MA wald 'boy'
 - dialect lacks case, dual form of nouns
- Lexicon (vocabulary)
 - CA ?anf-un MA: nif "nose"

Other factors in diglossia

- **1. Prestige:** people sometimes disown L
 - Arabs often say they do not speak dialectal Arabic
- **2. Literary:** H is favored, and standardized
 - L may not be written, or is used for poetry or as a form of protest/nationalism
- **3. Acquisition:** L acquired at home, H in school

Polyglossia

- Tanzania: English, Swahili, native 'vernacular' languages (Shubi, Sukuma, Yao)
 - English is the H language (education, prestige)
 - Swahili is the unifying, national language
 - Native languages are L (intimacy, informality, group allegiance)

Di or polyglossia and switching

- Diglossic and polyglossic situations imply that only one language is used at one time
- Speakers are more versatile and engage in switching – moving back and forth between languages, negotiating situations and settings