Language Use in a Multilingual Environment

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ABSTRACT

A multilingual community has people who can speak different languages. These multilingual speakers make choices on the language they get to use when communicating in any setting, a particular group of people or topic for a particular reason. This paper investigates language use in Jordan which is a multilingual society. To achieve this the researcher examined several literatures and theories in language use in a multilingual society with respect to Jordan. The study observed that Code switching, Code mixing, and language variety are the common multilingual speakers in Jordan a multilingual community. The study also observed that the females tend to speak the prestigious language (English) in a formal setting while the males tend to code-switch more.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a common phenomenon in all human societies, and its use is critical to a good understanding of the linguistic situation in a multilingual setting. Multilingual society is a society which has more than one significant language group. It is a situation in which two (i.e. bilingualism, specially) or more languages operate within the same context. Jordan is a multilingual country in which various languages like Standard Arabic, Jordanian Arabic, Caucasian, and English are used   for communicating.

According to Gal (2007), multilingualism which is a sub-field of sociolinguistics examines the use of multiple languages, by either an individual or a community. Thus a person that speaks more than two languages, is referred to as a multilingual person. When people have command of two or more languages, they make choices as to when and where to use a certain language. The choices speakers make of the languages rests on their attitude concerning the language of choice.

There are several reasons and motivations for a bilingual or multilingual individual to choose one linguistic code over another. These motivations may include, among other things, group identity, self image, and simplicity. For example, the individual may select to use a more formal speech style at all times to reflect that he or she is educated or he or she may opt for an informal speech style to reflect keen sense of solidarity with other members of the society assuming--of course--informal style is the norm.

Scholars Carroll (1997), Sapir (1929) indicated in their study that there is strong relationship between the choice of language use, the impression it makes and the social setting. The selection on the choice of language either formal or informal on the societal setting the speakers is and what impression s/he wants to make to its listeners. Thus this study will examine language use in a multilingual society using Jordan as a case study.

Language Use in multilingual society

Language is used for interacting and communicating with people daily who are from different places with different languages. In a Multilingual society, the use of more than one language by an individual in communicating is expected. Grosjean (1982) noted that in the daily interaction and communication with other people, a multilingual changes the language he or she uses depending on who the person is, where and what. Multilingual use language choice during their interaction with others when they do not understand his regional dialect.

Based on Holmes (2013) language choices is a choice of language interaction that happens in many speech communications. It means that in someone communication, it usually find some people make a language choice in their communication. Moreover, in multilingual communities will find people using more than two languages. The use of more than one language by the speaker in communication indicates that they make language choice. In other words, they will choose one language or combine the languages when interact with each other.

Kinds Of Language Choice And Use In Sociolinguistics Field

Code Switching: Code switching occurs when the speaker shift from one language to another or when the speaker switches from one code to another. Fishman in Agustina amd Chaer (2004) states some factors influenced people used code switching, there are; the speaker or hearer, the language, when, and what the purposes of the speaking. Soewito in Agustina amd Chaer (2004) also noted that code switching maybe between two internal languages (Intern Code Switching) or switching from internal language to foreign language (Extern Cod Switching).

Code Mixing: Code mixing is two or more languages within one of them should be primary language which have a function and the other language just pieces, or phrase without any function. Nababan (1993) explains that code mixing is the situation in which people mix two or more languages or language style in the speech act. In Indonesia, this code mixing often happens in daily conversation people usually speak Indonesia mixed by their regional language.

Variation in the same language: it is combining the same language between formal and informal form like Pidgin and Diglossia. According to Stewart (1972), Pidgin, is a language variety type whose structure and lexicon have been drastically reduced, and which is native to none of those who use it. Mahl-hausler (1986) states that, pidgin evolves out of low status "substrate" languages. Pidgin is as a result of formation of languages. The fusion of two languages which is mutually understandable for both speakers. It is thus regarded as an inferior and corrupt version of donor language. Diglossia here refers to the process of using more than one variety of the same language. These language is used based on who the speakers are and the condition of where they are.

Factors the Influence the Use of Language in a Multilingual setting

There are different factors that influence the use of one of the languages, in a multilingual setting. These factors are discussed in the following sections:

Social Factors

In a multilingual society people choose an appropriate language when they speak, people switch language into other language, and they use different language in different context. According to Holmes (2013), there are certain social factors which influence the language use in a multilingual setting. These social factors account for the language use made by the speaker. They include

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The Setting: The setting or situation the speaker is in. ; Participant: The people or persons the speaker is taking to; The Topic: The issue or topic that is being discussed by the speaker and the participants.; The Function: The reason why the speaker is having a conversation with the persons (the effect the conversation creates)

Domain Factor

Domain refers to the concept that each language or variety of language is assigned to particular function or space and particular participants in the society, such as language used in the work domain, family domain or religious domain, etc. (Spolsky, 2012). Fishman (1972) argues that domain is a useful idea in investigating individual and community language use. The home and the neighbourhood are believed to be the domains where the minority language is more often used (Lawson and Sachdev, 2004).

Theories on Language Use

The Fishman's Theory

The Fishman's framework which seeks to explain the theoretical rationale behind the choice of particular language (s) by particular speaker(s) in a multilingual setting. According to Fishman (1972) habitual language choice in multilingual speech community is far from being a random matter of momentary inclination rather proper usage dictates. To Fisher, the speaker chooses from one of the theoretically co-available languages, on a particular occasion to discuss a particular topic.

Hyme's theory

Hymes (1974) proposes an ethnographic framework which takes into account the various factors that are involved in speaking. An ethnography of communicative events is a description of all the relevant factors that aid the understanding of how that particular communicative event achieves its objectives. Hyme's theory of ethnography of speaking in which he outlines variables that constrain speech or talk in social speech or talk in social settings.

Accommodation Theory

Communication accommodation theory was developed by Howard Giles. In his socio-psychological study, Giles (1977) critically evaluated why some language contact situations, some communities were able to maintain their language while others could not. According to the theory argues that people adjust the way they speak ie their speech, vocals and gesture pattern when speaking to people in order to accomodate them. The theory aims to examine the links between language, context and identity. The theory explores and tries to understand the why people minimize or emphasis the language and social difference when interactin with other people whether verbally or non-verbally.

Social Network Theory

This theory was developed by Bloom and Gumperz (1972) to account for language choice in multilingual setting. . This theory seeks to examine the interaction between a language and its "environment", i.e. the social, cultural, political and economic as well as the larger linguistic contexts in which the community is positioned. It examines a language in relation to other languages in the following aspects: its internal varieties, linguistic demography, the state of

multilingualism, institutional support for the language, domains of use, the nature of its written traditions and standardization, and language attitudes of the speakers.

Language Use in Jordan

Jordan is described as a multilingual community and is considered a golden gate for several nationalities which made Jordan a homeland for them. Jordan has been a destination for many Arabs and other ethnic groups such as Armenians, Assyrians, Gypsies, Circassians, Kurds, and Chechens. . All these groups have formulated a multilingual community whereby many languages and varieties became in use in their daily conversations. According to the Jordanian constitution, standard Arabic is the official language of the country. It is used in formal situations such as courts, mosques, scientific seminars, conferences, and all official institutions. In daily conversations, spoken Arabic differs from the standard at the regional, social, or ethnic levels. They also differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. This situation has allowed people in Jordan to switch among various languages or among three major Jordanian varieties namely (Urban, Rural and Bedouin) or between Arabic and English (Internal language to foreign language)

AL-Mhairat (2015) in his study examined the code-switch form Jordanian Bedouin dialect to Jordanian Urban dialect. The researcher conducted open ended interviews and gave sociolinguistics questionnaires to a sample of 66 Bedouin dialect respondent living in Amman for the study. The study observed that Bedouin dialect is switched to the Jordanian Urban dialect than the reverse. It also noted that though most speakers code switch between the two dialects in the social domain, they do it less with family members at home and while expressing their emotions.

Code mixing of Arabic Language and English Language (Foreign) among Jordanian University Students was studied by Al Hayek (2016). The study examined the linguistic phenomenon of code mixing by student from three universities in Jordan. The study indicated that code mixing of English with Arab was prominent among the males than the females who tend to speak more of English for social reasons as English language is identified as a prestigious language in Jordan. The study further noted that students residing in the capital city tend to speak English more than the students that reside in rural areas. Even the older students were observed to tend to speak Arabic more than the new students in order to preserve the Arabic language in Jordan.

Diglossia refers to the situation where two different variety of a language used a community is used for different communicative purposes.. The study by Al-Sobh (2015) diglossia in Arabic language indicated that the standard variety (classical Arabic) is used in formal speeches, university lectures and news media. While the colloquial variety of Arabic is used in the day to day speech of informal conversations by educated Jordanians and the uneducated Jordanian.

Also, the study of Darwish (2017) on the use of Arabic language on social media indicated that Local Arabic is used mostly by young people on social media than the standard Arabic. According to the study, the justification of this language use on social media by the youth was because it helped them express themselves more or just a habit. The Arabizi language which is a combination of Arab and English was also noted by the study to be used seldom by half of the youths studied with the other half comprising of youths who graduated from private schools.

The language use by the Jordanians has also led to to language shift of vernacular languages. The study of Al-Khatib and Al-Ali (20..) noted that the Kurds of Jordan are expereincing a shift in the language. The study noted that the Kurdish Language is now spoken by a small number of people who are mostly the elderly while most of the people in the Kurds of Jordan speak more of Arabic. The study noted further that this shift in the Kurdish language may lead to a loss if the language.

Conclusion

In multilingual society, the choice between languages by multilingual is affected by the situation, the person, the interlocutors. A multilingual makes the choice to use a particular language based for a particular social function, or in a particular social context while another language is reserved for other social functions and social contexts. In making this decision a multilingual takes into consideration social factors like who they are addressing, where they are addressing the person, what they are to address and the effect of what they will say to the addressee.

In Jordan the language used can be classified into the National language which is Jordan Language- Arabic, Vernacular or local language used in the local areas and English language which is the international language. From the study of various articles that examined language use in Jordan, it is observed that the standard Arabic is less used in an informal setting, while colloquial Arabic is used more in an informal setting especially when they want to express themselves more. The study also indicated that code-switching between Arabic and English language is prominent among Jordanians who are in the city, educated, young. The Arabizi language is also observed to be used by youths on social media as a pidgin version of Arabic. It is however seldom use by in an informal setting.

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