

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Language choice, social variation in language and LSLM

This chapter reviews researches and theoretical perspectives to the study of language choice and language shift, and a related subject, the social variation in language and linguistic change. The review is selective. Theories that have direct relevance to the current study are dealt with in greater depth in their respective subsections whereas those that are not are briefly mentioned.

Of particular significance are the works of Fishman (1965/1986) on the “domain” construct, and Ferguson (1959/2000) on “diglossia”. These earlier works on language choice have provided the foundation to the study of language choice, and language maintenance and language shift (LSLM). Fishman’s conception of “domain” which is a constellation of factors of *setting*, *topic* and *participants* of an interaction has provided the framework for description of language choice patterns of communities and for understanding the social structure governing societal bilingualism. Fishman’s (1967/2000) conception of the different states of societal bilingualism and its link to “diglossia” is a major contribution to the study of LSLM.

In contrast to the macro-sociological construct mentioned above, the micro-interactive approach to the study of language choice pioneered by Bloom and Gumperz (1972) takes the “speaker” as the locus of investigation. The interactive approach views language choice as an interactive communicative strategy. It interprets

speakers' behaviour in search of the social determinants of language choice. Language choice is not regarded as "reflections of independently measurable social norms" (Bloom and Gumperz, 1972:432), but the norms are seen as part of the communicative strategy employed in speech. As explicated by Bloom and Gumperz,

We can no longer base our analyses on the assumption that language and society constitute different kinds of reality, subject to correlational studies. Social and linguistic information is comparable only when studied with the same general analytical framework. Moving from statements of social constraints to grammatical rules thus represents a transformation from one level of abstraction to another within a single communicative framework.

(Bloom and Gumperz 1972:432)

Bloom and Gumperz's (1972) contribution to LSLM is that they have provided a framework to examine social meanings expressed in speech and the distinction between metaphorical and situational code-switchings. They have particularly explored social identities expressed in speech.

Since Bloom and Gumperz's (1972) study, other models of language choice which take the socio-psychological orientation to language choice have also emerged, among other things, to examine the dynamics of inter-group interaction, and "divergence" and "convergence" in language choice. (See theory of accommodation, Giles, et al. 1977). The socio-psychological constructs also observe individuals' moods, feelings, motives and loyalties in the interpretation of language behaviour. Giles and associates (1977) have expanded on the concept of accommodation by incorporating various theories in social psychology. They highlight the 'negotiative' character of convergence under the label of 'interpersonal accommodation theory'. Examples of

theories incorporated are social exchange processes, causal attribution processes and Tajfel's theory of inter-group distinctiveness (c.f. Giles & Smith, 1979).

The theory of accommodation (Giles, et al., 1977) in particular has been much employed in language choice and LSLM studies (e.g. Kapanga, 1998; Finlayson & Slabbert, 1997). The basic idea of this model is that speakers converge to their interlocutor's style of speech by adjusting their speech to suit the needs of the person being spoken to. It is assumed that speakers modify their speech so as to encourage further interaction and decrease the perceived discrepancies between the participants in interaction. Presumably, speakers and listeners are expected to share a common set of interpretative procedures which allow the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker and correctly interpreted (decoded) by the listener. Ultimately, the act of convergence results in a favourable appraisal of the speaker. On other occasions, a speaker may choose to diverge i.e. making no effort to accommodate to his/her interlocutors' language. This occurs when the speaker wants to express solidarity with fellow group members or to emphasis his loyalty to his own group, and dissociate himself from his interlocutors' group. In this instance, accommodation is interpreted as an expression of speakers' social identity at one point in time.

This theory has also been applied to describe "accommodation" by dominant and subordinate groups under various perceptions of social change. It is hypothesised that members of a subordinate group may converge to the dominant group's language in an attempt to gain social acceptance by the dominant group, and inevitably, accelerates their social mobility within the larger community. Presumably, "downward convergence", which is an act of convergence by the dominant group towards subordinate language would most unlikely occur (although it is possible if dominant

group members perceive a possible occurrence of social change to their advantage). Divergence or non-convergence is said to occur when subordinate group members perceive a possibility of social change to their advantage.

Thus far, the discussion has centred around two main approaches to language choice: the macro-sociological construct and the micro-interactional approach. On the whole, language choice viewed from the macro-sociological construct could be considered as 'deterministic' given that "the emphasis lies on a set of given societal norms rather than on the ways speakers construct, interpret and actively transform social reality" (Appel & Muysken, 1987:23) in contrast to Gumperz's interactional approach, and the social psychological model.

A closely related subject to the study of LSLM is social variation in language and linguistic change. Social variation in language primarily attempts to provide a socially based explanation for linguistic variation in monolingual communities and existence of variation in the use of linguistic variants in communities. Studies conducted on the subject largely employ William Labov's methodology in a series of studies conducted on communities in Martha's Vineyard, New York City and Philadelphia. His work has opened the way for much subsequent work on social variation in linguistic change (c.f. Bright, 1997).

Researchers who examine this type of variation, also known as variationists, look at social differentiation in the use of linguistic variants, i.e. prestige and non-prestige variants and attempt to describe the processes of linguistic diffusion and change in communities. Speakers' choice of variants of a language is correlated with speaker variables (e.g. age, gender, ethnic group, social class) to determine the sources and

motivation for linguistic change. Social class is the “most widely used social variable” (Milroy & Milroy, 1997a:55) in such studies, and this factor interacts with speaker variable, “gender” in accounting for linguistic change. Linguistic change is shown to be motivated by speaker’s desire to be associated with the status associated with “prestigious” linguistic variants.

Contrary to these earlier views on social variation in language, Milroy and Milroy (1997a) have argued that “social network” provides a better explanation of linguistic change than other speaker variables previously used. They contend that the network model is also able to explain changes in patterns of language use in communities and language shift and language maintenance. As an alternative model to study LSLM, the network model have gained interest of researchers in recent time partly because the essence of the theory is in tandem with the popular notion of social identity and solidarity used in previous researches. The social network theory is a feasible model because it relates to the interactional aspects of language choice.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, the main aim of the current study is to elucidate speaker variation in language choice. In addition to the above mentioned theories, this study has also adapted part of the framework of analysis employed by Gal (1979). This framework of analysis has moved away from the macro-sociological construct mentioned above in the study of LSLM. Speaker variation in language choice and “implicational scaling technique” (Gal 1979) form the framework of analysis of survey data discussed in Chapters 5-7 of this thesis. And for that reason, the topic is discussed further in section 4.7 below.

4.2 The domain construct

Fishman (1965/1986:445) envisaged the concept of “domain” to refer to “higher order generalisation from congruent situations”. The domain analysis is taken as “constellations of factors of location, topic and participant” (Fasold, 1984:183). For instance, a typical family domain would be a situation in which a speaker is at home talking to another member of the family about an everyday topic. It is also assumed that one variety or language is more likely to be appropriate than another for use in each domain. The domain analysis has been thought to be a feasible model to describe the general patterns of distribution of languages in communities.

Basically, some generalisations of the norms of language use in each domain can be formulated from employing domain analysis. In addition, language choice is expected to differ between domains, and this may be further generalised into two distinct categories which correspond to two distinct varieties. Family, Friends and Neighbourhood are categorised as ‘low’ (L) domains; in contrast, domains categorised as “high” (H) include Education, Business, Government and Employment. It is expected (as in diglossic communities) that dialects and other lesser languages are dominantly used in the “low” domains; whilst, the standard variety characterises the “high” domains due to the formality of the situation. The concept of “domain” envisaged by Fishman (1965/1986) is a useful sociological construct to be considered in the study of language choice, and it remains a major influence in the study of language choice and LSLM.

4.3 Diglossia

The term “diglossia” (Ferguson, 1959/2000) initially refers to a linguistic situation where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a specialised function. The basic idea is that the two varieties, a High (H) variety and a Low (L) variety are spoken in corresponding domains i.e. Low and High domains respectively, and would function in complementary distribution with very little overlap. Approximating the name, (H) is viewed as a variety that has more ‘prestige’ partly because it has been used as a written language. It is spoken in formal situations (e.g. sermon in church, university lecture, news broadcast). On the other hand, the (L) variety, possibly a vernacular, and supposedly “inferior” is preferred in informal situations (e.g. friends and families, poetry, radio ‘soap opera’). (H) is the standardised form, and is described as having a more complex grammar and lexicon. The difference between (H) and (L) is distinguished also in terms of acquisition, where (L) is learned informally, whereas (H) is acquired through formal education received in the later part of one’s life. Ferguson includes Arabic, Modern Greek, Swiss German, and Haitian Creole as “defining languages” of exemplars of “diglossia”.

Ferguson’s diglossic situation applies well in countries (e.g. Morocco) where the H variety, the classical Arabic and the L variety, Moroccan Arabic, fulfill separate functions. However, the concept loses its usefulness when the distinction between and within the varieties becomes blurred over time (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Fasold, 1984). As a result, the term has been redefined. By consensus, it now generally refers to bilingual communities in which the two languages (instead of the varieties of a language) are functionally distinguished in terms of (H) and (L). The term was also

revised largely by Fishman (1972) to describe the relationship between diglossia and bilingualism.

To summarise, earlier approaches to language choice have provided a macro-view of how language choices of members of a community may operate. For example, they inform how the formality and informality of the social situation may affect choices speakers make in interactions, which is the relationship between language and social situation. They have also shown how social structures (e.g. domains and other social institutions) influence and dictate the patterns of language use in bilingual communities. Overall, it has provided the foundations for later studies on language choice and LSLM.

4.4 Bloom and Gumperz's (1972) method of observation

In the analysis of particular speech events, Bloom and Gumperz (1972:422) introduce the notions “settings”, “social situations” and “social event” in their unstructured ethnographic observation of the language behaviour of the Hemnesberget community in northern Norway. The concepts form three successively more complex stages in speakers’ processing of contextual information. These three parameters constitute the “contextual constraints” as determinants in the communicative process, alongside the speaker’s knowledge of linguistic repertoire, culture, and social structure.

Bloom and Gumperz (1972: 422-423) refer to “settings” as distinct locales where a range of socially distinct happenings take place such as home, workshops and plants, church, school etc. It represents the initial stage in speaker’s processing of contextual information. *Settings* are localities marked by the apparent occurrence of particular activities, and venues for different groups of people to meet and interact.

Each setting is manifested by distinct sets of human activities that differentiate one setting from the other.

Settings vary on a social dimension; that is on a formal-informality continuum. So, some setting can be considered more formal than others because it “may be characterized by the presence of certain cultural features and it may manifest certain social norms to which members may implicitly adhere to in interaction (Bloom & Gumperz, 1972: 422-423). For instance, “home” is described as a setting which is informal, where friends and kins meet, and which offers more privacy than public places such as the church, community hall, and the school which “form somewhat more restricted meeting grounds for more formal gatherings” (Bloom & Gumperz, 1972:422-23).

In a given setting, speakers may switch codes to signal a change in the social situation. Social situation refers to specific interaction involving “a particular constellation of personnel, gathered in particular settings during a particular span of time” (Bloom & Gumperz, 1972: 423). It forms the “background for the enactment of a limited range of social relationships within the framework of specific status sets, i.e. systems of complementary distributions of rights and duties” (Barth, 1966, cited in Bloom & Gumperz, 1972: 423).

Bloom and Gumperz have also observed situations where the same participants in interaction switch codes motivated by change in social roles or/and topics. They assign the term, “social events” to refer to such happenings. Social events are stereotyped interactions marked by sequential structure of opening and closing routines.

The norms which apply to two distinct social events differ although the participants and the setting remain the same.

For example, in the contexts of Sarawak, a Bidayuh executive in a government-run organisation is seen initially conducting a meeting in the official language, i.e. standard Malay, and later may switch codes to the local Malay variety with the same interlocutor for a social chat. A change in social events requires speakers to reassess the social constraints in the same situation, and consequently may trigger a switch in the choice of language, varieties or even style.

4.5 Situational and metaphorical code-switchings and social meanings in speech

In Bloom and Gumperz's term (1972:424), situational code-switching "assumes a direct relationship between the language and the social situation". The change in language choice corresponds to a change in the social situation. Social situations may differ in terms of participants, setting or the type of activity, or a combination of these factors. For example, Bloom and Gumperz (1972) report that on one occasion, when they, as outsiders, approached a group of locals engaged in conversation, the participants reacted to their arrival by indicating a change in casual posture of the group and a switch from Ranamal (local variety) to Bokmal (standard variety). Another example given is where teachers employ the standard code while delivering lecture, and then shift to the local variety when they want to encourage open and free discussion among students. These examples demonstrate that choice is critical to the event in the sense that any violation of selection rules may change members' perception of the event and this leads to clear changes in participants' definition of each other's rights and

obligations. In other words, choice of code is “narrowly constrained by social norms” (Bloom & Gumperz, 1972: 424).

However, not all switchings are triggered by change in social situation. Switchings may carry particular evocative purpose or are employed to achieve special communicative effects while participant and setting remain the same (Gardner-Chloros, 1997). This type of code-switching which Bloom and Gumperz refer to as “metaphorical switching” relates to particular kinds of topics or subject matters rather than a change in social situation. A metaphorical switch is regarded as symbolic of alternative interpersonal relationships, it “allows the enactment of two or more different relationships among the same set of individuals”. The choice of code “alludes to these relationships and thus generates meanings” (Bloom & Gumperz, 1972: 425). On other occasions, it attaches a certain meaning of “confidentiality or privateness to the conversation” (Bloom & Gumperz, 1972: 425).

Bloom and Gumperz examine code-switchings practice to arrive at social meanings expressed in speech. In this community (i.e. Hemnesberget community in northern Norway), they observed that its members displayed variations in the way they employed two varieties of the language, i.e. a standard and a dialect in interaction. Bloom and Gumperz account these variations to the degree to which each member relates to local and non-local values. That is, older members of the community maintain strict separation of local and non-local values in their language behaviour. In in-group situation, only the local dialect i.e. *Ranamal* is spoken, while *Bokmal*, the standard variety is used with outsiders. In other words, these speakers observe the norms designating the group’s identity.

On the other hand, younger community members e.g. college students, who are less attached to local values and have absorbed pan-Norwegian identities and values use code-switch pattern between the two varieties. Hence, code-switching is the norm in interaction among younger speakers even in in-group interactions or in an intimate social setting. Although they profess loyalty to the local dialect and allegiance to Hemnesberget, the students resort to metaphorical switching when they are required to appeal to their status as “intellectuals”.

From these observations, Bloom and Gumperz conclude that the dialect and the standard language have remained separated because of the “cultural identities they communicate and the social values implied therein” (Bloom & Gumperz, 1972: 417), and contend that the dialect is maintained as long as its association with local identification remains.

Linguistic alternates within the community’s repertoire serve to symbolise the differing social identities which members may assume. Nevertheless, the relationship between specific speech varieties and social identities is by no means a simple one-to-one relationship. A speaker may assume or project different identities in various situations. He may appear as a member of the local community on some occasions, while identifying with middle-class values on others (Bloom & Gumperz, 1972).

4.6 Language attitude and identity

In language shift studies (e.g. Silva-Corvalan’s 1994, study on language contact and change in Spanish-English bilinguals in Los Angeles), language attitude is investigated to predict the survival of the mother tongue. Speakers’ attitude towards

mother tongue and other languages is correlated with language choice patterns of speakers. To measure language attitude, survey questions implicitly require speakers to evaluate the social value of languages (e.g. whether they think that a language is modern or old fashioned, or whether mother tongue symbolises ethnic identity), and functions of languages to speakers. Presumably, positive attitude towards mother tongue would encourage maintenance whilst negative attitude would implicate deterioration in the use of the ethnic language. Nonetheless, it has also been shown that attitudes towards a language do not often correlate with actual language use; speakers who profess loyalties towards an ethnic language may not necessarily speak the language in daily interaction. In fact, it is common in language shift studies that speakers who have been “uprooted” from the community should profess loyalty to their ethnic language. Likewise, speakers of minority languages may exhibit a negative attitude towards their own language in many respects, but this does not imply that they do not attach any importance to it. The language may be highly valued for social or affective reasons, as a symbol of ethnic identity and solidarity between group members.

Appel and Muysken (1987:16) states, “if there is a strong relation between language and identity, this relation should find its expression in the attitudes of individuals towards these languages and their users”. So, attitude towards languages and its speakers develop because speakers associate the use of language with the identity it assumes. This relationship is represented below:

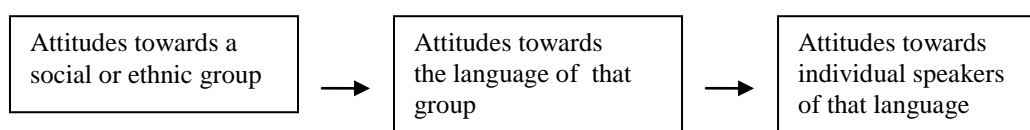


Fig 4.1: Schema representing the formation of attitudes (Appel and Musyken 1987:16)

It is assumed that social or ethnic groups have certain attitudes towards each other relating to their differing social positions. These attitudes affect general perceptions towards the group culturally, including perceptions towards its language, and this in turn, affect perception towards speakers of the language. Even in monolingual countries, speakers have certain attitudes towards varieties of a language (c.f. Lambert, 1979). Some accents are favoured over other accents because of the perceived prestige value associated with the speakers of the variety. These attitudes towards varieties reflect a community-wide stereotype of certain community or speakers.

In LSLM studies, language attitudes of minority groups towards own language and dominant languages, and attitudes of dominant groups toward minority languages are crucial for understanding why certain communities abandon their native language while others have maintained theirs. For instance, Vassberg (1993) uses Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's framework of "acts of identity" to assess the process of emergence and disintegration of identities and its link to LSLM. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985, as cited in Vassberg, 1993:4-5) view language behavior as a "series of acts of identity in which people reveal both their personal identity, and their search for social roles by creating linguistic patterns, so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which, from time to time, they wish to be identified". Vassberg studied Alsatian speakers in Alsace, a community situated along Franco-German border. Although Alsatian speakers speak an Alemannic dialect, a variety of Germanic dialect, association with German culture is not desired. Instead, the use of French is regarded as prestigious. Vassberg concludes that shift to French in this community is a manifestation of altering identity.

4.7 Variation in language choice and implicational scaling technique

This sub-section deliberates on the framework of analysis first employed by Susan Gal (1979) to study the process of language shift in communities. Gal basically describes speaker variation in language choice, and adopts the Guttman's "implicational scaling" method of analysis to describe changes in language choice patterns of German-Hungarian bilingual community in Oberwart, Austria. Gal (1979) suggests that speaker variation in language choice is closely related to social diversity. In Gal's (1979: 12) words,

...just as the difference in the speech of one person in different situations allows the initiated listener to gain information about the social context and the speaker's attitudes or intentions, so the systematic variation between speakers within the same context provides information about aspects of the speakers' social identity

(Gal, 1979: 12)

After a preliminary observation of language choice of the community she was studying, Gal (1979:101) concludes that choice may be predicted on the basis of two components of the situation – characteristics of the speaker and of the listener. Therefore, the 'interlocutor' factor becomes the main variable that forms the basis of her survey on language choice patterns of the community. Nonetheless, this does not imply that the other two factors that could have influenced language choice, i.e. setting and topic of conversation are not as important, but in the community that Gal studied, language choice can be determined by the interlocutor factor in most occasions. Furthermore, Gal asserts that it is by observing the language behaviour of speakers with various types of interlocutors that the social symbolism of language is revealed.

In Gal's study, the language choice patterns of 68 community members with 13 types of interlocutors which represent various generations and social backgrounds are investigated. The various types of interlocutors contrast various social contexts. For example, Interlocutor 12 i.e. government officials represent interaction in a formal domain whereas interaction with Interlocutor 3 i.e. black market clients, represent an informal situation. The patterns of choice of the respondents with each interlocutor are presented in the form of a matrix; on the vertical axis, the speakers, and on the horizontal axis, a list of interlocutor types.

Gal uses the "implicational scaling" technique to examine the choice of Hungarian and German in various social contexts in the community. The method ranks both "speakers" and "interlocutors" according to "patterns of choice" (not according to age). So, differences in choice between various social situations can be read across each row on the horizontal axis, whereas differences between speakers in choice with the same interlocutor or in the same social situation can be seen as one read down each column. Community members may choose German, Hungarian or both in various social situations. Gal also uses this technique to identify social situations where code-switching is likely to occur in this community i.e. situations where both languages (i.e. GH) are used by the community members. Once this objective is achieved, Gal investigates further to account for the contexts indicated with (GH). A similar framework of analysis was also employed by Li Wei (1994) in his study of language choice of the bilingual Chinese-English community in Tyneside, Newcastle. (Refer to Appendix C for example of application of the implicational scaling technique).

4.8 Speaker variation in language choice and social network theory

The social network theory was first used by Milroy and Milroy (1997a; 1997b; 1992) as a counter argument to Labov's (1972/1986) theory of linguistic change. Milroy and Milroy suggest that social network is capable of accounting for linguistic change (including change in language choice patterns) as well as language maintenance. The network variable is shown to interact with the variables of gender and age. The network theory was conceived from Lesley Milroy's study on the Belfast community conducted in 1980. The motivation behind the study was to account for the maintenance of a "stigmatised" and "low-status" form of language (vernacular maintenance) despite strong pressures from "legitimised" norms. In Belfast, a "low variety" existed, a characteristic of the inner city Belfast speakers. The inner city speakers employ the low variety as an index to solidarity in in-group interaction, and the "standard variety" in out-group situation. In contrast, the outer city Belfast speakers only use the standard variety. It was observed that "community norms of language are maintained by informal pressures; a kind of non-institutional norm enforcement (e.g. social network), and by "relatively localised patterns of identity marking" (Milroy & Milroy, 1997a:53).

Speaker's social circle or network of social ties is a major influence on the speaker's language choices in interaction. Speaker's social networks can be a norm enforcement mechanism in the sense that as members of a social group, speaker's cultural behaviour (including language behaviour) is influenced by norms within the group. Nevertheless, Gal (1979) argues that not all types of network ties can be a norm enforcement mechanism although some contacts may be quite frequent. Informal peer-group network appears to have a primary role in shaping patterns of language behavior

in many communities. It can act as a powerful constraint on identity that speakers assumed in particular situations, and hence determine their language choices.

The social network model has also been employed in LSLM studies. Li Wei (1994) for example, employs the social network analysis to measure speakers' degree of integration into informally constituted social groups. The study was conducted to examine the process of language shift to English in a Chinese immigrant community in Tyneside, Newcastle. Through participant observation and ethnographic interview, Li Wei (1994) collected information on individuals' network. By means of statistical analysis, the strength of three types of networks of 58 speakers i.e. exchange, interactive and "passive" ties were computed. The results were then correlated with patterns of language choice of individuals and they show among other things that speakers whose networks consist of a relatively large number of ethnic (Chinese) ties display more 'traditional' social behaviour such as using the Chinese-dominant language choice patterns, while those with fewer ethnic ties within their exchange networks have moved away from such tradition and have adopted an English-oriented behavior. The results also suggest that Chinese and Chinese-dominant language choice patterns are the norm for peer-group communication among older speakers, while bilingual and English dominant patterns are the norm for peer-group communication among younger speakers. Overall, he concludes that although social networks are closely related to speaker's age, social networks provide a better explanation of the social mechanisms underlying language choice.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to review relevant literature in two inter-related fields: (i) the study of language choice and (ii) the study of social variation in language and linguistic change. This thesis adopts theories from the macro-sociological construct as well as the methods of observation from the interactional approach in data collection and analysis. From the study of social variation in language, this study applies the notion of “speaker variation in language choice” and the “implicational scaling” technique in its framework of analysis.