
An Introduction to Sociolinguistics

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huge numbers of French words such as *beef, mutton, veal* and *pork*) so there were no longer domains in which French was the appropriate language to use.

In Greece the relationship between Dhimotiki (L) and Katharévoussa (H) has changed in the twentieth century. At the turn of the century the relative roles of the two varieties were still quite distinct. Katharévoussa was regarded very highly and was the appropriate variety for serious speeches or writing. Dhimotiki was used for informal conversation. There was a language riot in Athens in 1901 when the New Testament was published in Dhimotiki. Many people felt it was totally unsuited for such a serious purpose. More recently, however, the choice of Katharévoussa or Dhimotiki has taken on political significance. Katharévoussa was the only official language of Greece during the period from 1967 to 1974 when the right wing military government was in power. Since then the Athenian variety of Dhimotiki, labelled 'the people's language', has been adopted as the official standard language by the democratic government. As mentioned above, attitudes to the H variety in a typical diglossia situation are usually respectful and admiring. The following quotation suggests that things in Greece are changing. Katharévoussa was denounced in the 1980s by a student leader as 'the old-fashioned medium of an educated elite . . . archaic and tediously demanding', with 'freakish diction . . . antiquated rhetorical devices and . . . insufferable verbosity'.

Finally, it is worth considering whether the term diglossia or perhaps polyglossia should be used to describe complementary code use in *all* communities. In all speech communities people use different varieties or codes in formal contexts, such as religious and legal ceremonies, as opposed to relaxed casual situations. In multilingual situations the codes selected are generally distinct languages, e.g. French or Swahili for formal situations vs a vernacular tribal language such as Shi for casual interactions in Zaire. In predominantly monolingual speech communities, such as those of many English-speaking people in Britain or New Zealand, the contrasting codes are different styles of one language. As we shall see in later chapters, there are clearly identifiable linguistic differences between the more formal and the more colloquial styles of a language. But they are often a matter of degree. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the variety at the formal end of the scale could be regarded as an H variety, while the most casual variety could be labelled L.

Code-switching or code-mixing

Participants, solidarity and status

Example 8

(*The Maori is in-italics*. THE TRANSLATION IS IN SMALL CAPITALS.)

Sarah: I think everyone's here except Mere.

John: She said she might be a bit late but actually I think that's her arriving now.

Sarah: You're right. *Kia ora Mere. Haere mai. Kei te pehea koe?*
(HI MERE. COME IN. HOW ARE YOU?)

Mere: *Kia ora e hoa. Kei te pai. Have you started yet?*
(HELLO MY FRIEND. I'M FINE).

People sometimes switch code within a domain or social situation. When there is some obvious change in the situation, such as the arrival of a new person, it is easy to explain the switch. Mere is Maori and although the rest of the meeting will be conducted in English, Sarah switches to Maori to greet her. The Maori greeting is an expression of solidarity. So a code-switch may be related to a particular participant or addressee. In a Polish family living in Lancashire in the 1950s the family used Polish in the home. When the local English-speaking priest called, however, everyone switched to English. In both cases the switch reflects a change in the social situation and takes positive account of the presence of a new participant.

A speaker may similarly switch to another language as a signal of group membership and shared ethnicity with an addressee. Even speakers who are not very proficient in a second language may use brief phrases and words for this purpose. Scottish Highlanders who are not proficient speakers of Gaelic nevertheless express their identification with the local Gaelic speech community by using Gaelic tags and phrases interspersed with their English. Maori people often use Maori words and phrases in this way too, whether their knowledge of Maori is extensive or not. The switches are often very short and they are made primarily for social reasons – to signal the speaker's ethnic identity and solidarity with the addressee. Here are some examples.

Example 9

(a) Tamati: *Engari* (SO) now we turn to more important matters.
(*Switch between Maori and English*)

(b) Ming: Confiscated by Customs, *dà gài* (PROBABLY)
(*Switch between English and Chinese*)

- (c) A: Well I'm glad I met you. OK?
 M: ándale pues (OK SWELL), and do come again. Mm?
 (Switch between Spanish and English)

In (a), Tamati uses a Maori tag at the beginning of his utterance while the Cantonese speaker in (b) uses a final tag. This kind of switching is sometimes called emblematic switching or tag switching. The switch is simply an interjection, a tag, or a sentence filler in the other language which serves as an ethnic identity marker. The exchange in (c), for instance, occurred between two Mexican Americans or Chicanos in the United States. By using the Spanish tag, M signalled to A that she recognised the relevance of their shared ethnic background to their future relationship. The tag served as a solidarity marker between two minority ethnic group members whose previous conversation has been entirely in English.

Switches motivated by the identity and relationship between participants often express a move along the solidarity/social distance dimension introduced in chapter 1. A switch may also reflect a change in the other dimensions mentioned in the first chapter, such as the status relations between people or the formality of their interaction. The examples above have illustrated that different kinds of relationships are often expressed through different codes. More formal relationships, which sometimes involve status differences too – such as doctor–patient or administrator–client – are often expressed in the H variety or code: e.g. Bokmål in Hemnesberget, Spanish in Paraguay, standard Zairean Swahili in Bukavu. Friendly relationships involving minimal social distance – such as neighbour or friend – are generally expressed in an L code: e.g. Ranamål in Hemnesberget, Guaraní in Paraguay, Kingwana or a tribal language such as Shi in Bukavu.

In the little village of Hemnesberget (described in example 6 in the first chapter) Bokmål is the language to use when you go to the tax office to sort out your tax forms. But the person you will deal with may also be your neighbour. The conversation might look like this.

Example 10

(BOKMÅL IS IN SMALL CAPITALS. Ranamål is not.)

- Jan: Hello Petter. How is your wife now?
 Petter: Oh she's much better thank you Jan. She's out of hospital and convalescing well.

- Jan: That's good I'm pleased to hear it. DO YOU THINK YOU COULD HELP ME WITH THIS PESKY FORM? I AM HAVING A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFICULTY WITH IT.
 Petter: OF COURSE. GIVE IT HERE . . .

Nothing appears to change except the topic of discussion and with it the code. In fact the change of topic here symbolises a change in the relationship between the men. They switch from their roles as neighbours to their roles as bureaucrat and member of the public. In other words they switch from a personal interaction to a more formal transaction. This kind of role switch is commonly associated with a code switch in multilingual communities. Exactly the same kind of switching occurs in Belgium when a government clerk deals with a query from someone she went to school with. They switch from a local variety of Flemish to French when they turn from exchanging stories about what has happened to their schoolmates to sorting out their business.

Exercise 8

When people switch from one code to another for reasons which can be identified, it is sometimes called *situational switching*. If we knew the relevant situational or social factors in advance in such cases, we could predict the switches. Which code would you predict the speaker will switch from and which code will they switch to in the following situations. and why?

- (a) A Hemnesberget resident chatting to a friend in the queue at the community administration office gets to the counter and speaks to the clerk.

Answer

From Ranamål to Bokmål because Ranamål is the variety used for personal interactions while Bokmål is appropriate for official transactions.

- (b) Three students from the Chinese province of Canton share a flat in London. They are discussing the ingredients of the stir-fry vegetable dish they are cooking. One of them starts to discuss the chemical composition of the different ingredients.

Answer

From their Chinese dialect, Cantonese, to English because the topic of Chinese food is appropriately discussed in Cantonese but the technical topic introduced is more easily discussed in English, the language in which they are studying.

Topic

Example 10 illustrated that people may switch code within a speech event to discuss a particular topic. Bilinguals often find it easier to discuss particular topics in one code rather than another. In Hemnesberget, Bokmål is the more appropriate variety for discussing a business matter. Topic relates to the function dimension introduced in chapter 1. For many bilinguals certain kinds of referential content are more appropriately or more easily expressed in one language than the other. Japanese war brides in America, for instance, found it easier to use Japanese for topics they associated with Japan such as 'fish' and 'New Year's Day'. Chinese students flitting together in English-speaking countries tend to use Cantonese with each other, except to discuss their studies when they switch to English. This is partly because they have learned the vocabulary of economics or linguistics or physics in English, so they do not always know the words for 'capital formation' or 'morpheme' or 'electron' in Cantonese. But it goes further than simply borrowing words from English. They often switch to English for considerable stretches of speech. The technical topics are firmly associated with a particular code and the topic itself can trigger a switch to the appropriate code.

Another example of a referentially oriented code switch is when a speaker switches code to quote a person.

Example 11

(The Maori is in italics. THE TRANSLATION IS IN SMALL CAPITALS.)
A Maori person is recalling the visit of a respected elder to a nearby town.

'That's what he said in Blenheim. *Ki a matau Ngāti Porou, te māoritanga i papi ake i te whenua.* (WE OF THE NGAATI POROU TRIBE BELIEVE THE ORIGINS OF MĀĀORITANGA ARE IN THE EARTH.) And those Blenheim people listened carefully to him too.'

The switch involves just the words that the speaker is claiming the quoted person said. So the switch acts like a set of quota-

tion marks. The speaker gives the impression – which may or may not be accurate – that these are the exact words the speaker used. A related reason for switching is to quote a proverb or a well-known saying in another language, as illustrated in the following example.

Example 12

(The Chinese is in italics. THE TRANSLATION IS IN SMALL CAPITALS.)
A group of Chinese students are discussing Chinese customs.

Li: People here get divorce too easily. Like exchanging faulty goods. In China it's not the same. *Jià gǒu sùí gǒu, jià jī sùí jī.*

(IF YOU HAVE MARRIED A DOG, YOU FOLLOW A DOG, IF YOU'VE MARRIED A CHICKEN, YOU FOLLOW A CHICKEN.)

The code switch corresponds exactly to the proverb being recited from Chinese. The similarity of quotation and proverb recitation is very clear. Both are referentially motivated switches in that the speaker wishes to be accurate – the exact words are important. But switches often serve several functions at once. In these examples the switches not only emphasise the precise message content, they also signal ethnic identity. In other words they have an affective as well as a referential function.

Switching for affective functions

The use of Jamaican Creole or Patois alongside standard English by those who belong to the Afro-Caribbean or West Indian Black communities in Britain follows similar patterns to the those described above for a range of multilingual and bilingual communities. At school, for instance, Black British children use Patois to their friends and standard English to their teachers.

Example 13

Polly is a young British Black woman. She speaks both standard English with a West Midlands accent and a variety of Jamaican Creole, known as Patois. On one occasion a schoolteacher annoyed her intensely by criticising a story she had written about British West Indians. In particular, he corrected the use of Patois by one of her characters – something he knew nothing about. Her response was to abuse him in Patois, swearing at him only just below her breath. The

effect was electrifying. He was terrified. He threatened to send her to the headmaster but in fact he didn't, and she noted with satisfaction that he left her alone after that.

Polly's switch to Patois was here used to express affective rather than referential meaning. The teacher didn't need to understand the words – he simply needed to get the affective message. In other contexts too switching between Patois and standard English can achieve a range of interesting rhetorical effects. Just as the use of ethnic tags signalled ethnic group membership for speakers in the utterances in example 9 above, a switch from Patois to standard English with the local British regional pronunciation can signal a person's identity as a West Midlander in a conversation where local regional values are relevant. In an argument with a West Indian from another area over the best soccer team, for instance, the use of the localised English accent can serve just this kind of function.

Example 14 demonstrates not only Polly's code-switching ability – it also illustrates her rhetorical skills.

Example 14

(Patois is written in italics.)

With Melanie right you have to say she speaks *tri different sort of language when she wants to. Cos she speak half Patois, half English and when im ready im will come out wid, 'I day and I bay and I ay this and I ay that: I day have it and I day know where it is' . . .* And then she goes, '*Lord God, I so hot*'. Now she'll be sitting there right and she'll go, '*It's hot isn't it?*', you know, and you think which one is she going to grow up speaking?

This is not simply code-switching for the purposes of accurate quotation. The Patois is being used here for amusement and dramatic effect. Melanie is being parodied and sent up. Polly is again using her ability in the two codes for affective purposes.

Many bilinguals and multilinguals are adept at exploiting the rhetorical possibilities of their linguistic repertoires. Bokmål is the language of the school, for instance, but while they are in class children may make rude remarks or jokes about the teacher to each other in Ranamål, the dialect. In Paraguay too, Guaraní, the L variety, is considered more appropriate for joking and humorous anecdotes. So while discussing a serious political issue in Spanish a Paraguayan might switch to Guaraní with a humorous example or a witty aside.

A language switch in the opposite direction, from the L to the H variety, is often used to express disapproval. So a person may switch language because they are angry.

Example 15

(The German is in italics. THE TRANSLATION IS IN SMALL CAPITALS.)

In the town of Oberwart two little Hungarian-speaking children were playing in the woodshed and knocked over a carefully stacked pile of firewood. Their grandfather walked in and said in Hungarian, the language he usually used to them: 'Szo! ide dzüni! *jeszt jerámunyi mind e kettütök, no hát akkor!*'

(WELL COME HERE! PUT ALL THIS AWAY, BOTH OF YOU, WELL NOW.)

When they did not respond quickly enough he switched to German:

'*Kum her!*'

(COME HERE!)

Exactly the same content is expressed first in Hungarian and then in German. The children in fact know only Hungarian so the reason for the switch is clearly not to convey referential content. In Oberwart, German is the language of the school and officialdom. So in families where Hungarian is the usual language of the home, a switch to German is significant. In these homes Hungarian expresses friendship and solidarity, and a switch to German puts the addressee at a distance. German symbolises authority, and so by using German the grandfather emphasises his anger and disapproval of the children's behaviour.

Example 16 illustrates a similar code switch between two different styles of English. Its purpose is similarly to reprimand a child and the switch involves a move from an intimate and friendly style to a formal style which distances the speaker from the addressee.

Example 16

Father. Tea's ready Robbie.

(Robbie ignores him and carries on skate-boarding.)

Father. Mr Robert Harris if you do not come in immediately there will be consequences which you will regret.

Exercise 9

Identify the linguistic features in example 16 which signal that Robbie's father has switched code between his first and second utterance.

Answer

The use of title and full name (*Mr Robert Harris*) rather than affectionate nickname (*Robbie*). The very full and formal construction with a subordinate clause (*if . . . immediately*), preceding the main clause. The use of a distancing construction (*there will be consequences which you will regret* rather than, say, the more familiar *you'll be sorry*). The use of relatively formal vocabulary (e.g. *immediately* rather than say *now*, *consequences*, *regret* rather than *sorry*).

Metaphorical switching**Example 17**

At a village meeting among the Buang people in Papua New Guinea the main village entrepreneur and 'bigman' is trying to persuade people who have put money into a village store to leave it there. This is a section from his skilful speech. (*Tok Pisin is in italics*. Buang is not italicised.)

Ikamap trowel o wonem, mi ken stretim olgeta toktok. Orait. Pisin ke ken be, meni ti ken nyep la, su lok lam memba re, olo ba miting autim olgeta tok . . . moni ti ken nyep ega, rek mu su rek ogoko nam be, ong moni rek, . . . moni ti ken bak stua lam vu Mambump re, m nzom agon. Orait, bihain, bihainim bilong wok long bisnis, orait, moni bilong stua bai ibekim olgeta ples.

English translation

If any problem comes up, I will be able to settle all the arguments. OK. This is the way – the money that is there can't go back to the shareholders, and the meeting brought up all these arguments . . . the money that's there you won't take back, your money will . . . this money from the bulk store will come back to Mambump, and we'll hold on to it. Now later, if we continue these business activities, then the store money will be repaid to everyone.

In many of the examples discussed so far the specific reason for a switch can be identified with reasonable confidence. Though it would not be possible to predict when a switch will occur without knowing what a speaker intended to say next, it is often possible to account for switches after they have occurred

(i.e. post hoc). Example 17, however, moves switching into a different dimension. It is an example of what can be achieved by a really skilled bilingual. In this situation there are no obvious explanatory factors accounting for the specific switches between Buang and Tok Pisin. No new person joined the audience at any point. There was no change in the setting or in the topic – 'bisnis'. There are no quotations or even angry or humorous utterances. What is the social meaning of these rapid switches?

By switching between codes with such rapidity the village bigman effectively draws on the different associations of the two codes. Buang is the local tribal language. By using it Mr Rupa is emphasising his membership of the Buang community – he belongs here and everyone knows him. But he is also a skilled business man with contacts in the outside world of money and marketing. His use of Tok Pisin emphasises this role and his superior knowledge and experience as a man of the wider world. Buang symbolises high solidarity, equal status and friendly feelings. Tok Pisin represents social distance, status and the referential information of the business world. Mr Rupa is having his cake and eating it too. He is code-switching for rhetorical reasons drawing on the associations of both codes. This type of switching has sometimes been called *metaphorical switching*. Each of the codes represents a set of social meanings, and the speaker draws on the associations of each, just as people use metaphors to represent complex meanings. The term also reflects the fact that this kind of switching involves rhetorical skill. Skilful code-switching operates like metaphor to enrich the communication.

Example 18

(THE WORDS ORIGINALLY SPOKEN IN SAMOAN ARE IN SMALL CAPITALS.)

Alf is 55 and overweight. He is talking to a fellow Samoan at work about his attempt to go on a diet.

My doctor told me to go on a diet. She said I was overweight. So I tried. BUT IT WAS SO HARD, I'D KEEP THINKING ABOUT FOOD ALL THE TIME. Even when I was at work. And in bed at night I'D GET DESPERATE. I COULDN'T GET TO SLEEP. SO I'D GET UP AND RAID THE FRIDGE. THEN I'D FEEL GUILTY AND SICK AND WHEN I WOKE UP NEXT DAY I WOULD BE SO DEPRESSED because I had to start the diet all over again. The doctor wasn't sympathetic. She just shrugged and said 'well it's your funeral!'

In this example the speaker draws on his two languages to express his ambivalent feelings about the topic he is discussing. Though there is no exact and one-to-one correspondence, it is possible to see that in general personal feelings are expressed in Samoan while English provides some distance and objectivity about the topic. English is used for referential content such as 'My doctor told me to go on a diet', while Samoan expresses his shame and embarrassment ('I'd get desperate', 'I would be so depressed'.)

Some people call the kind of rapid switching illustrated in the last two examples 'code-mixing', but I prefer the term metaphorical switching. Code-mixing suggests the speaker is mixing up codes indiscriminately or perhaps because of incompetence, whereas the switches are very well-motivated in relation to the symbolic or social meanings of the two codes. This kind of rapid switching is itself a specific sociolinguistic variety. It is a distinctive conversational style used among bilinguals and multilinguals – a rich additional linguistic resource available to them. By switching between two or more codes, the speakers convey affective meaning as well as information.

It is obviously important to distinguish this kind of switching from switches which reflect lack of vocabulary in a language. When speaking a second language, for instance, people will often use a term from their mother tongue or first language because they don't know how to say it in their second language. These 'switches' are triggered by lack of knowledge of the vocabulary. People may also borrow words from another language to express a concept or describe an object for which there is no obvious word available in the language they are using. Borrowing of this kind generally involves single words – mainly nouns – and it is motivated by lexical need. It is very different from switching where speakers have a genuine choice about which words they will use in which language.

Borrowings often differ from code switches in form too. Borrowed words are usually adapted to the speaker's first language. They are pronounced and used grammatically as if they were part of the speaker's first language. New Zealand English has borrowed the word *mana* from Maori, for instance. There is no exact equivalent to its meaning in English, although it is sometimes translated as meaning 'prestige' or 'high status'. It is pronounced [ma:nə] by most New Zealanders.¹ The Maori pronunciation is quite different with a short *a* in both syllables. The word *Maori* is similarly adapted by most English speakers.

They pluralise it by adding the English plural inflection *s* and talk of the *Maoris*. In the Maori language the plural is not marked by an inflection on the noun. By contrast, people who are rapidly code-switching – as opposed to borrowing the odd word – tend to switch completely between two linguistic systems – sounds, grammar and vocabulary.

Linguistic constraints

Sociolinguists who study the kind of rapid code-switching described in the previous section have been interested in identifying not only the functions or meaning of switches but also the points at which switches occur in utterances. Some believe there are very general rules for switching which apply to all switching behaviour regardless of the codes or varieties involved. They are searching for universal constraints on switching. It has been suggested for example that switches only occur within sentences at points where the grammars of both languages match each other. So you could only switch between an adjective and a noun if both languages used the same order for that adjective and noun, as illustrated in the following example.

| English | French | Possible switch point? |
|-----------|---------------|---|
| red boat | bateau rouge | NO |
| big house | grande maison | YES, i.e. 'big maison' or 'grande house' |

Other sociolinguists argue that it is unlikely that there are universal and absolute rules of this sort. It is more likely that these rules simply reflect the limited data which has been examined so far. They argue for greater attention to social and contextual factors. The points at which people switch codes are likely to vary according to many different factors such as which codes are involved, the functions of the particular switch, and the level of proficiency in each code of the people switching. So, it is suggested, only very proficient bilinguals such as Mr Rupa will switch within sentences (intra-sentential switching), whereas people who are less proficient will tend to switch at sentence boundaries, or use only short fixed phrases or tags in one language on the end of sentences in the other, as illustrated in the utterances in example 9.

It is easy to see how these questions lead to others. What kind of grammar or grammars are involved when people code-switch? When people switch rapidly from phrase to phrase for instance, are they switching between the two different grammars of the codes they are using, or is there a distinct code-switching grammar which has its own rules? We don't yet know the answers to these questions.

Attitudes to code-switching

Example 19

- (a) In Hemnesberget, two linguists recorded university students home on vacation. The students unconsciously switched between the local dialect and standard Norwegian according to the topic. When they later heard the tapes some were appalled and promised they would not switch in this way in the future.
- (b) 'When I switch (inadvertently), I usually realise soon afterwards and correct myself, but it is still embarrassing.'
- (c) 'Code-switching is not very pure.'
- (d) 'My attitude towards code-switching is a very relaxed one.'

People are often unaware of the fact that they code switch. When their attention is drawn to this behaviour, however, most tend to apologise for it, condemn it and generally indicate disapproval of mixing languages. Among Mexican Americans the derogatory term *Tex Mex* is used to describe rapid code-switching between Spanish and English. In parts of French-speaking Canada *joual* is a similar put-down label for switching between French and English, and in Britain *tuti futi* (or 'broken up' Panjabi refers to a style which switches between Panjabi and English. In Hemnesberget, the speech of young students who were switching between the local dialect and the standard was condemned as *knot* or 'artificial speech'. Reactions to code-switching styles are negative in many communities, despite the fact that proficiency in intra-sentential code-switching requires good control of both codes. This may reflect the attitudes of the majority monolingual group in places like North America and Britain. In places such as New Guinea and East Africa where multilingualism is the norm, attitudes to proficient code-switching are much more positive. The New Guinea bigman's status is undoubtedly enhanced by his ability to manipulate two or more codes proficiently. It seems possible that an increase in ethnic self consciousness and confidence may

alter attitudes among minority group members in other communities over time.

These issues will be discussed further in the next chapter. Attitudes to a minority language are very important in determining not only its use in a code-switching style, but also its very chances of survival.

Concepts introduced

Domain
Diglossia
Polyglossia
Code-switching
Code-mixing
Situational switching
Metaphorical switching

References

The basic concepts introduced in this chapter are discussed further in the following sources:

Ferguson (1959) reprinted in Giglioli (1972)
Fishman (1971, 1972)
Gumperz (1971, 1977)
Platt (1977)
Poplack (1980)

The following sources provided material for this chapter:

'Aipolo and Holmes (1991) on Tongan in New Zealand
Blom and Gumperz (1972) on Hemnesberget, Norway
Browning (1982) on Greece
Dorian (1982) on Gaelic, Scottish Highlands
Ervin-Tripp (1968) on Japanese war-brides
Gal (1979) on Oberwart, Hungary
Goyvaerts (1988), and Goyvaerts et al. (1983) on Bukavu, Zaire
Gumperz (1977) on code-switching
Rubin (1968, 1985) on Paraguay
Santarita and Martin-Jones (1990) on Portuguese in London
Valdman (1988) on Haiti

Quotations

Example 7 is from Reinecke (1964: 540)
Example 9 (3) is adapted from Gumperz (1977:1)
Example 11 is from Smith (1971: 4)
Example 14 is from Edwards (1986: 90-91)
Example 15 is from Gal (1979: 112)

Example 17 is an excerpt from Sankoff (1972: 45–6) where a full analysis of the complete text from which this sample is taken is provided, demonstrating the complexities of analysing code-switching behaviour.

Example 19 (b) is a Kurdish-Arabic bilingual, example 19 (c) is a Hebrew-Arabic-English trilingual, and example 19 (d) is a French-English bilingual. All are quoted in Grosjean (1982: 148). Quotation about current attitudes to Katharévoussa is from Dimitropoulos (1983) cited in *Linguistic Minorities Project* (1985: 68).

Useful additional reading

- Fasold (1984) Ch. 1 and 2
- Fishman (1971)
- Saville-Troike (1982) Ch. 3
- Trudgill (1983a) Ch. 5
- Wardhaugh (1986) Ch. 4

Note

1. I have used the system for representing sounds (rather than letters) which is described in the Appendix. Linguists provide representations of the way people pronounce words, as opposed to their spellings, in square brackets.

CHAPTER 3

Language maintenance and shift

There are many different social reasons for choosing a particular code or variety in a multilingual community, as chapter 2 illustrated. But what real choice is there for those who speak lesser-used languages in a community where the people in power use a world language such as English? How do economic and political factors influence language choices? The various constraints on language choice faced by different communities are explored in this chapter, as well as the potential longer term effects of these choices – language shift or language death. In the final part of the chapter, attempts to reverse these consequences through language revival efforts are described.

Language shift in different communities

Migrant minorities

Example 1

Maniben is a young British Hindu woman who lives in Coventry. Her family moved to Britain from Uganda in 1970, when she was 5 years-old. She started work on the shop floor in a bicycle factory when she was 16. At home Maniben speaks Gujarati with her parents and grandparents. Although she had learned English at school, she found she didn't need much at work. Many of the girls working with her also spoke Gujarati, so when it wasn't too noisy they would talk to each other in their home language. Maniben was good at her job and she got promoted to floor supervisor. In that job she needed to use English more of the time, though she could still use some Gujarati with her old workmates. She went to evening classes and learned to type. Then, because she was interested, she went on to learn how to operate a word-processor. Now she works in the main office and she uses English all the time at work.

