



Midterm 1 - Unit 1-4 Reading

Reading Unit 1 (Jacob)

- Macaulay, Ronald. 2008. **Regional dialects and social class**. In Virginia Clark, Paul Escholz, Alfred Rosa and Beth Lee Simon (eds.) *Language: introductory readings*, New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 383-397

This reading provides further information on topics discussed in Unit 1. At the end of the reading, there are ten questions. When you read the paper, please find the answers to the following three questions. This information may be quizzed in the midterm exam.

[1] When Macaulay says that “languages and dialects have both a unifying function and a separatist function,” what does he mean?

Languages and dialects have both a unifying and a separatist function. They help a group of people see what they have in common with each other and how they differ from “others”. In the past, before the existence of passports or other identifying documents, language was one way of distinguishing not only friends from foes but also those from whom a suitable marriage partner could be chosen. Dialects will still serve this function.

[2] What three reasons does Macaulay give to back up his belief that Standard English is not superior to other forms?

1. Languages are neither logical nor illogical, though the users of the language can be.
2. Those dialects in which the third-person singular -s inflection has been lost are more regular (in this respect) than Standard English
3. There is no objective criterion by which the beauty of a language can be measured.

[3] Macaulay describes patterns of speech in New York City (the pronunciation of words like *think* as either ‘think’ or ‘tink’) and Glasgow (the pronunciation of words with a ‘t’ as either ‘t’ or a ‘glottal stop’). In the studies described by Macaulay, how does social class relate to the occurrence of non-standard pronunciations?

As you go up the social ladder you are less likely to find people using [t] for [θ] (non-standard pronunciations). There is thus a correlation between socioeconomic level and the use of the (th) variable.

Reading Unit 2

South Africa: the rocky road to nation building, by Rajend Mesthrie, in *Language and National Identity in Africa*, edited by Andrew Simpson, 2008, Oxford University Press, 314-338.

Language issues have figured prominently in the emergence of South Africa as a nation. Read this article by Rajend Mesthrie and extract information about the following aspects of language in South Africa. Note that there is a lot of information in this paper – you should just try to understand the key developments and issues very broadly so that you could answer questions about the major linguistic issues in the midterm

Currently, South Africa has 11 official languages – English, Afrikaans, and nine African languages (you do not need to know the names of these African languages).

[1] From what is described in the paper, are all of South Africa’s 11 official languages enjoying equal support and equal ‘success’ (i.e. being used in the same way as the other official languages)? One official language seems to be used more frequently than the other official languages – which one, and why is it more successful?

Not all languages are equally supported. **English is used more frequently than the other official languages.** English consolidated its position at the expense of other languages. English came to dominate in parliament, higher education, local government, and institutions such as the police, defense force, and the courts. The

political class, in general, and black political leaders, in particular, are disposed to the promotion of a unilingual, i.e. English-only, language policy in the public service.

English is seen as a tool of modernization and political development. English is associated with technology, international links, communications networks within Africa, and the business of politics. Other languages have become highly stigmatized and are perceived as worthless by most of their speakers. Many parents seem to desire as much English for their children as soon as possible.

[2] How did Afrikaans arise as a language? What feelings do people in South Africa have toward Afrikaans, and why?

Two decades after the military and diplomatic establishments that displaced Dutch rule in Cape Town and its environs, the British population came to South Africa and introduced a policy replacing Dutch with English as the language of government, education, and law, which caused much discontent among the Dutch/Afrikaners. Feeling their religion, culture, and language were under threat, many Afrikaners trekked further into the interior with the intention of escaping British influence. By this time Afrikaans had evolved as a colloquial variety of Dutch, with certain admixture from other languages

[3] During the period of Apartheid, what was the government's language policy in education, and why did people protest against this policy?

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 consigned Black people to a second-class education in poorly resourced state schools. At this time, mission schools, which had offered quality education (albeit in small numbers) to Black people were closed down, forcing young Black children into the state-run schools. Apartheid policy consistently attempted to impose a clear linguistic hierarchy on the country and used the education system to play out the prevailing rivalry between Afrikaans and English. In the 1950s, the Department of Bantu Education ruled that English and Afrikaans be introduced as subjects in the first year of schooling (to children who were acquainted with neither language). Whereas the commission had also suggested that only one official language (English or Afrikaans) be a compulsory subject, the Department insisted on both, fearing that if only one language were to be chosen, it would be English. For the same reason, both English and Afrikaans were to be used as mediums of instruction in secondary schools

Black students protested against the government's decision to enforce the use of Afrikaans as a medium of education in secondary schools in equal measure with English.

[4] During the period of Apartheid, the government promoted the use of nine African languages. From your reading of the paper, what seems to have been the motivation for this government policy?

(The article doesn't give clear answers.) The goal is to strengthen the apartheid policy. More distinct languages often lead to less unified among these areas/groups of people when there lack a common language. And in this way, the government can control the relation of different races by giving different linguistic advantages to their languages.

Unit 2 Extra reading task

Use the internet and sources you can find there to research the term 'elite closure'. What does this term refer to? You may be asked a question such as 'What does the term 'elite closure' refer to in the midterm exam?'

Elite closure is a type of social mobilization strategy by which those persons in power establish or maintain their powers and Privileges via linguistic choices.

Reading Unit 3 (Clara, Frank)

[1] Generation 1.5. Short paper written by a USC undergraduate student.

Try to understand who the term Generation 1.5 refers to, and what kinds of special challenges this group experiences.

[This topic may also be included in the mid-term, either as part of the multiple-choice/true-false sections, or as a short answer question].

"Generation 1.5" definition:

1. Immigrated to the U.S. from China, Korea, or Japan between the ages of 8-12 (during their elementary school/early middle school years, at an age where relatively high, though not perfectly native, fluency in English can still be achieved)
2. Have parents/legal guardians who are 1st generation immigrants in the U.S. so, America is the long-term home.
3. Attended middle school and high school in the United States.

Special challenges they experiences:

1. Failure to completely relate to either the heritage country or the United States, and they can't identify themselves as 1st generation or 2nd generation.
2. They are comfortably bilingual but imperfect in both languages. Their English sounds fluent and native but the pronunciation and grasp of idioms sometimes differ them from locals. They are strong in heritage language but know little about formal areas of the language.
3. They were immersed in the heritage culture during the first half of their childhood and then American culture for the second half, therefore resulting in full competence in neither culture. They don't have a comfortable, up-to-date grasp of their heritage cultures, such as modern trends and slang. They also missed out on American childhood as they didn't experience many cultural icons, such as Disney princess movies.
4. With little guidance from their parents (who should have been a vital resource in helping them navigate through their childhood years), these children have to find their own way through a new culture and become interpreters and cultural guides for their parents.

[2] Trading Tongues by Leanne Hinton, in *Beyond Yellow English*, 2008, Edited by A. Reyes and A. Lo for Oxford University Press.

Please read this paper on the experiences of young speakers of heritage languages in the USA and make your own notes on the following issues. These topics may be included as questions in the mid-term exam.

1. What is *language rejection* and why does it occur among young heritage language speakers?

Children begin to develop a strong sense of shame about their language and their heritage culture, and accordingly make every attempt to suppress it.

It is because the children are subjected to tough assimilative pressures at school, mainly from their classmates. They are made to feel 'different' and 'not normal,' and their language or their accent is ridiculed.

2. What is *first-language attrition* and who typically suffers first-language attrition?

The heritage language is slowly deteriorating for the ones who are dominant in English. (The language loss for the mother tongue)

3. What is meant by the term *passive knowledge*?

Children get to the point where they can understand the home language in a basic way but cannot speak as well as they understand.

4. What is *Konglish*?

Mixed Korean and English.

5. What problems are created by first-language attrition?

Children having attrition may find themselves personally frustrated, unable to communicate effectively with relatives, alienated from peers in the old country, and humiliated in front of visitors to the home.

6. In what way is there poor communication between generations (of heritage language speakers), and what criticisms do young heritage language speakers sometimes suffer?

Children cannot say the first language in a proper way when talking with family. They are limited to normal yet shallow 'everyday' conversations and do not have enough vocabulary to have meaningful talks with parents. 'I'm usually stuck there in a most awkward position, trying to understand what they are saying, and trying to answer back in the most polite way possible. What usually comes out of my mouth is a mixture of English and informal Korean, which causes all the adults to laugh at me.'

Linguistic prejudice from heritage language speakers because they are the descents but do not speak the language very well and must resort to another language when talking to these people. People in the home country also feel strongly that people who come to the United States should not forget their heritage.