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Multilingualism and Language Choice in Domains

Tesso Berisso Genemo

Abstract

Experts know that multilingualism is not the so-called minority phenomenon as many people think it to be. Although it is difficult to provide the exact statistical data on the multilingual speakers and distribution of multilingualism in the world, sociolinguists and linguists estimate that there are roughly around 6000 languages in the world. The focus of this book chapter is to succinctly present the sociolinguistic aspects of language choice and use of multilingual speakers in various domains. Besides, concepts such as bilingualism and multilingualism and their dynamics in the field of sociolinguistics have been critically been reviewed and presented from the theoretical and empirical perspectives. Further, some of the relevant issues related to language choice and use in multilingual speech communities in different parts of the globe are reviewed and included. Furthermore, factors inducing multilingualism among different speech communities and individuals have been reviewed and finally, recent developments and dynamics toward the spread of multilingualism in various parts of the world are also presented in the chapter.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, bilingualism, monolingualism, multilingualism, language choice, domain of language use, domain analysis

1. Introduction

Multilingualism alludes to both a person's capacity to utilize a few dialects and the coexistence of distinctive language communities in one geological area [1]. Besides, Edwards and Aronin [2, 3] contend that multilingualism is the phenomena of the present age; however, it has existed throughout the whole of human history. As society moves ahead, the expansion of multilingualism is attributed to the social, linguistic, and cultural changes derived from globalization, geographical, and social mobility, economic and political transformations, and the development of technology [2, 3]. Hammarberg [4] states that multilingualism is the normal condition of language ability and that humans are multilingual by nature [4].

In the book *Introducing Multilingualism*, Weber and Horner [5] refer to Blommaert's [6] definition of "multilingualism" and they state that we all have a variety of linguistic resources at our disposal and it can refer not just to one or two languages one may possess. Thus, Weber and Horner [5] do not distinguish between such terms as bilingualism and trilingual, but subsume them under one concept of "multilingualism." Multilingualism, thus, ought not to be seen as a collection of languages that a speaker control, but it may be seen as a complex semiotic asset, of which a traditional defined "language" has a place in a few, while a distinct "language" has a place in others. Among the resources are concrete accents, language

varieties, registers, styles, modalities such as writing ways of using language in certain communicative situations and spheres of life, and people's ideas about such methods of utilizing their linguistic ideologies [5, 6].

According to Blommaert [6], we are all multilingual to a certain degree since we use different "linguistic varieties, genres, registers, accents," and it does not matter if our linguistic recourses belong only to one "conventionally defined language" or several of them. He further points out language ideologies in his conception about multilingualism. He connects these ideologies with the ideas people have about the way of using languages they possess, the way they define a language and multilingualism, their beliefs about how language is used and how it works. Aronin and Singleton [7] share with Blommaert's [6] similar ideas about multilingualism. They describe it as a new social phenomenon in itself, not just adding numbers of languages to individuals and societies. They view multilingualism as a "new linguistic dispensation," which means "language ideologies and policies, language education in all its dimensions, and the patterns of language use of communities and individuals. It also encompasses the systemic development and evolving status of the full spectrum of extant and emergent language varieties" [7].

According Franceschini [8], today the term multilingualism "denotes various forms of social, institutional and individual usage as well as individual and group competence, plus various contexts of contact and involvement with more than one language." Franceschini states that the study of multilingual phenomena takes into account the practice of using more than one language, including regional languages, minority languages, migration languages, and language varieties such as dialects, to varying degrees of proficiency among individuals and societies [8]. Thus, the term "multilingualism" is being used increasingly and it refers to societies, nations, individuals, who use more than one language in everyday life, in variety of situations to varying degrees. Multilinguals then are the one who have two or three languages in their repertoire.

"Bilingualism and multilingualism are normal, unremarkable necessities of everyday life for the majority of the world's population" [9]. However, different sociolinguists use the terms "bilingualism" and "multilingualism" in different ways. For example, Romaine [10] uses these terms interchangeably to refer to the routine use of two or more languages in multilingual speech communities. In this chapter, I use the term "multilingualism" to refer to the routine use of two or more languages in a community. Sociolinguists know that multilingualism is not the aberration or minority phenomenon many speakers suppose it to be. It is, rather, a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority of the world's population. Although it is so difficult to provide the exact statistical data on the multilingual speakers and distribution of multilingualism in the world, the focus of this chapter is to succinctly describe the sociolinguistic aspects of language choice and use of multilingual speakers in various domains. Besides, some of the relevant issues are related to language choice and use in multilingual speech communities, in different parts of the world. Furthermore, factors and recent developments for the spread of multilingualism in various parts of the world are also reviewed and included in this chapter.

2. Language and sociolinguistics

Spolsky [11] affirms that, during the last 40 years or so, sociolinguistics has been acknowledged as an independent scientific study that accounts for the relationship between language and society. The field of sociolinguistics, Llamas [12] maintain, in the early twenty-first century has become a mature, definitive, and

vigorous discipline. Hudson [13] on his part propounds sociolinguistics as the study of language in relation to society. Yet again, according to Coupland and Jaworski [14], sociolinguistics is defined as “the study of language in its social contexts and the study of social life through linguistics.” Further, Fishman [15] uses the term sociolinguistics to embrace both the sociology of language and sociolinguistic. Multilingualism is one of the basic concepts dealt in sociolinguistics.

In sociolinguistics, no matter how it is defined, as partially already mentioned, “Language is not simply a means of communicating information. It is also a very important means of establishing and maintain relationships with other people” [16, 17]. In other words, “the fundamental sociolinguistic question is posed by the need to understand why anyone says anything” [18]. Clearly, in the field of sociolinguistics, language is the key point that links speakers to other people and to society in general. As a matter of fact, the use of language is probably what separates humans from other species and what explains the peculiar ways of living together we can call society or community [19]. That is to say, whether it is used as a basis or as the main topic, language is the essential and central instrument that brings human beings together by creating societies and communities. In [20] terms, “language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. It expresses cultural reality through all its verbal and non-verbal aspects, language embodies cultural reality.” In other words, language might be consider the fundamental instrument within the society in terms of communication, but also one of the main tools that convey and constitute elements of culture and values. This point, on which there seems to be no conflicting opinions, allows all sociolinguistic research to be carried out.

3. Multilingualism

How many languages are there in the world? Questions such as these are central to the study of multilingualism, which can be defined as the use of more than two languages by individuals, and/or within societies and countries. This definition of multilingualism subsumes the definition of bilingualism, which can be defined as the use of two languages by individuals [21]. The term can be applied to people who have competences in a number of languages or to places where many languages are used. The ability to use more than one language) as the attribute of an individual who has a “plurilingual repertoire” of language competences [1]. Plurilingualism is the opposite of monolingualism because it refers to the variety of languages that many people use; it includes the linguistic diversity referred to as “mother tongue” or “first language,” as well as a variety of additional languages or varieties.

Multilingualism can be defined as follows:

- The act of using or promoting the use of many languages by an individual speaker or a group of speakers in general. In the world’s population, multilingual speakers predominate monolingual speakers.
- Polyglottism is yet another term for it. Polyglots are people who are multilingual. This has evolved into a societal phenomenon governed by globalization and cultural openness requirements.
- In a general way, a multilingual person is someone who can communicate in more than one language, whether actively through speaking, writing or signing, or passively through listening, reading or perceiving.

- Multilingual speakers have acquired and maintained at least one language during childhood, that is, first language (L1) or mother tongue. This is something that can be acquired without a formal education. Even if a person is proficient in two or more languages, his or her “communicative competence” or “ability” may be unequal.

3.1 Viewpoints on multilingualism

In society, linguistic diversity has been viewed in three ways: as a problem, a right, and a resource [22]. Ethnic linguistic minority is considered as a problem that must be solved by assimilation into the majority language from the first perspective. Supporters of this viewpoint believe that minorities should fully embrace the behavior and language of the majority group. The second viewpoint views minority language maintenance as a right, while the third viewpoint argues that a minority language is a resource that can enrich the experiences and perceptions of all community members, regardless of their first language, [23]. This third view of multilingualism and linguistic diversity has been advocated in a number of studies [24, 25], where three main benefits of multilingualism have been identified: improved international relations and trade; cultural enrichment; and social inclusion [25]. Multilingualism is also seen as a key factor through which different ethnolinguistic groups in society can successfully coexist. Auer and Wei [24] commented as: “Far from being a problem, multilingualism is part of the solution for our future. Social stability, economic development, tolerance and cooperation between groups are possible only when multilingualism is respected” [24]. Thus, this shows that multilingualism is a necessary part of the solution to problems surrounding language and inequality in a given polity.

3.2 What is multilingualism?

In this section, I examine at some of the different meanings of multilingualism offered by the different authors. I also go through the definitions of the some of the concepts that have been related to multilingualism, albeit with some preconceptions.

3.3 Delineating multilingualism

3.3.1 *Dissociating multilingualism from monolingualism*

Multilingualism is a fundamental phenomenon that involves language competences and communicative practices in most communities around the globe, according to Heller and Edwards [2, 26]. Multilingualism is an important linguistic dispensation in respect of people’s communication patterns, according to Aronin and Singleton [27, 28]. They claim that multilingualism is the worldwide norm, notably in Africa and Asia, and that it manifests itself at the individual and societal levels. Although language uniformity has long been valued in Europe, there is a growing tendency toward embracing linguistic diversity [8].

The term multilingualism refers to the knowledge and use of a wide range of languages and language varieties with various statuses on the one hand, such as official, national, majority, minority, non-standard varieties, mixed languages, and domains of use on the other, such as home, school, and work places [8, 29]. It also entails all levels of language knowledge and skills. Research on multilingualism has greatly influenced studies in the fields of Linguistics, Applied

Linguistics, Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics. Jessner [29] states that one of the reasons for the challenge in creating widely recognized definitions of multilingualism is that monolingualism's principles do not match the unique arrangements that occur when individuals or groups know and use many languages. This is also evident of different conceptions for different terms and concepts crucial to multilingual studies, such as the meaning of "language," which is the primary object of study in various domains.

Since "multilingualism" emerged as a theme in linguistic research, different attempts have been made toward defining it. According to Kemp [30], the different definitions stem from the complexity of language practices in different communities on the one hand, and differing ideologies and goals of researchers in studying multilingualism and multilingual societies on the other hand. The understanding of multilingualism starts from the understanding of its basic ingredient, "language," which in the classical sense is defined as an abstract tool of communication with territorial and cultural boundaries [5, 31, 32]. Its bounded nature inspired the creation of language names like English attached to specific geographical territories [6]. In this sense, language is a quantifiable entity. The fact that the people or communities could have many such institutions inspired the counting convention. The practice of counting languages led to the coining of terminology such as "bilingualism," "trilingualism," "plurilingualism," and, of course, "multilingualism" [4, 5, 30]. In light of the aforesaid, Edwards [2] defines "multilingualism" in terms of individual knowledge and use of language (individual multilingualism). He recognizes that the ability of an individual to speak different languages is varied does not exist at the same level for all languages. This discussion forms the base for a binary approach in research, which distinguishes the complexity of multilingualism as opposed to monolingualism, and which subsumes "multilingualism" under "bilingualism" by authors of [33–35].

3.3.2 Social mobility and multilingualism

At earlier, descriptions of multilingualism emphasized on languages as abstract objects, with multilingualism being associated with having a number of independent monolingual systems. Before the industrial revolution, it was uncommon to find people who spoke more than two languages in Europe. As a result, the term multilingualism was first applied to civilizations where multiple languages coexisted, rather than to individuals. Canagarajah [36] for example refers to "national multilingualism" which he defined it as the use of many languages in a country. This concept illustrates how the presence of multiple languages can be a barrier to easy communication because people are not thought to have the ability to quickly learn new languages for trans-local contact. For many years, this perception of multilingualism resulted in its denunciation in communities and among people [37]. On the similar vein, Blommaert [6], mentions that it has since been revisited in light of the ongoing and increasing migration and globalization, which promotes the constant transfer of languages and cultures from one place to another, needing individuals to construct communicative practices that are compliant with the diversity in order to either provide or access services. The peculiar trends of communication observed in certain parts of the world such as South Asia, particularly India [2] and Africa [37] have presented linguists with a complex scenario that prompts more critical attention than just numerical consideration of languages [38]. This, as Blommaert and Heller [6, 39] mention, highlights the situated nature of language practices that makes people acquire and use bits of language that suit particular contexts.

3.3.3 Multilingualism and language practices

Franceschini [8] elaborates that the concept of multilingualism is to be caught on as the capacity of social orders, teach, bunches, and people to lock in on a customary premise in space and time with more than one dialect in regular life. This means that multilingualism is a product of the fundamental human ability to communicate in a number of languages. Operational distinctions may then be drawn between social, institutional, discursive, and individual multilingualism. This is in line with Groasjean's [33] assessment that "bilingualism" involves open interaction and contact especially involving different cultures. Franceschini [8] further addresses the unfixed nature of communities and practices by acknowledging language use in space and time, and the aspect of contact. She emphasizes the value of communities of practice (institutions and groups) which breed the environment for societal and individual practices that utilize and produce language for different purposes. Groasjean [33] on the other hand asserts that "bilingualism is not a phenomenon of language; it is a characteristic of its use." In an attempt to give a profound description of multilingualism, Cruz-Ferreira [34] emphasizes [32, 33] assertion by viewing "multilingualism" as an aspect of individuals and not of languages. Makoni and Pennycook [32] contend that multilingualism has nothing to do with languages, because languages are not multilingual, rather people are capable. This is not to say that there is not a language element to the concept of multilingualism. It all more strongly mirrors Stewart's [31] argument that language is a local practice formed by individuals' repeated activities in their many communicative interactions in various social contexts. In other words, individuals' social practices (what people do) with languages cause multilingualism [34, 40]. Thus, Makoni and Pennycook [32] suggest that in order to understand and ably describe "multilingualism," there is a need to study speakers' language practices.

3.4 Types of multilingual competence

Sociolinguists list down different competencies of multilingual speakers. In multilingual societies, not all speakers need to be multilingual. Some states have multilingual policies and recognize several official languages, such as Canada (English and French). In some other states, particular languages may be associated with particular regions in the states, when all speakers are multilingual linguists classify the community according to the functional distribution of the languages involved.

4. Language choice and use in multilingual settings

Resources in a multilingual repertoire are obtained with a variation of competences for use in specific contexts [41] and for specific purposes. Henceforth, language choice is an important aspect to discuss in a study of multilingualism [42, 43]. Gumperz and Duranti [42, 44] moreover keep up that multilingual speakers in multilingual settings continually make choices as to which etymological asset to convey in a given setting and with a given group of bystanders. Gumperz [42] accepts that dialect choice depends on the realization of the communicative capacities of the questioners such that comprehensible is of center intrigued. Myers-Scotton [45] on the other hand asserts that language choice is motivated by performance of identity and negotiation of agency especially during social interactions. With this view, Myers-Scotton [45] is inclined to language choice as a function of identity negotiation whereby every time the communication situation changes and people

assume different subject positions, Kramsch [46] chooses a code that reflects their personae. Meyer and Apfelbaum [47] argue that “cognitive, social and historical aspects may play an important role in multilingual communication such as level of linguistic competence of participants and the degree of linguistic regulation of interaction spaces.”

Scholars have identified a number of factors which they believe influence language choice and language use in ethnic minority settings. These are as follows: domain, interlocutors, and topic. These factors are discussed in the following sections:

i. **Domain**—Domain refers to the idea that each language or variety of language is assigned to a specific purpose, space, or group of people in society, such as the work domain, family domain, or religious domain, for example. Spolsky and Fishman [48, 49] argue that domain is a useful idea in investigating individual and community language use. Likewise, language speakers in ethnic minority communities tend to link certain languages with specific domains, according to the language domain idea of [50]. For example, the language spoken at home or in one’s neighborhood may differ from the language spoken at school or at work [51]. Eastern European migrants in East Anglia have “a slight preference for the use of English outside the home/family domain, while the L1 is used predominantly in the home/family domain, as would be expected” [51].

ii. **Interlocutors**—Interlocutors have a significant impact on language choice. While researching the linguistic behavior of ethnic minority communities in the London suburbs, Harris [52] identified three patterns: one with parents, which usually involved a mixed language of mainstream and minority languages; one with siblings, which mainly involved using the mainstream language; and one with grandparents, which mainly involved using the minority language. Other researchers Lawson and Yagmur [53, 54] reported similar results, suggesting that language use may be connected to the speakers’ age. Gender differences are thought to influence language usage patterns [52, 55].

iii. **Topic**—Language choice may also be influenced by the topic under discussion. Fishman [50] suggests that certain subjects are some way or another dealt with way better in one dialect than in another, in specific multilingual contexts. Lawson and Sachdev [53] point out that Bengali was used with topics related to family issues, while English was mostly used while discussing school matters. Wei [55] presents two primary techniques within the macro-societal perspective model: the complementary distribution approach (following researchers like [56]), and the conflict model. According to the first method, all of the languages or language variants in the linguistic community are used to fulfill a certain role. As a result, languages (or their variations) are attributed to a set of functions that work together to create a consistent multilingual system. Code switching is also one manifestation of the way in which bilingual individuals negotiate and practice language choice [57, 58]. For example, Ethiopia is a multilingual and multicultural country where more than one or two languages are used in various settings and as a result, bilingualism, multilingual repertoires, code switching, language choice for specific domain, codemixing, and borrowing are instances of multilingual language preferences and use in diverse Ethiopian communities [59].

5. Domain analysis as a theoretical framework of language use

The concept of domain analysis developed by Fishman remains useful for both description and explanation of the distribution and use of language in domains and is based on [49] famous question of “Who speaks what language to whom, and when.” There is a correlation between language choice and a wide range of social factors, such as the number and geographical distribution of the language’s speakers. Domain analysis, therefore, is the framework on which the survey questionnaires for this study are based. Domain analysis approached the study of language use by relating self-reported language behaviors and attitudes of the respondents to sociological indices in the groups under study. The language domain should be considered an abstraction of an interactional situation in which a cluster of sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and linguistic factors is at work.

The family, the playground, and the street, the school, the church, work, literature, the mass media, the courts, and other administrative agencies are examples of domains described in the literature. The precise description and classification of domains necessitates a thorough understanding of a society’s socio-cultural dynamics, norms, and values at a specific point in time. This is because the quantity and intensity of language behavior domains can vary from context to context [49].

5.1 Defining domain analysis

Domain, an important determinant of language choice, refers to the context of language use, for instance, that of family, friendship, neighborhood, education, and transaction. With reference to domain distribution of language use, Wallwork [60] says that in some domains there may be contact with other people with whom there is a potential choice of two or even three languages. The decision may be focused on the function of the two speakers in relation to each other, or the topic of the conversation who both view domain in the same ways [61].

5.2 Domain effects on language choice

The impacts of domain on language choice have been investigated in a number of research. Greenfield [62] states that in the multilingual Puerto Rican population of New York, the low language, Spanish, is preferred in intimate domains such as family and friendship, while the high language, English, is preferred for job and education. Parasher [63] demonstrates that in India, people use their mother tongue and another language in the family domain, although English dominates high domains like education, government, and employment, as well as some low domains like friendship and neighborhood. Similar findings were reported by Hohenthal [64], who found that languages are employed differently depending on the domain. The concept of domain and domain analysis, however, has been criticized. Some of the studies reported partial effect of domain on language choice whereas others reported even no effect at all. Pascasio and Hidalgo [65] examined how role-relationships, domains, and speech situations affect language use among bilinguals in Philippines. The speech situations, however, do not seem to have much effect on language used. Gal [66] however, strongly disagreed with the influence of domain on language choice. The other situational factors such as audience, setting, occasion, and purpose have been found to influence the choice of language in other communities but these factors were found irrelevant to the Oberwart case in Austria.

5.3 Factors determining language choice/use in multilingual situations

Topic, role relation, and geography, according to Fishman [49], are elements that influence the concept of domain. In multilingual situations, he claims that topic can be a language regulator. When discussing specific topics, someone might, for example, adjust their language to that of the interlocutor. Role relation, according to Marjohan [67], is that the languages you use are decided by the interlocutors with whom you communicate. For instance, a father may converse with his mother, a child may converse with his mother, and a mother may converse with her child. He also says that locality influences the languages you use because of where the discussions take place. According to Marjohan and Tanner [67, 68], there are factors of choice to be setting in locale. The factors are content or topic, social distance and motivational factors. In social distance, there are two dimensions: vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimensions mean that the languages use are determined by the relative position of someone that is compared with others. Marjohan [67] States that you have to respect someone who is above you in terms of status, age or marital status. The horizontal dimensions refer to the relative closeness of someone with others. You tend to use a low code if you speak to someone who is close to you in terms of degree of friendship, sex, ethnic background, religious background or educational background. Someone has motivational factors when he or she is interested to speak with the interlocutors or interested about the topics even manipulative.

5.3.1 The part of language proficiency/knowledge

A number of studies have identified proficiency as a limiting factor in language choice. David [69] There have been reports that a shift can be attributed to a lack of proficiency in the ethnic language (language shift, switch, mix and maintenance are the ways through which language choice manifests). David also understands that code switching reflects a speaker's level of expertise and comfort with a certain language. She also acknowledges that whether English or Malay is utilized as the lingua franca is determined by whether the speakers are fluent in both languages. Wallwork [60] has a similar view when he states that it is vital to consider an individual's language skill in connection to the settings in which language is used. In a Puerto Rican bilingual education program in New Haven, Connecticut, Hakuta [70] looked into the links between language choice, proficiency, and attitude. She claimed that language transition in American Hispanic communities is frequently characterized by a combination of processes involving proficiency, choice, and attitude.

5.3.2 Ethnicity as a factor

Ethnicity is widely acknowledged as a major limitation that determines people's linguistic choices. The impact of ethnicity on language choice has been documented in several research. Gal's [66] is one of the research that firmly suggests that language choice is determined by identity. In the Oberwart instance in Austria, Gal discovered that only the participants' identities can account for their language choice and use. In their study in Valencia, Spain, Sankoff [71] discovered a similarly high link between ethnicity and language choice. According to the findings, ethnic identity is the most closely linked to language choice motivation. Another study Burhanudeen [72], conducted in Malaysia, where the current study is being conducted, finds that the ethnicity of the participants influences the Malays' language choice.

5.3.3 The gender factor

Gender is also found to influence language choice. According to Lu [73], disparities in age, education, gender, and residency area result in various attitudes toward native language maintenance and legitimacy, and these attitudes encourage people to choose alternative languages. Chan [74], on the other hand, finds no gender differences in Minnanren's language use (quoted in [75]). Domain, proficiency, ethnicity, and gender are all factors that influence language choice among Malaysian friends and neighbors, according to this study.

5.3.4 Attitudes toward language

Given the scope of the term and the relevance of the various characteristics of attitudes, Garrett [76] contends that defining the idea of attitude is difficult. Attitudes, on the other hand, are divided into three categories: cognitive, affective, and behavioral [76]. The first is concerned with the impact of attitudes on an individual's perceptions of the world and specific situations; the second is concerned with emotions in response to the attitude item, and the third is concerned with attitudes interfering with conduct [76]. There is a general consensus in the literature that learning and using a language are easier for people who have a positive attitude toward the language and its speakers [76, 77], because language attitudes can better determine others' reactions to the language choice and thus influence this choice [76].

6. Frameworks for promoting multilingualism

Scholars have argued pedagogical, theoretical, and empirical foundations for such multilingual language use policies in multiethnic countries. Increasing citizens' language skills will be equally important in achieving European policy goals, particularly against a background of increasing global competition and the challenge of better exploiting Europe's potential for sustainable growth and more and better jobs. For example, The European Union Commission's long-term objective is to increase individual multilingualism until every citizen has practical skills in at least two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue. This framework should establish clear objectives for language choice and use of multilingual speakers at the various domains and be accompanied by a sustained effort to raise awareness of the importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

7. Recent dynamics of multilingualism

Two patterns deserve comment in relation to the changing character of multilingualism in the world today. This is true for the spread of the major world languages such as English, Spanish, French, and Chinese especially in the major cities and urban centers in the world. This is because as those major languages spread in urban centers as well as other localities, people tend to prefer and use them (languages) in various domains instead of the other minority or less populous languages. The second condition in the new development of multilingualism in the world is the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity, and mobility in different parts of the world particularly in Europe and America where linguistic homogeneity was the major characters of these parts of the globe [6]. Of course, in these parts of the world (Europe, USA), mobility and waves of immigration are the main leading factors for the spread of multilingualism and multiculturalism across the world.

8. Sociolinguistic implications of multilingualism

Sociolinguistics is the descriptive study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used, and the effects of language use on society. Multilingualism is the act of using polyglottism, or using multiple languages, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. The simultaneous coexistence of a large number of languages in a country has also important cultural, economical, sanitary, and political effects on the life of its inhabitants, who will be crucially affected by the decisions taken by the government on language policy.

9. Implications of multilingualism and linguistic diversity

- i. **Problems of nationalism**—Difficulties within a country can act as an impediment to commerce and industry and be socially disruptive. This is remedied by adoption and development of a national language. For the case of Kenya, Kiswahili has been propagated. The national language is promoted by ensuring its acceptance by those who are not its native speakers and ensuring that the language serves the needs of a modern state,
- ii. **The choice between a local language and the colonial language**—If a country settles on the old colonial language as the national language, then the chance for a local language serving as the national language is severely threatened.
- iii. **Multiplicity of local and ethnic languages**—The three east African nations have multiple languages to choose from in the choice of a national and official language. In addition to the challenge posed by the dominance of the colonial language, promoting one local or ethnic language over the other may bring forth a conflict in the sense that the community owning that language is also elevated politically which can bring strife in the country concerned.
- iv. **Implications within the educational system**—i) A country may decide to use various ethnic group languages. These are already known by children; hence, the subject matter can be introduced immediately without waiting until children learn the national language; ii) it gives birth to dominance of some languages over others; the result is that the majority of writers and readers operate within the framework of one language; iii) there are serious implications relating to the issue of translation of literature from one language to another with particular reference to the whole field of oral literature; iv) there is also language interference that occurs when one language imposes itself on another language especially during the process of language learning and usage. The language an individual learns first as mother tongue or as a first language (L1) will always affect the learning and usage of any other language subsequently learnt.
- v. **Maintenance of diversity**—using ethnic languages for initial language learning and switching to a national language for more advanced education. This ensures the maintenance of the ethnic group language.
- vi. **Mixing of the linguistic codes of different languages**—Multilingual situations may also have important linguistic effects on the languages in contact.

They may cause the mixing of the linguistic codes of different languages, resulting in lexical borrowing and the spreading of some grammatical features among those languages.

- vii. **Code switching**—This is a dominant effect of multilingualism. Code switching is the use of two or more codes in the same talk exchange [77]. The speaker uses a switch in code as a tool to negotiate the rights and obligations set which she/he wishes to be in effect for the exchange. The addressee uses the switch as an index of the negotiation in which the speaker is engaged. For instance, in the Kenyan situation [58], speakers change between codes to imply formality, informality, closeness, distance, kinship and also to define human relationships.

10. Conclusion

As already explained or stated in the introduction of the chapter, multilingualism is the common norm and way of life in many parts of the world. Nevertheless, for so long time, the concept of monolingualism has been also a dominant norm and way of life in various parts of world particularly in the Western countries. As has been stated in the chapter, the nature of multilingualism in different countries in the world is reviewed and presented. Besides, practical aspects of the multilingualism and language choice and use practices from empirical data were also reviewed and discussed for further understanding. Nevertheless, the coexistence of multiple languages in linguistically diversified settings by itself is not inherently the source of conflicts, miscommunication, or misunderstandings as a result of language choice and use of multilingual speakers. The real problem perhaps might be the inequalities existing between individuals and groups or communities who happen to speak and use different languages in various domains.

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