

SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE CONTACT

Lectures 2-4

What is a language?

- This is often decoded by political forces rather than linguistic facts. While Mandarin and Cantonese are thought to be two varieties of the same Chinese language in spite of them being vastly different while Danish and Swedish are considered different languages even though they are mutually intelligible and very similar

Multilingual speech communities

- People have always moved ever since the beginning of our existence. This has, more often than not, brought languages in close contact, sometimes creating multilingual speech communities, where the community has access to a number of languages other than their own.
- A lot depends on how the communities were brought in contact and how they negotiate the social space between them.

Short description of the phenomena

- 1. reasons for language contact
 - a. war, conquests, colonization
 - b. slavery
 - c. migration --- forced or otherwise
 - d. inter-marriage
 - e. adjacent geographical areas---Sprachbund
 - f. trade or urbanization

- 2. types of contact
 - a. socially separate----
 - b. family level
 - c. market place contact, trade,
 - d. social contact

3. Differences in linguistic change due to types of language contact

- I. conquest/ war/colonialism
 - imposition of a language of wider communication
 - establishment of standard languages via institutions
 - thus transforming the local languages into a minority language
 - as a result the minority groups have a slow shift in language through stages of bilingualism realized over a long period of time

immigration

- a population moving into another
- mobility towards an already existing political scenario
- as a result, rapid assimilation resulting in language shift.

family level interaction

- a linguistic group is incorporated into another as spouses, servants, slaves, refugees adopted as equal members of the tribe etc.
- inter-marriage on a prolonged and large scale interferes with the language structure
- a new-comer (e.g. wives) adopt a new language with imperfections and pass it on to the children
- Also marriage of settlers with the 'native women' is a case in point

social level

- high degree of bilingualism among speakers of adjacent but (generally) genetically unrelated languages over a prolonged period of time.
- Contact affects all levels of language, specially phonology
- Results into a Sprachbund or a 'linguistic area'.

trade situation

- need to communicate between groups of people for trade purposes in market place----- gives rise to lingua franca
- also the plantation scenario where the work-force and the plantation owners do not share their languages
- typically gives rise to pidgins and creoles

RESULTS OF CONTACT

- Here are some of the most common outcomes of language contact between speech communities. Though creation of a multilingual community seems to be the easiest thing to happen in such situations, we have a plethora of other possibilities as well.

Pidgin and Creoles

- A pidgin is a system of communication used by people who do not know each other's language, but need to communicate with one another for trading or other purposes.
- Purpose:
 - 1. Immediate and practical need of communication between groups speaking different languages.
 - 2. created mostly in trade situations, like that of Papua new guinea.

Typical features:

- 1. Derived from a 'normal' language through simplification, reduction and admixture, often considerable, from the native language or language of those who use it.
- 2. spoken non-natively
- 3. a means of communication with the 'other' group, never a means of intra-group communication
- 4. Had to be simple to learn for those who benefited the least, the dominant group.
- 5. Specially constructed to suit the specific needs arising out of the contact situation. So the vocabulary and other constructions are also severely restricted, and cannot be used for a new situation and need.

- 6. Another situation where the pidgins grew was among the African slaves, when communities and they had to communicate among themselves and with the slavers. As the slaves did not have the opportunity to learn the masters' language properly, the pidgin remained the only language they communicated with others, thus identifying slaves with pidgins.

Grammatical features

- 1. Lexicon derived from the dominant language.
- 2. Phonology and syntax derived from the dominated language.
- 3. No morphology.
- 4. Severe structural simplification.

example

- Tok pisin: creole spoken in Papua new Guinea These lines are taken from a famous comic strip in Papua New Guinea:
- "Sapos yu kaikai planti pinat, bai yu kamap strong olsem phantom." "Fantom, yu pren tru bilong mi. Inap yu ken helpim mi nau?" "Fantom, em i go we?"
- Translation: 'If you eat plenty of peanuts, you will come up strong like the phantom.' 'Phantom, you are a true friend of mine. Are you able to help me now?' Where did he go?

How Pidgins compare with other types of languages

Pidgin

1.
 - not an example of bad 'X', it is itself a language , with a community of speakers.
 - It is never meant to make the speakers Master the L2.
2.
 - not case of heavy borrowing, as there is no pre-existing variety into which terms are borrowed.
 - nor does the grammatical simplification reflect existing phenomena in the donor language
3. no native speaker of the language, as the # exists along side actively retained mother tongues.

Other language varieties

- Interlanguage
- Borrowing
- any other language language

Pidgins and lingua franca

- Both pidgin and lingua francas appear similar on certain grounds, in that both are used for communication between people who do not share their mother tongue.
- But, a pidgin is actually a type of language, where as lingua franca refers more to the use of the language concerned.
- So, a language, whether or not a pidgin, can act as a lingua franca among different groups of people; French is the lingua franca among various African language speakers (when their languages are mutually unintelligible). For example, in Zaire for native speakers of Lingala and Kikongo.

Creole

- **What:** Creoles are pidgins that have acquired native speakers.
- **How:** in a linguistically mixed community where a pidgin is used as a lingua franca, children tend to learn it as their native language; especially if parents use it at home.
- **Features:** 1. creoles are natural languages 2. Tends to have prepositions, articles, tense, aspect, mood morphology, embedding etc. 3. simplification accompanying the creation of a pidgin is “repaired” while creating a creole----- creolisation.

De-creolisation

- a phenomenon that happens when a creole is spoken in a country where the language of communication is the creole's lexifier source language.
- Process: Gradual shifts towards the lexifier source language, with a range of intermediate structures.
- Basilect → mesolects → acrolect
(Creole) post creole continuum (source language)

The debate:

- Creoles prove the bioprogram (Universal Grammar) theory:
 - humans are born with the genetic resources to learn languages and this has certain universal rules.
 - It is proved by the existence of similar rules and structures prevalent in creoles all over the world, irrespective of the lexifier or the native source languages
 - Children are thought to impose structure on the pidgin thereby making it a natural language, following the rules of the UG.
 - Children use the rules of a natural language on a pidgin, without the existence of input (poverty of stimulus).

Vs.

- The difference between structurally enriched pidgins and creoles are actually negligible.
- pidgins develop over time and gradually tend to incorporate more grammatical features.
- So, its time and not the infant learners' contribution that can account for the grammatical complexity of creoles.
- the only notable difference between the two varieties is the existence of native speakers in one and not in the other

Creoloid

- These languages, though they show some admixture and simplification, are not post -creoles because they have not been creoles, because they have never been pidgins.
- Case in point is Afrikaans, a variety of Dutch spoken in South Africa. This language
 - Is mutually intelligible with Dutch.
 - Has a lot of mixture from Malay, Portuguese etc
 - spoken non-natively by speakers of Malay, Portuguese etc
 - was used for all social functions, and therefore, never subjected to reduction.

Dual source creoloid/Mixed languages

- mixed languages are distinct from other regular languages in that they are new languages and not the continuation of one of the ancestor languages.
- It is not what one of the ancestor languages could have become through diachronic changes.
- This is a mixture of elements of two languages, almost in equal degree.

- Also important is the fact that these languages cannot be clearly put under any of the genetic families that the ancestor languages belonged
- These languages are very often intrinsically connected to the formation of a new ethnic identity.
- These are cases where the source languages contribute equally to the creation of a new language
- the communities speaking them are not in the traditional dominant-dominated relationship.

Pitcairnese

- sometimes the dual source languages can become the sole language of a community.
- This happened in case of Pitcairnese, the language of remote Pacific Ocean island Pitcairn. This island community comprises of the descendants of British sailors, who carried out the mutiny on the Bounty and Tahitian men and women who went with them to hide on the island from the Royal British Navy

Mitchif

- this is a language spoken by the descendants of French Canadian fur traders and Amerindian women .
- it is a mixture of French and Cree.
- this had a major involvement of children in the development of the language thus avoiding simplification and reduction.
- The speakers are removed both in time and space from the ancestral languages and their cultures.
- This is a remarkable language where the noun phrases are in French, complete with inflections while the verb phrases are in Cree, including the complex verbal morphology of that language.

example

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| • la fam | micimine:w | li pci |
| • the (fem.) woman | she-is-holding-it the | (masc) little-one |
| • French French | Cree | French French |
| • The woman is holding the child | | |

Mednyj Aleut

- spoken by a handful of elderly people in the Copper Islands in the North Pacific Ocean, east of Russia. This is spoken by descendants of Russian fur traders and Aleut women.
- unlike Mithchif speakers, the speakers of this language were never completely broken off from the source languages.
- Though the knowledge of Aleut is declining, Russian is gaining ground. 90% of the lexicon is derived from Aleut and the rest from Russian.
- Noun inflections are from Aleut and Verbal inflections from Russian

Media Lengua

- this is a Quechua derived mixed language spoken in the town of San Miguel de Salcedo in Ecuador. The lexicon is mostly derived from Spanish and the adverbs, pronouns, numerals, conjunctions etc. the verb and noun inflections, word order, subordinations etc are from Quechua.
- This is used both as first and second language by Indian peasants, weavers and construction workers among themselves.
- They also know both the source languages and use them. Spanish with non – Indians and Quechua with highland Indians.
- Researchers believe this language emerged during the construction of railroad in the area that saw labor migration and urban expansion of the place.
- however, the speakers of this language are not a distinct ethnic group.

Russenorsk

- this was a language spoken in the Northern Norway until 1917: Russian Revolution.
- It consisted of elements taken from Norwegian and Russian in almost equal measures and arose out of trade between Norway and Russia.
- Unlike colonial settings the contributing languages were spoken by people of equivalent wealth and technology.
- This also functioned as lingua franca by speakers of languages like sami, Finnish, Dutch and German.

Chindo/ Peranakan Chinese

- the Peranakan Chinese are the descendants of Chinese traders and Indonesian women and are a separate ethnic group.
- they use, for in-group communication, a mixed language that uses grammatical system of Javanese with the lexicon of Malay.