LIGN177: Multilingualism

October 27, 2009

AAVE + Mixed languages

African-American (Vernacular) English

- Spoken by many African-Americans
- Two ways that AAVE is distinctive
  1. Has features that do not occur in standard English or other English dialects
  2. Has greater occurrence of certain features than in other dialects

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Pronunciation

- Reduction of word-final consonant sequences: des or pos for 'desk' or 'post' → more than other dialects
- /l/ /r/ deletion: secretary [sɛkətɛri]   help [hɛp]
- Fricatives → tin for 'thin' or baf for 'bath'
                den for 'then' or bruvver for 'brother'
- /aj/ or /aw/ --> [a] or /ɔj/ --> [ɔ]
  - tire [tar]   fight [fat]   oil [ɔːl]

Verb 'to be'

1. Absence of 'is' and 'are' for present tense

Standard	AAVE
He is tall	He tall
They are playing	They playing

- Where standard allows 'contraction' of is/are, AAVE has absence

STANDARD	AAVE
He's my father.	*He ø my father.*
He's in the garden	*He ø in the garden.*
Who's "it"? (game of tag)	*Who ø "it"?*
*Who's it? (at the door)	**Who ø it?*
*He knows who she's.	**He knows who she ø.*

Verb 'to be'

Invariant 'be' for habitual aspect (action is usual or regular)
- He be walkin'   =   He is usually walking/he walks
                                                    (every day)
- He walkin'   =   He is walking right now

Negation is different:
- She busy   She ain't busy
- She be busy   She don't be busy

Unstressed bin: 'I bin doing it ever since we was teenagers'
Stressed BIN: 'I BIN had this' = I've had this for a long time'

Little inflectional morphology

- Absence of tense/possessive/plural marking with -s (connected to consonant cluster simplification)
- 　　　He walk
- 　　　John house
- 　　　two boy

Is AAVE like regional English dialects?

- AAVE: *It's somebody at the door.*
  Cornwall English: *'Tes some wan t' the dooar.*
  (Hancock 1994:102)
- AAVE: *Even when I be round there with friends, I be scared.*
  Irish English: *Even when I be round there with friends, I be scared.* (Rickford 1986:261)

Is AAVE like a creole?

- **Standard English**   Where have you been?
- **African-American English**   Where you been at?
- **Guyanese Creole English**   Wisaid you bin de?

Gullah/AAVE correspondences
  AAVE: *I **done** seen it.*   AAVE: *He ø good to his kids.*
- Gullah: *I **don** see um.*   Gullah: *D'ole baid ø so deep...*

- Stressed BIN and absence of 'is' and 'are' are not found in regional English dialects

Is AAVE decreolized?

Diaspora – descendents of slaves in Liberia, Dominican Republic speak like AAVE speakers today

- <u>Samaná Peninsula, The Domincan Republic</u>: American slaves transported in the early 1820s, mostly from Virginia and Maryland (examples from Poplack & Sankoff 1987)
    - *She don't ax me what she ø gon' cook.*
    - *English ain't so easy to learn like Spanish is.*
    - *If anybody ø in the way, well, they'll mash him up.*

Mixed languages

- Mixed languages have complex syntax and morphology
- Two cases studies
    - Michif
    - Ma'a
- Other possible mixed languages:
    - Shelta – language of Irish travelers
    - Romani – language of Gypsies
    - Copper Island Aleut (mixed Aleut-Russian)
    - Maltese – Arabic with heavy Italian, English influence

Michif

Michif

Canadian French + Cree = Michif

Canadian French is the dialect of French spoken in Canada. It has distinct pronunciation and vocabulary from Standard French

Cree is an Algonquian language spoken in western and central Canada

(Other Algonquian languages: Menominee, Ojibwe, Miami, Shawnee, Delaware)

Michif

The speakers of the language are *Métis*, pronounced 'may-ti'. This is the French word for a person of mixed race. The speakers themselves prefer '*Michif*'

They are descendants of French and Native people

The name *Michif*, pronounced [mɪčɪf], is a derivative of the word *Métis*. In Canadian French, the sequence [ti] is pronounced [tsi], and even [či] (as in 'chief') in some varieties.

Métis population today

Green indicates sparsely populated areas (1-1000)

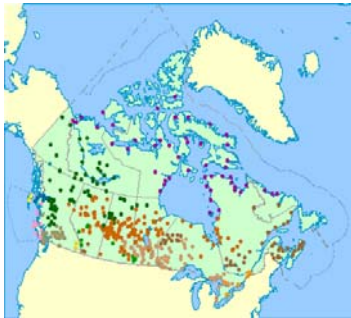Orange-red indicates densely populated areas (1000-22,000)

293,000 total Métis in Canada; number of Michif speakers is unknown - ~1000?

Also spoken in N. Dakota, Montana, Minnesota (~400?)

Cree

Cree is indicated in dark orange

Territory stretches

From Alberta -

Saskatchewan -

Manitoba –

Ontario -

Quebec

French native speakers today

History of the Métis Nation

French (mostly men) arrived in Canada in the early 1600s – settled in Acadia (present day Nova Scotia) and 'Canada' (present day Quebec)

Fur trade was prime economic activity – native people traveled to Montreal for trading, but eventually, French Canadian fur traders traveled west, especially in the winter months

English settled in New England and present day Ontario (Upper Canada). Religious, language and cultural differences were reinforced through separate colonization

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Types of fur traders

voyageurs 'travelers'

coureurs de bois 'trappers' (literally: wood runners),

3

Consequences for contact with Native peoples

1) French interacted more with Natives – fur traders were nomadic – similar lifestyle. *Coureurs de bois* often lived with Natives
2) French went west of Great Lakes – area of Cree and Ojibwe –*voyageurs* traded for fur-trading companies and *coureurs de bois* were independent

Early contacts between French men and Cree women resulted in mixed children

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Métis Nation

- Historical and social circumstances contributed to establishing Métis as separate 'nation' from both French and Cree, despite their ancestral ties to each group
- Marginalization of Métis as neither pure Aboriginals nor members of the two 'founding nations' of Canada (English and French)
- Michif language is an emblem of mixed status

Michif Language

Linguistic characteristics

Analysis of Michif

d'un gros arbre *pimi-cipatapiw*. "*ôta nipiyâni*," *itêyihtam êsa*, "une bonne place *ôma si-nipi-yân*." *ê-wâpamât ôhi* le loup de bois *ê-pâ-pahtâ-yi-t*. ha, ha.

And he thought, well, if I'm gonna die, I'll sit down beside this tree, a good place to die. So he sat beside the big tree there. He was looking and all of a sudden he see that timber wolf coming straight for him.

Analysis of Michif text

All the nouns are in French

All the verbs are in Cree

A few English words – English is commonly spoken by Métis nowadays

Métis generally do not speak French or Cree

(French: 8%, Cree: 27%)

Why is Michif problematic for linguistics?

Problem 1: Michif has French nouns and Cree verbs

Languages created from the mixture of two or more languages, such as *creoles*, have high degree of mixture of syntax and vocabulary, not rigid division of Michif

French part

French– nouns and noun-phrase elements (adjectives, articles)
masculine and feminine, definite and indefinite articles and possessives:

un matin (masc. indef.)	'a morning'
une tempête (fem. Indef.)	'a storm'
le loup (masc. def.)	'the wolf'
la bouche (fem. def.)	'the mouth'
ses pièges (pl. poss)	'his traps'

Adjectives precede (or follow) the noun, in accordance with French grammar: une bonne place 'a good place' un gros arbre 'a big tree'

Cree part
Cree verbs are very complex

wi-nitawi-wapaht-am
want-go-see.it-he.it   'he wants to go see it'

Cree demonstratives are used – divided into *animate* and *inanimate*:

	this	*that*
animate	awa	ana
inanimate	ôma (or u:ma)	anima

Agreement on verb as in Cree:
wapa**ht**   'see it'   wapa**m** 'see him/her'

French nouns are classified as animate or inanimate as if they were Cree and show appropriate agreement on verb

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Why is Michif problematic for linguistics?

■ Problem 2 – if bilinguals have two separate language systems, *how do two different systems co-occur in the same language?*

In Cree, nouns are animate/inanimate (boy, girl vs. box, paper)
In French, nouns are masculine/feminine (boy, paper vs. girl, box)
In Michif, nouns are French with masculine/feminine definite article (lɪ/la), but also have animate/inanimate demonstrative article (awa/u:ma) from Cree:

ex.   awa   la   fij   *u:ma   la   bwɛt*
    this-anim. the-fem. girl   this-inam.   the-fem. box

    awa   lɪ   garsü   *u:ma   lɪ   papji*
    this-anim. the-masc. boy   this-inam.   the-masc. paper

Hypotheses on origin of Michif – Social hypotheses

❖ Trade language – French and Cree created a language to communicate
Problem: trade languages are restricted and simplified; Michif has full structure of Cree verbs and French nouns

❖ Separate tasks – men and women had different tasks in family
Problem: does not explain noun/verb differentiation.
Ex. berry picking is a female job, but all berry names are French

❖ Caretaker – Indian women learned French names of objects through pointing and taught them to children
Problem: some nouns can't be pointed at (werewolf or 'rugaru')

❖ Mixed identity – language serves to denote dual ancestry and to express Métis identity
Problem: why is the language structured the way it is?

Hypothesis on origin of Michif – Linguistic hypothesis

Michif arose as a language spoken by Cree who code-switched into French – Peter Bakker speculates it was 'teenagers'

Code-switching – bilingual speakers integrate linguistic material from both languages within the same discourse

Code-switching requires the knowledge of both grammars and respects the grammar of both
Bilingualism usually has a more prevalent language →
the dominant language donates the verbs, whereas the 'intruder' language provides the nouns
Michif was Cree (language of mother) with heavy French code-switching which became fixed

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Ma'a

Ma'a or Mbugu

- A Tanzanian language with Cushitic vocabulary and Bantu structure
- Ma'a people moved into the South Pare area (Vudee) around 300 years ago. Then a group moved to the Usambara Mountains.
- The Ma'a in Pare shifted to Pare
- Usambara group resisted change, and isolated themselves – contact with Shambaa and Pare produced Ma'a

Pare mountains

Ma'a syntax and lexicon

- Syntax
- Cushitic is SOV word order
- Bantu is SVO word order
- Ma'a is SVO – structure like Bantu

- Lexicon
- About half of the lexicon is Cushitic

Ma'a morphology

- Noun class system is like Bantu
- But possessives are suffixed, as in Cushitic

- Ma'a has Bantu verb structure:
    - neg-subj-tense-obj-root-extension
- ve-ne-tu-ifi
- 2-fut-us-destroy   'they will destroy us'

Inflection comes from Bantu
Derivation (causatives, reflexive, etc.) comes from Cushitic

Ma'a origins

- Bantuized Cushitic? – basic vocabulary is Cushitic; but, structure is very Bantu
- Cushitisized Bantu? – more likely to borrow words than structure; what about basic vocabulary?
- Code-switching? Cushitic matrix and Bantu embedded; but Ma'a have negative attitude towards Bantu