Multilingualism

Sarah Phillips

Sarah.Phillips@nyu.edu

LING-UA 15: Language & Society

Today's Lecture Roadmap

- Understanding the multilingual society/community
  - How do communities become multilingual?
  - How do communities vary in their `multilingual-ness'?
  - What are the effects of multilingual communities on the individual?
- Understanding the multilingual individual
  - How can society affect an individual's `multilingual-ness'?
  - What does code-switching have to do with being multilingual?

How do communities become multilingual?

- Migration, displacement and other forms of population movements
  - Puerto-Ricans in New York City
- Boundary drawing within a linguistically-distinct region
  - Hebrew-Arabic bilinguals in Israel
- When a society requires members to "marry out" of their group, known as exogamy
  - The Tucano People of the Amazon, and the practice of *linguistic exogamy*

How do communities vary in their 'multilingual-ness'?

- Two broad categories for characterizing multilingual communities:
  - When a speech community is comprised of multilingual individuals
  - When a speech community is comprised of monolingual individuals who speak different languages
- Societal multilingualism is achieved when there is a stable co-existence of multiple languages within a community

How do communities vary in their `multilingual-ness'?

- The interaction of multiple varieties and social contact can produce a variety of society-level effects, including:
  - Diglossia, or when specific varieties serve specific social functions within a community
    - The High variety is used in formal situations
    - The Low variety is used in informal situations
  - Asymmetric bilingualism, or when less powerful linguistic groups are expected to learn the language of the more powerful linguistic group(s)

How can society affect an individual's 'multilingual-ness'?

- Language Loss
  - The end result of language shift from the heritage or native language to the dominant language
  - Typically induced by social, political factors
  - Diglossic situations has been argued to lead to language loss among 2nd, 3rd, and/or 4th generationers of multilingual families
(de Bot & Weltens, 1991; Maher 1991)
  - Video of Asian-Americans' Experiences with Language Loss (-0:44)

How can society affect an individual's 'multilingual-ness'?

- Language Maintenance
  - A strategy that prevents language loss
  - Typically associated with positive attitudes toward particular cultural identities
  - Video of Spanish-English Bilinguals in North Carolina (0:38-1:33)

What does code-switching have to do with being multilingual?

- Code-switching is the phenomenon when a multilingual uses two or more "codes" to communicate

- According to Labov (1971), code-switching between languages like Spanish and English seem completely random

- However, Pfaff (1979) found that code-switching obeys structural constraints and is motivated by social and discursive factors
  - While there is a large body of research on the structural constraints, sociolinguists are more interested in the social motivations for a bilingual to code-switch

What does code-switching have to do with being multilingual?

- Sociolinguists can examine this particular behavior as social situations influencing language choice:
  - Korean-American Experience in the Dentist's Office
    - Metaphorical Code-switching: integrate social situations through code
  - Key & Peele's "Phone Call" Skit
    - Situational Code-switching: alternate code when the situation changes
- Sociolinguists can also examine this particular behavior as indicating one's multilingual identity and attitudes

Using code-switching to mark one's identity

"Syntactic structure and social function of codeswitching" (1981)

- Conducted an ethnographic study of Lola, Spanish-English bilingual and member of the Puerto Rican community in New York City
- Recorded 3 different sessions in different social contexts:
  - Formal interview
  - Informal session
  - "Vernacular" session
- Found Lola produced:
  - More code-switching in informal settings
  - More code-switching with familiar interlocutors/fellow speech community members
  - No difference in type of code-switching with respect to interlocutor or context
- Argues that codeswitching can be used to mark one's ethnicity and/or group membership

Using code-switching to mark attitudes

"The sociolinguistic functions of codeswitching between Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic" (2011)
- Examined 35 hours of naturalistic recordings from three different social contexts for instances of codeswitching between Standard Arabic (SA) and Dialect Arabic (DA)
  - religious discussions/lectures
  - political debates
  - soccer commentaries
- Speakers are highly-educated speakers of Egyptian, Gulf, and Levantine dialects of Arabic
- Found "the motivations for CS between SA and DA are mainly code-dependent" (p.559)
  - Switching to SA, considered the High variety, marked attitudes about the content being of high prestige, sophistication, and serious function as well as to indicate a pan-Arab identity
  - Switching to DA, considered the Low variety, marked attitudes about the content being of low prestige, taboo, or less seriousness as well as to encourage accessibility

Today's Take-Home Messages

- Multilingual communities are typically formed through three phenomena: migration/displacement, boundary drawing, and exogamy

- Communities vary by whether the members are monolingual or multilingual and how they structure when each language is used socially (if they do?)

- How these communities are structured can encourage or deter members to being multilingual or monolingual

- Bilinguals can use codeswitching to mark social situations as well as their identities and/or attitudes

Supplemental References

- Albirini, A. (2011). "The sociolinguistic functions of codeswitching between Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic" *Language in Society*, 40, 537-562.

- de Bot, K., & Weltens, B. (1991). <u>Recapitulation, regression, and language loss</u>. In H. W. Seliger & R. M.Vago (Eds.), *First language attrition* (pp. 31– 51). New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Labov, W. (1971). The notion of 'system' in creole studies. *Pidginization and creolization of languages*, 447, 472.

- Laosa, L. (1975). Bilingualism in Three United States Hispanic Groups: Contextual use of language by children and adults in their families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 67(5), 617-627.

- Maher, J. (1991). <u>A crosslinguistic study of language contact and language attrition</u>. In H. W. Seliger & R. M.Vago (Eds.), *First language attrition* (pp. 67– 84). New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Pfaff, C. W. (1979). Constraints on language mixing: intrasentential code-switching and borrowing in Spanish/English. *Language*, 55(2), 291-318.

- Poplack, S. (1980). "Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en Español": Toward a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics*, 18, 581-618.

- Poplack, S. (1981). <u>Syntactic structure and social function of code-switching</u>. In Durán, R. (Ed.), Latino Language and Communicative Behavior (pp. 169-184). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.