

Tools and Technologies of Language Documentation

Prof. Bornini Lahiri and Prof. Dripta Piplai (Mondal)

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

IIT Kharagpur

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Lecture-04

Lecture 04 : More about Language Shift

Hello everyone! Welcome to the fourth lecture of Module 1 of the NPTEL IIT Kharagpur course, Tools and Technologies of Language Documentation. The title of today's lecture is More about Language Shift. So I talked about the idea of language shift previously and today we will be talking about the following. So initially we will see how the field of Language Maintenance and Language Shift developed within Sociolinguistics which basically overlaps with the studies of Endangered Language. We will talk about the triggers of language shift and how language shift is related to migration. After that, we will discuss how to study Language Maintenance and Shift.

And finally, I will introduce the idea of 'domains' of use and shift, which I briefly mentioned in the previous class. So, I will begin the class with a quote from Fishman. I will read it out for you. "The study of language maintenance and language shift is concerned with the relationship between change and stability in habitual language use on the one hand, and ongoing psychological, social or cultural processes on the other hand, when populations differing in language are in contact with each other".

So you can figure out that we are talking about contact situations, the idea of language contact and we are also talking about language change and stability. So this is very important for us to understand when we are talking about the idea of Language Documentation as a whole. So I hope you remember what we already discussed about the concepts of Language Maintenance and Language Shift. Now, you are familiar with these ideas and also the differences as we talked about it in the previous class. So I will tell you that both the concepts are related to the fields of Language Contact and Multilingualism.

If you are interested in Sociolinguistics, I am sure that you are already familiar with these ideas; Language Contact, when several languages are together and they are influencing each other and also Multilingualism, where several languages are coexisting

and influencing each other. So if we think about the domain of Language Maintenance and Language Shift, I will briefly talk about some works which are crucial for this field. The first one that I am mentioning is the work by Kloss in 1927, where detailed idea of Language Maintenance was introduced in terms of the linguistic minorities, the language issues for linguistic minorities. The next work that I will mention is the work by Einar Haugen. I am sure you are familiar with Einar Haugen's name if you have done some Sociolinguistics in terms of Standardization.

So even for Standardization studies, Haugen talked about language and migration specifically in terms of the Norwegian migrants in the US. The next milestone in the study of Language Maintenance and Shift is the work by Weinreich, who talked about bilingualism in language contact. Very very important for our purpose is the work by Joshua Fishman. I will come back to Fishman's ideas several times in different lectures. So now we should focus on Joshua Fishman even when we are talking about the development of the field.

Why I am saying that it is very important to focus on Fishman's work? Because Fishman talked about the focus of users and uses of language, both the use and the users. And also the idea of habitual language use. So, what kind of linguistic environment is there, what kind of habitation is there and also you know what is the habit of the speakers when they are using different languages. Fishman also talks about certain extra linguistic factors that impact language maintenance. So we will talk about these extra linguistic factors.

I talked about a few examples in the previous class if you remember. And another important aspect is Attitude and Policy, how they are affecting the idea of language maintenance and shift. So if you are planning to work on indigenous minorities, you have to keep certain things in mind. First of all, you have to evaluate what kind of situation you are considering for your field. So, we have to understand whether the indigenous language on which you are planning to work is receiving some kind of threat may be from the speakers of dominant languages of the area.

If there are pressures of other linguistic groups which is operating, whether there are economic reasons for shifting the language may be for job or education as we briefly mentioned in the last class and also, whether it is a shift or loss or death, or maintenance of languages. So, we have to understand. In the next class, I will talk about some layers and in today's class I will talk about a scale which will help you to understand and evaluate the situation in terms of the language on which you are planning to work. So now the question is how do we figure out the triggers of language shift? Maybe you can clearly understand that the community is shifting, the speech community is clearly shifting to another language, but it is very important for you to understand the reason why

the community is trying to shift to another language. What are the triggers? At times we have seen that changes in nation states trigger a shift.

If you remember the example of Austria and Hungary that I mentioned in the last class So the speakers if they once belonged to a different nation state, after a war of reorganization of state boundary, they belong to a different nation state, they have to shift the language because there are certain mandates of the nation state for formal work, education, administration, etcetera. So, if it is happening, if the shift is happening because of the changes in nation state. At times we have also seen that invasions by other group resulted in language shift. It triggers language shift. So you have to consider the historical aspects of language shift for your purpose.

At times we see that this development of bilingualism or multilingualism is common due to language contact. And when we are talking about language contact, there are different possibilities. At times we find there are emergence of pidgin languages, which are created very quickly when two communities are in contact and they need to create a language for intergroup communication. We also find that there are at times the creation of lingua franca or link language. There are several communities which are existing together, they need to talk to each other and then they develop a link language and they shift to the link language; they do not speak their ancestral language anymore.

So we need to evaluate this. And we find that a language without a status in polity is abandoned. If you are working on a language which does not have any status in terms of the governance of the area, then there is a chance that the speech community will shift to a different language because there is no value of the language in terms of governance. So when we talk about language shift, we also look at the replacement of L1 or the first language. So how is this replacement taking place? Language shift, we can say that it is a gradual replacement of one's L1 or the main language by another one which is L2.

So you can also consider this as a brief definition of Language Shift which will be super useful for you. So if there is a gradual replacement you have to understand that what is the language which is replacing L1. So there is a need to understand the sociolinguistic background of the situation and very important for our purpose is to understand whether the replaced form is found in almost all the domains of usage. I hope you remember the example of domain that I discussed in the previous class. In today's class, I will also give you some more examples in order to understand the domain specific usage of language.

So if you can find the replaced form in all the domains available or it is found in only some specific domains, needs to be considered. So here I am giving an example of Dutch migrant community in Australia, we can find that almost 95 percent of the second

generation Dutch Australians do not speak Dutch, they have shifted to English. So, of course, there is a pressure for economic reasons and educational purposes, but they have shifted to English. So, what kind of replacement is taking place and why this is related to different domains need to be evaluated. At this point, I will also introduce some useful concepts which will be which will be needed for your work.

The first concept is Linguicide, which I am borrowing from the work of Philipson and Stutnabb-Kangas. So, linguicide refers to a you know a more violent example of language death where there is a huge pressure of the dominant communities and then there is a language shift which is marked. Then I am introducing the idea of Language Attrition, which is important for you if you are working for example, in psycholinguistics or pedagogy. It is very important for you to understand; language attrition refers to certain kind of language loss, where there is a reduced linguistic competence among the speakers. So, at times if you are at field you realize that the speakers do not have fluency or maybe the younger people they do not have fluency.

So you can say that you know it is a kind of reduced linguistic competence. So in these cases we have to understand whether it is a case of language attrition or loss. And we can relate language maintenance to retention of one's language in different domains. Again I am coming to domains and here I am emphasizing the term retention, because when we are talking about maintenance, we need to understand whether it is maintained in different domains or not. In many cases we talk about migration.

If you remember in the last class I talked about different kinds of migration and the size of the migrant community which determine the nature of shift. So here I am coming back to this issue of migration language maintenance and shift. So if I want to find the idea of migration briefly, I will say that migration is a forced or voluntary movement of communities across national and linguistic borders. So either it is forced, the community is forced to shift their homeland, forced to migrate to a different place and at times it is voluntary, where the speech community moves somewhere for a better livelihood. So the nature of language maintenance will be different in cases of the different kind of migrations and the host community, the place where they are moving, the host community's attitude again, the host community's behavior towards the migrant population.

So we need to understand when a community moves to the territory of another community what happens. So it already belong to a different community and then this group is moving to the new territory. So, who takes up the dominant role in the territory? At times you will see that the community who is migrating to the new area, will be you know will receive a pressure from the community who was already residing in that place.

And at times you will see that exactly the opposite is happening if it is a big group who is migrating to a new place, may be they will dominate and the people who are existing there will be shifting to a different language. It depends on multiple extra linguistic factors and you need to take into account all these factors which are affecting the idea of language shift and maintenance.

So you need to understand all these conditions and evaluate all these conditions based on the language on which you are working. You need to take into consideration the territorial issues which are important for our purpose. And we also need to understand whether there is a kind of bilingualism or multilingualism which is stable and it can be a transitional bilingualism or multilingualism. So we need to understand the difference between these two as well. So now the question is how do we study language maintenance and language shift? It will be useful for the and of course, related to the aim of this course, how do we try to document a language, how do we understand the status of an endangered language for example.

So we need to focus on demographic data. How do we collect demographic data? There are already existing data from census, there is a time gap for conducting census of different countries may be every 5 or 10 years. So we need to look at the demographic data and also other large scale surveys may be done for academic purpose, for purpose of policy making done by governmental agencies or non-governmental agencies. So there is some data which is already available for the community on which you are working probably. So you need to understand or evaluate the status of maintenance and shift from the already existing data, but the problem here that I am posing is what kind of questions do we ask.

So it depends on your question; if you modify the question in a specific way and you will be getting answers which may be useful for you may not be useful for you. So you need to be careful and I have given three examples at this point based on the census data of three different countries. You can figure out how these are important. The first one is from Australian census of 1976. The question is which language does the person use regularly? I am asking you to pay attention to the language in which the question is being asked.

The next set the next question is from Canadian census, 1996, where it is asked what language does this person speak most often at home? So instead of 'regularly' you can understand it is another layer 'most often' and also 'at home'. So maybe if you are asking this or creating a question which is similar in nature, you may get information about one language, but maybe the person speaks another language at home which is not spoken regularly. So this total profiling is needed for your purpose. The third question that I have

mentioned here is from the census of England and Wales 2011. What is your main language? So this is a more brief and a precise question, but it is directing you to answer or name only one language.

So in the previous question, you can say that I speak like two languages most often, I mean I do not know which one I use more than others, but for the third question, you can say that my main language is this, only one answer will be given. So if you look at these three different questions, my question to you is how will you evaluate these questions and will you learn something from designing such a question for your purpose. So in Indian context we need to understand what kind of data is there for your speech community, the speech community on which you are planning to work? And also what kind of questions do you need to formulate for collecting your set of data? So if we consider creating a questionnaire for understanding or evaluating language maintenance and shift for your target speech community, you can add questions like this, if a speaker can understand, speak, read and write in a language. So maybe you will figure out that the person speaks the language, but reading and writing is not happening; the person can only speak and understand. So if it is happening for all the four, then the case is going to be different right.

So, we need to consider all these matters in detail. And also, if you were figuring out the fluency in a particular language, you just cannot say that yes fluency is there. You can figure out this answer in different layers whether it is very well, well, not well and not at all. Consider marking them for doing a quantitative analysis, you can also get qualitative data based on the answers that your informants are giving to you. But these are important in terms of evaluation, the status of the language in terms of maintenance and shift.

So when we are collecting data on language shift and maintenance as our background data, we need to understand certain socio-demographic factors. What are these? These are information of gender, birthplace, marital status, level of education, income, occupation, religious affiliation, ethnicity, etcetera. You can ask me why I am mentioning all these socio-demographic factors? Are these related to the language use, shift and maintenance? My answer is yes. So we need to take into account all these factors because these can directly affect the language use of your informant. Now, I will briefly introduce you to the idea of Domain, which was mentioned by Fishman in 1972.

What do we mean by domain? A person can have varied language use based on the domains. So how in different domains, I am sure you remember some of the examples that I had given in the last class. So, we can find that language use is different based on family domain, again there are layers in family domain. So in family domain we can say that addressee and setting they are playing a role. So if in a family domain the address is

mother and the setting is home, it can be different if you are talking to your mother in a setting which is not home, may be in the market; it will vary.

Maybe you find a speaker using one language while talking to his or her mother at home and a different language when talking to the mother at market place or work place. So we need to understand all these layers in order to understand the overall language use of the community. If we consider religion for example, if the addressee is priest in a church, maybe the language use is different, the different language is chosen and if the same person is talking to the priest outside the church; maybe the person is meeting the priest in the same community, maybe market again, a different language will be chosen. There are possibilities. So, we cannot generalize that this person always uses one language with the mother and one language with a priest.

It depends on the domain and what kind of setting is there. For employment, we can see that one person is talking to the employer at workplace in one language, but when the same person is meeting the employer outside the workplace, the person is using a different language. For friendship, we can see that one student for example, is talking to the classmate by using one language inside the classroom, one language outside the classroom. So we need to understand all the layers of domains. Now let me introduce the idea of Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale or popularly known as GIDS, which is very very important for you and you should remember all these stages if you are planning to evaluate the situation, the overall situation of a speech community in terms of language maintenance and shift.

So there is this very important work by Fishman, 'What is reversing language shift and how can it succeed?' I briefly mentioned the idea of reversal of language shift in the previous class. So in this work, this GIDS model was introduced by Fishman and it is an eight stage scale which is important for you to understand. So whenever we visit a field and try to maybe we are doing a piloting to understand the situation of endangerment for a speech community, we need to understand the stage where the speech community can be put and it has to be done in the initial level before you start collecting data. So, if you have an overall evaluation of the speech community in the very beginning, it will be useful for you to proceed further and also maybe modify your questionnaire for collecting the data. So when we are talking about the 8 stages of the scale, Stage 8 is the most threatened one and Stage 1 is the least threatened language.

So Stage 8 is a case where only a few isolated speakers may be left and there is very little interaction and as Austin and Sallabank mentioned in their 2011 work, Stage 8 is basically it belongs to the domain of the study of endangered language. Stage 7 is a stage where language is used exclusively by the older speaker. No young member of the

community is using the language and no intergenerational transmission is happening. Stage 6 is where language is used informally in community context and for intergenerational transmission. So we often find these examples in Indian context where the language is not used in any formal domain, but for informal use in community it is being used.

I will give some examples in the next classes, where you will understand this example in a more better way. So language is used informally in community context we understand, but it is also used for some kind of intergenerational transmission is different from the previous two stages as you can understand. Stage 5 is where language is used orally in community related domains, but many members of the community also receive literacy in the language. So, it is not only confined to the informal interaction, but also we are bringing in the issue of literacy here. In Stage 4, we find that language exists in mainstream education, which is different from Stage 5, because in Stage 5, we are talking about community members are receiving literacy; it can be home based literacy, but in Stage 4 we are talking about mainstream education, where formal schools include the language.

In Stage 3 we find that it is used for professional purposes for example, used in shops and business. In Stage 2, we find that the language is also available in the mass media and also for health and finance. So, at this point I will mention that we can figure out that there are some changes in recent days, where we find that there is no literacy in mainstream education, but the language is available for mass media. So this is something where we need to stop and evaluate our target language that whether we are considering both 3 and 2 in case of contemporary situations. And Stage 1 is where the language is used for education, employment and government; it means which has a formal acceptance by the nation state.

So in the conclusion, I will talk about some of these ideas that we have discussed in today's class. We see that Language Maintenance and Shift are related to Language Contact and Multilingualism both. We need to understand the triggers of Language Shift and also whether L1 is completely replaced or it is not completely replaced, it is still there in some specific domains. I introduced the idea of Linguicide and Attrition which will be useful for some of you. We discussed language maintenance and shift in migration context, if this is useful for any kind of field work that you are conducting.

We discussed the kind of questionnaire that we can gather and modify based on our purpose. And finally, we talked about the domains of language use and we talked about the scale introduced by Fishman. These are the key references and I hope you enjoyed the lecture. Thank you.