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# MULTILINGUALISM AND BILINGUALISM – SOCIOLINGUISTICS ASPECT

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# Language Contact


- A situation that arises when
  - two or more languages are spoken in the same or adjoining regions
- And
  - when there is a high degree of communication between the people speaking.
- Can result in
  - Language loss or even language death
  - Bi- / multilingualism
  - Language change

# Bilingualism (Multilingualism)

- **Individual Bilingualism** – the use of two (or more) languages by an individual
  - E.g., an individual who speaks both English and Macedonian;
- **Societal Bilingualism** – the use of two (or more) languages within a given community
  - E.g., the bilingual setting in India, Canada, Switzerland, Malaysia, etc.



# Describing Individual Bilingualism & Multilingualism

- The term 'bilingualism' may mean different things to different people.
    - To the average person, bilingualism can be loosely defined as:
      - the use of two languages or
      - the native-like control of two languages.
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# What it means to be bilingual ...

- ▶ 75% of the world's population speak two or more languages.
- ▶ Not all bilinguals speak two languages at the same level.
- ▶ By the age of 2.5, a bilingual child begins to make choices in language use, usually the majority language.
- ▶ Parents who want their children to retain their heritage language must work at it.

# Describing Individual Bilingualism

- Bilingualism has often been defined in terms of language competence. But a definition of bilingualism must also account for the impact of social, psychological and cultural variables on the bilingual individual.
- How did you (or someone you know) become bilingual?
  - What is your (their) proficiency in each language?
  - When do you (they) use each language?

# Describing Bilingualism & Multilingualism

- Five important variables in relation to bilingualism:
  - 1] degree of bilingualism
  - 2] context of bilingual language acquisition
  - 3] age of acquisition
  - 4] domain of use of each language
  - 5] social orientation



# Degree of Bilingualism - Definitions

- ▶ Bloomfield (1933): native-like control of two languages (maximalist)
- ▶ Mackey (1962): the ability to use more than one language (minimalist)
- ▶ Weinreich (1953): the practice of alternately using two languages (minimalist)
- ▶ Haugen (1953): the point where a speaker can first produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language (minimalist)
- ▶ Maximalist approach: describes the ideal bilingual (not reality)
- ▶ Macnamara (1969): need to discuss the degree of bilingualism / competence in sub-components (LSRW)

# Degree of Bilingualism – **Balanced Bilinguals**

- Individuals fully competent in both languages (Lambert et al. 1959)
  - Almost impossible to achieve (Baetens Beardsmore 1982)
  - Sociolinguistic forces demand that bilinguals organize their languages in functionally complementary spheres. No society needs two languages to perform the same set of functions. Balanced bilingualism entails the death of bilingualism. (Fishman 1972)

# Degree of Bilingualism – Semilinguals / Limited Bilinguals

- Individuals who appear to have limited proficiency in both languages. Deficit in six language competencies:
  - size of vocabulary
  - correctness of language
  - unconscious processing of language (automation)
  - language creation
  - mastery of the functions of language (e.g., emotive, cognitive)
  - meanings and imagery

# Context of Bilingual Language Acquisition

- Primary context / natural bilingualism: situations in which a child acquires both languages in a naturalistic setting without any structured instruction
- Secondary context / school bilingualism: situations in which a child acquires one of the languages in a structured setting, usually school.

# Context of Bilingual Language Acquisition

- Naturalistic fused setting: no separation of context for both languages; child is exposed to both languages in the same context.
- Naturalistic separate setting: one parent, one language model; but also applies to other interlocutors, i.e., siblings, peers, grandparents, etc.

# Context of Bilingual Language Acquisition

- Elective bilinguals: individuals who have some element of choice about learning a second language.
- Circumstantial bilinguals: individuals who have no choice about learning a second language; indigenous colonized or minority groups.
- Distinction is important especially with respect to how bilinguals are measured.

# Domains of Use

- **Domains:** the different spheres of influence in a speaker's life –
  - Family
  - Friendship
  - Religion
  - Education
  - Employment
  - etc.

# Domains of Use

- Interlocutors: a language relationship tends to evolve naturally. And once established, it is usually not easy to alter
- Place or Location: work vs. home; physical location like neighborhoods
- Topic: language of technical discourse or cooking, gardening, etc.



# Social Orientation


- Attitudes of bilinguals toward their bilingual status;
- Attitudes toward the larger community;
- Attitudes of the larger community toward them and their bilingual status.

# Additive vs. Subtractive Bilingualism

- **Subtractive bilingualism** / differential bilingualism: Without first language support, the learning of a new language may entail the loss of that first language.
- **Additive bilingualism**: an environment conducive to the development of the first language as well as the development of the second language results in the maintenance of both.



# Conclusion



Thank you for your attention!