Anthropology

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Many recent or contemporary conflicts around the world—from Sri Lanka to Rwanda to the former Yugoslavia to Iraq and to Darfur—have been described as modern political ethnic conflicts. Many nonviolent political movements, such as the Québécois independence movement in Canada or indigenous and regional movements in Bolivia and Ecuador, have also been described as marking ethnic and linguistic divisions. Nation-building—the purposeful creation of new forms of political cohesion and national identity—has been high on the political agenda in many parts of the world. People typically have multiple allegiances to ethnic and national groups. The appeal to ethnic and national identities has also often become more strongly marked following the influx of new labor migrants or refugees not only to Europe and North America but also to other parts of the globe, such as Africa and the Pacific Islands. This has led to the establishment of new permanent ethnic minority groups. Over this same period, indigenous populations such as Inuit ("Eskimos"), Sámi ("Lapps"), and Māori have organized themselves politically to demand that their distinct cultural identities and territorial and economic entitlements be recognized and protected by the state.

Anthropological perspectives have been useful to shed important light on many concrete and conceptual issues of ethnicity and ethnic relations. Through long-term ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation, anthropologists focus on social life at the level of everyday interaction and then try to frame that knowledge within broader conceptual models. As elaborated below, linguistic anthropological perspectives have proven particularly well suited for analyzing the relationships between language and ethnicity and how these links are renewed and transformed through everyday language use and social interactions.

Anthropological Characterization of Ethnicity

Objective Versus Subjective Criteria

How do we define ethnicity? Ethnicity is, first of all, not about one person but about a collectivity or human aggregate of "people" who may share a cluster of features or practices in common, possibly including physical appearance, dress, name, language, geographic region of origin, religion and beliefs, kin group networks, music and art, customs and traditions, and material culture. One major issue of discussion about ethnic identification has to do with objective versus subjective criteria. Some advocate definitions of ethnicity that include so-called objective characteristics or traits, such as many of those just listed earlier. These traits can be characterized as "given," or inherited, and therefore not easily changeable. This leads to an "involuntary" approach to group membership, which is conceptually contrastive to other forms of association, such as clubs and societies that one joins primarily on a voluntary basis, and where membership typically depends less on common socialization patterns. This "objective" approach to ethnicity encounters several serious difficulties when it is used to try to provide explanation to questions such as how and why ethnicity persists across generations even while social contexts rapidly change and characteristics of the groups change. For example, immigrant and indigenous experiences in North America provide us with numerous examples of communities that have persisted as distinct long after many visible or tangible links with earlier generations have disappeared (e.g., American Jews, African Americans, Navajos). It is at this point that the "subjective or idealist" perspective becomes useful as an alternative.

An idealist or a subjective approach to ethnicity emphasizes subjective perception in social identifications, subjective beliefs based on common traits, or emotional or "primordial" ties and how such beliefs motivate and influence social group formations. In contrast to the objective perspective, ascription and self-identification as a group are highlighted. One of the earliest theoretical contributions to the study of ethnicity from this perspective can be found in the work of the influential German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). He emphasized the role of religious values, ideologies, and charismatic leaders in shaping societies. Weber conceptualized an ethnic group as based on a subjective belief in a common origin and descent because of similarities of physical type, customs, or both or because of shared memories of historical experience, such as colonization and migration. In this view, group-forming power depends not on any objective trait or material conditioning but rather on individuals' belief or "consciousness of kind" (Weber 1978: 387). Weber argues that this subjective belief can be cultivated and intensified by "conscious monopolistic closure" (1978: 388). He goes as far to say that "it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists" in ethnic group (Weber 1978: 389).

Similarly emphasizing the role of emotional subjective attachment in ethnic identity formation, the American anthropologist Geertz (1973) discusses primordial loyalties or ties that determine people's sense of self or belonging to an ethnic

group. He argues that ethnicity should be thought of as a bundle of given features, such as assumed blood ties, race, region, religion, language, and custom—but it is the subjects', not the observers', sense of the "givens" of social existence that should be regarded as significant. Differences that might exist between two groups may be ignored or minimized, while other shared cultural features may be cultivated to mark distinctions. More recent anthropological research has argued that ethnic identity formation and heightened ethnic identity awareness have frequently occurred as a reaction to processes of modernization and globalization. Although the processes of modernization and globalization are often thought of as generating centripetal forces of homogenization, centrifugal ethnic fragmentation has often also occurred quite vigorously at the same time.

Although the instrumental construction of ethnicity relies on the cultivation of subjective primordial loyalties, such subjective attachments are not completely arbitrary because they at least partially appeal to shared history or common ancestry. In addition, at the same time that one's subjective perception of belonging to a social group is important to ethnic identification, it also depends on recognition by others. Thus, interplay of both subjective and objective perceptions is at work in the construction of ethnic identity. In addition, subjective approach is idealist, with its focus on the attachments or consciousness of individuals, and tends to neglect the influences of political and economic factors on social group formation. Cultural attributes do not always unite social actors, and there are always cultural differences within and across groups. The subjective approach by itself typically cannot explain power domination between groups within a particular society.

The Materialist or Circumstantialist Interpretation

An important advance in thinking about ethnicity, however, came from the Norwegian anthropologist Barth (1969) who, based on an ethnographic study of the Pathan people who live in western Pakistan and Afghanistan he conducted in the mid-1950s, argued that an ethnic group is defined by its boundary and that ethnicity is not so much about cultural difference but rather about "the social organization of culture difference" (*Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*). The boundary between ethnic groups may be maintained across generations even while the cultural characteristics enclosed by those boundaries may change substantially. Similarly, individuals might step in and out of the boundaries. Barth appeals to an ecological metaphor when he treats the maintenance and negotiation of boundaries between social groups as a competition for resources in the larger process of adaptation to the environment. Ethnicity is self- and other-defined, is self- and other-perceived, and is therefore a dimension of social organization that deals with "us" and "them" or more aptly "us" versus "them." When an ethnic group enters into conflict with another group, awareness of differences heightens (consciousness of kind in Weber's term). Intergroup interaction creates and maintains intragroup identity. Cultural differences persist or are created in large part because of such interethnic contact.

The subjective/idealist approaches can therefore be complemented by looking at the material (or political economic) conditions and social circumstances under

which social groups find themselves. One might call this approach materialist or circumstantialist. This approach views the material conditions of people's lives (the mode of economic production and the social relations of production) as primary determinants of human consciousness and the processes of social group formation. Writing of world history, the American anthropologist Wolf (1982) locates the source of ethnic divisions within the labor market in the relations between capital and labor power. Where capitalism brings groups of different social and cultural origins into contact, he writes, the migrant's position is determined by the structure of the labor market rather than the migrant's own culture. He viewed ethnic categories as historical products of labor market segmentation and thus as primarily determined by economic conditions but not as "primordial" social relationships.

One shortcoming of the materialist interpretation of ethnicity lies in its disregard for the different meanings that individuals and social groups associate with events and groups. The materialist approach tends to dismiss the importance of heterogeneity in the attitudes and thinking of subjects in the "same" economic position. Class and economic interests do not uniformly determine their behaviors nor do they fully construe their experiences. Changes in ideology may, for example, be brought about by activism and charismatic leadership, and this may mediate the relationship between social identities and material conditions. Changes in material conditions as well as individual agency, consciousness, and experience must be treated as dialectally related factors in the process of social group formation.

A combination of idealist/subjective and materialist/circumstantialist perspectives therefore appears necessary to understanding ethnic identification. In balancing these perspectives, care should be taken not to essentialize social categories, such as ethnicity and nation. Contemporary anthropologists have strongly criticized the often arbitrary and sometimes quite destructive efforts of colonial authorities and early anthropologists to classify and impose ethnic (or "tribal") group affiliations onto their colonial subjects.

Ethnicity is best thought of not as a fixed bundle of characteristics of a group but rather as dimensions of the social relationships among groups and networks of individuals. Although Barth's ecological and circumstantialist perspective has been criticized for its materialist reductionism and overemphasis on individual choice in ethnic identification, his insight regarding ethnic group boundaries as socially maintained and negotiated has been taken up by other anthropologists who have begun to shift in perspective to locate ethnicity in multicultural interactive contexts and analyze constructions of cultural differences. For instance, how practices and events that are sometimes thought of as traditional have often been quite recently developed as part of ethnic boundary construction or nation-building. In addition, as one of multiple social categories to which an individual can belong, ethnicity operates interdependently with and is woven together with other kinds of identity, such as kinship, generation, gender, socioeconomic class, and nation-state (di Leonardo 1991). One is not just Québécois, Canadian, and French speaking but a woman, a mother, a student, and so on, and depending on the situations, the web of identities stretches and pulls on some categories as opposed to others, all of which are always in making.

Language, Ethnic Identity, and Nation-State

Language is an important symbolic resource in making social relationships and in identity formation, including ethnic ones. Early in the history of anthropology in the nineteenth century, a common assumption among anthropologists and other social and natural scientists was that there was a close correspondence between race (or ethnicity)—as defined by certain biological and social characteristics on one hand and language and culture on the other. They argued, for instance, that inheritable biological manifestations, for example, the shape of the human skull as measured by a cranial index, mapped onto degrees of intelligence. People who explored these ideas viewed such correspondences as arising naturally within a cultural evolutionary ladder based on their crude conceptualization and misunderstanding of Darwin's theory of natural selection applied to cultural and historical phenomena. German-born and trained American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942) furnished one of the early critiques of these ideas. For example, in a paper published in 1912, he reported significant differences in skull shape between American-born children of immigrants and their European-born parents, criticizing the use of race to explain physical and cultural differences and pointing to the environment as an important influence on bodily forms in addition to heredity. Through other writings, he argued that languages and cultures do not develop following a unilinear evolutionary progression, and differences in cultural and linguistic practices simply cannot be explained as stemming from stages of development ranging from "primitive" to "civilized." His ideas of cultural relativism—that differences in people's cultural practices have arisen out of the diversity of their historical, social, and geographic experiences and that there is no evident hierarchical scale along which to arrange them—and emphasis on the importance of careful fieldwork in the study of culture became influential. For this influence and for establishing "four-field approach" to anthropology—studying evolution, archaeology, language, and culture—he is widely considered as the father of modern American anthropology.

There is no one-to-one link between language and ethnicity or nation (see chapter by Nancy Dorian). One important reason why a one-to-one relationship between ethnicity and language is commonly assumed is because of its usefulness in the construction of national identities within modern nation-states. The rise of the modern nation-states has been one of the most significant sociocultural changes in world history over the last few hundred years. Many who live in the stable industrialized countries tend to take for granted the concept of the nation-state and the idea of a national standard language associated with this state. But both these concepts, the nation-state and a national standard language, are particular outcomes of centuries of struggles among competing political and economic groups. The idea of a natural link between nation and language, for example, figured prominently in the German romanticist thought of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Baumann & Briggs 2003). The German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) was influential in diffusing the idea that nations are language groups. Nationalism may be characterized as self-aware ethnicity and organized around ethnocultural solidarity and often has as its objective political

autonomy. A nation-state is a nation that has a central administration, or a state, which is united by the sense of belonging among its citizens. The modern nation-state is largely a result of economic and political developments in nineteenth-century Europe, influenced particularly by the French Revolution and the industrial revolution, and the idea has diffused rapidly since. The ideology of the French Revolution was important in changing people's sense of identity, from being subjects of a monarch because of where you were born to being citizens of a nation, with rights and obligations that come with such status, and exercised through the institutions of the state. The French language was a major element in the development of France as a unified state in the seventeenth century.

The movement to identify nation-states on the basis of language spread throughout Europe in the twentieth century. For example, after World War I, leaders of the victorious countries met at the Versailles Peace Conference and redrew the map of Europe. Language was one of the most important criteria the allied leaders used to create new states in Europe and adjust the boundaries of existing ones (e.g., Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, where Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, and Romanian speakers lived). Note, however, that the distinction between languages—or what constitutes different languages as opposed to subvarieties of a language—is far from objectively and linguistically clear and is instead always in many respects socially and politically constituted (e.g., linguistic differences between "dialects" of Chinese are much larger than differences between Norwegian and Swedish languages or between Urdu and Hindi languages). The nation-state is also, as the British-American political scientist Benedict Anderson puts it, an "imagined community," in the sense that, for example, an individual American will never meet more than a small fraction of his or her 300 million fellow citizens or residents. Citizens, however, have an understanding of the United States as a political unit, as an entity of community in which people participate and exercise rights and obligations, such as voting. Their sense of association and belonging to a community is strong, although they do not know each other. A shared language serves as a powerful force in building this sense of association, especially through media and education.

The 1950s and 1960s saw the collapse of European colonial empires and scores of new countries emerged, particularly in Asia and Africa. The project to construct or establish a national standard language was and is still commonly seen in these new countries as an intrinsic part of modern nation-state building. Constructing new nation-states out of ex-colonies has, however, often proven to be problematic in part because of the arbitrary boundaries that colonial empires drew that cut across divisions of tribe, religion, language, and custom. Clifford Geertz points out that the nation-state fails when it fails in its efforts to extend citizens' ties beyond primordial attachments (or ties based on local kinship, religion, language/dialect, and customs) to embrace wider civic connections. Establishing a standardized national language can be one vital means of extending such ties across people in part because it facilitates centralization of national media, school curricula, and governmental bureaucracy. The national government can more effectively spread nation-building messages through the medium of a single standardized language variety. Imagine how much harder it would be to achieve national integration and build a sense of national identity if each state of the United States had a separate standard state language.

A shared standard national language then can clearly be a powerful tool for building a sense of common identity for the citizens of a potential nation-state. Official languages are also viewed as necessary for the functioning of the state and its central institutions. In the eyes of many nation-builders, a national language would become an emblem of one's national identity and the official language designated by the state for the use of state functions should be one and the same. Many ex-colonies have found this difficult to achieve because the colonial language continues to function as the official state language or at least the language of administration, the media, and the education, but other languages dominate people's everyday lives. The project of adopting a single national language is not easy for several reasons. Many of these countries are highly multilingual, and if one of the local languages were to be chosen as the official and national language, it might greatly advantage its speakers and disadvantage others. Furthermore, prior to independence, the political and economic elite of these countries were educated in the colonial languages and colonial bureaucracy management was conducted in languages different from the dominant languages spoken by large majorities of the population. Many countries of Africa have since independence been ruled by a political class who are also in effect a linguistic elite. Linguistic policies of the state inherited from the times of colonial administration have helped secure the positions of elites who are now unlikely to want to drastically change language policies in ways that might weaken their position.

Interesting paths in national language development were taken by some countries such as Indonesia and Tanzania, which explicitly did not adopt their ex-colonial languages as national languages. In the case of Indonesia, Javanese speakers represented the numerically and politically dominant ethnic group within the national border and their language might have seemed an obvious choice for an official national language to replace Dutch, but nationalists who struggled for Indonesian independence during the first half of the twentieth century saw problems with choosing Javanese for the purpose of nation-building. First, Javanese has many different speech levels that can indicate social status through a complex and an elaborate linguistic system (Errington 1988). Many argued that this would not be a good carrier vehicle for the modernist and nationalist ideologies of equal rights citizenship advocated by the independence movement. Second, the Javanese language is intimately linked to the intricate high culture of the syncretic religion of Hinduism-Buddhism-Islam and local Javanese elites. This set of religious values was not widely shared beyond the Javanese residents of Java Island, in places such as the outer islands of Sumatra, Bali, or Borneo. For these reasons and others, the nationalists chose Malay, which had been a lingua franca of trade for centuries in the wider region, renamed the language Indonesian, went on to develop the language as a national language, and greatly expanded the national educational curriculum to disseminate it.

In the following section, I discuss contributions from linguistic anthropology in analyzing the role of language as resource for ethnic/national identity formation and the links between ethnic identity and language as socially constructed and changing over time.

Linguistic Anthropological Perspectives on Language and Ethnic Identity

Early Linguistic Anthropological Work

Early linguistic anthropologists contributed to thinking on the subject of the relationship between language and ethnic identity through their interests in documenting non-European indigenous languages and studying the relationship between language, culture, and thought. For example, Franz Boas believed strongly in the "psychic unity" of humanity, an idea that all human beings share the same basic cognitive capacity, and argued forcefully against the idea not uncommon in those days that a nation's or an ethnic group's mental capacity determined the kind of language its people have, and thus, "simple" languages reflected their speaker groups' limited mental capacity. He believed that there was a strong connection between language and thought and that language organizes our experience of the real world, especially through its classification systems. He argued that language is a privileged site to study thought and culture because it is free from "secondary explanation" or distortion through rationalization. His example of "Eskimo" having multiple words for snow to illustrate the close relationship between cultural interest and lexical elaboration is well known.[1]

Boas's student Edward Sapir (1884–1939) further argued that "(H)uman beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression of their society" (Sapir 1929: 209). Sapir and his student Benjamin Whorf (1897–1941) went on to formulate the idea that has come to be known as the "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis," or linguistic relativism, which argues that speakers of languages with different systems of grammatical categories are led by these linguistic frames of references to experience the world in different ways. The idea refers to the patterns of grammatical categories rather than just words (unlike Boas's example). Sapir and Whorf based their arguments on contrastive examinations of the grammatical structures of different languages, in particular of non-European languages, and how the same event might be described in these languages. Whorf (1956) compared the structures of Hopi and European languages and argued, for example, that Hopi experienced time differently from English speakers.

Hypotheses such as these regarding links between language and thought have since been strongly criticized, especially outside of anthropology. Many scholars who reject the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as wrong, however, tend to be critiquing the strong version of the hypothesis—the idea that language determines thought, and not the weak version—that language influences habitual ways of thinking, which many linguistic anthropologists find agreeable in some ways. While most discussions of the concept of linguistic relativism do not make direct reference to the concept of ethnicity, the idea has been influential albeit implicitly in political and policy-making projects related to, or having consequences in, ethnic relations. More recent developments in linguistic anthropological studies, including those

of the relationship between identity and language, also often appeal to the idea that speakers believe language shapes thought and identity.

Linguistic Anthropological Approaches

In the last few decades, linguistic anthropology has grown and transformed itself considerably through the establishment and development of a set of vigorous research paradigms, such as Ethnography of Communication (Hymes 1964) and Language Socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986). The links between language and identity have become a major research area. Ethnicity is viewed as a historically and politically situated set of identity practices in which language serves as an important symbolic resource—not only as a symbol of group identity but also as a resource for negotiating social relationships. Practice, performance, and participation are key notions in thinking about the construction of social identity and relationships and the role of language in these processes (Duranti 1997). Identity is enacted and reaffirmed through acts of identity, among which linguistic choices feature prominently. Individuals create and recreate patterns of linguistic behavior in the performance of their identities.

Linguistic anthropology has become an interdisciplinary field now solidly established as one of the four primary subfields of anthropology alongside sociocultural, biological, and archaeological anthropology. The anthropological tradition of conducting long-term ethnographic field research has provided one particularly valuable method for linguistic anthropologists in collecting data and understanding the nature of the relationship between ethnic identity and language. Ethnography refers to a methodology as well as a written product—the description of the social organization, social activities, symbolic and material resources, and practices and characteristics of a particular group of people (see chapter by Dorian, this volume). Such thick descriptions can only be produced by prolonged and direct participation in the social life of a community.

Linguistic anthropology integrates interpretive ethnography with other methods for the documentation and analysis of speech patterns and social behaviors. First of all, it is based on careful recording and analyses of linguistic forms in sociocultural context. As part of the data collection, therefore, linguistic anthropologists typically observe and participate in the various kinds of interactions that occur in the community under study, recording naturalistic verbal interactions (by audio or audiovisual recording) and conducting ethnographic interviews. With the understanding that transcription is a selective process reflecting theoretical goals, linguistic anthropologists produce annotated transcriptions based on their recordings and participant observation. Annotated transcriptions are then used to analyze and illustrate the patterns of use of linguistic resources by social actors as well as changes in the verbal behaviors over time.

The linguistic anthropological perspective regards language as much more than a reflection of social reality and pays close attention to the social and affective meanings and value and the power of speech. Linguistic features (such as a word or code choice and phonological or grammatical construction) carry meanings beyond their referential ones and may index certain ethnic and other identities or

situations of use. In this regard, the field has drawn upon and contributed to the field of semiotics—the study of sign systems—in analyzing the multiple and typically fluid relation between language on the one hand and identity and social relations on the other.

In fact, the ways in which linguistic signs index identities such as ethnicity are often not direct, clear, absolute, or fixed. For example, the absence of third-person singular –s may index informal or fast speech, Chicano English, African American English, and other varieties of speech. Pronouncing certain diphthongs (combination of vowels as in "my") as a monophthong (single vowel) may index African American English as well as Southern white English among other English varieties. Indexical signs tend to work and acquire social meaning in group and in context, for example, in conjunction with other linguistic and nonlinguistic signs, such as physical features or kinesic ("body language") behaviors of the speakers. Certain linguistic indexes may come to be interpreted as iconic representations of social groups and feed racial and other forms of prejudice and discrimination. For example, although linguists would describe the absence of third-person singular –s and diphthong reduction as grammatical features of certain English varieties, they are sometimes taken as icons (signs that refer to objects based on similarities) of laziness, arising naturally from characteristics of people. Linguistic signs as these are arbitrary ones (their connection to the referents is established by socially agreed convention and has no inherent connection to them). Through a process of naturalization, however, of the connection between linguistic signs and social characteristics as inherent, their users may become negatively judged by others who speak different varieties of English or by those who do not use these phonological or grammatical features as part of their speech. Linguistic anthropologists are thus interested in how the meanings of linguistic signs emerge out of the multiple interactions through choices and negotiations made by individual speakers.

The integration of these various traditions has allowed linguistic anthropologists to narrow in on points of intersection between the micro and the macro, the individual and the societal. They have contributed to the study of ethnic identity and language by offering numerous careful case studies. They have, for example, examined how community-wide language shift or language maintenance occurs by looking for changes in everyday individual language practices and their motivations as a way to better understand the processes of sociolinguistic transformation (see below for a discussion of some case studies).

Finally, linguistic anthropologists have extended the understanding of what is included in interactional context in analyzing language use to go beyond the immediate social situation of verbal encounters to include history, social structure, ideology, and political economy as important motivating factors in shaping language use and its link to identity. In fact, a recent area of linguistic anthropological focus in the study of language and ethnic identity is found in the development of what can be called the language ideology paradigm. As interest in studying language users as social actors has expanded, linguistic anthropologists have paid increasing attentions to language ideology or cultural sensitivities held by language users about language, its use, and its users (see Woolard 1998). Linguistic awareness and attitudes, which may be held at various degrees of consciousness, directly

or indirectly influence individual and group language choices. In holding this view, contemporary linguistic anthropologists have rejected the idea earlier advocated by Boas that language is free from reflexive thought and rationalization. On the contrary, as the rest of the chapter illustrates, contemporary linguistic anthropologists argue that language awareness and ideology is one of the most important factors in shaping verbal behavior and sociolinguistic change.

Linguistic Anthropological Case Studies

As discussed earlier, language serves as an important resource for ethnic identity formation and the links between ethnic identity and language are socially constructed and change over time. How do such constructions actually occur and change? Consider the experience of language and culture contact that, for instance, occurs following colonization or migration. People tend to speak like those they grew up speaking with and those who they identify with. But many people learn different languages (or language varieties) from contact with others. When groups of people who speak differently (and may have different cultural traditions, religions, etc.) come into contact, a number of things can happen to their lifestyles and languages as well as how they feel about their own and other people's languages. Ethnic identities are formed or reshaped through dynamic processes of linguistic and cultural contact.

When two groups come into a new relationship of contact, at least one of the groups must communicate by learning the other's language. Papua New Guinea, the most linguistically diverse country in the world with roughly 760 languages spoken within its national border, is an example of region that has developed a high degree of egalitarian mutual multilingualism. Many of these 760 languages are spoken by small communities of less than five hundred speakers who have been in contact with each other for centuries through trade, marriage, migration, and warfare. The distinctiveness of these languages has been maintained and perhaps even cultivated by their speakers while they practice multilingualism, at least until recently when "large" languages such as Tok Pisin, the national language, started to replace them.[2]

If one of the groups is politically more powerful, its members might try to impose their language and institutions onto the less powerful group(s). For example, during the Norman Conquest of England, an English-speaking aristocracy was replaced with a French-speaking one and thus ultimately led to considerable French influence on the English language that persists to this day. Linguistic accommodation and assimilation toward more politically powerful groups was the outcome of many nation-building projects, including those of the Soviet Union and the United States. To varying degrees, Russian and English, respectively, were imposed on the indigenous residents of the newly incorporated territories, leading to bilingualism and in some cases language shift toward the national language or even physical extermination and language death. For another example, Schmidt (1985) studied a Dyirbal-speaking community in Australia, where shift from the local language to the nationally imposed English had advanced to the point where Dyirbal was facing eminent language death. She found that this shift and

language abandonment was not only motivated by the government's linguistic and cultural assimilationist policies but also accelerated by intergenerational conflict and language estrangement among younger speakers within the ethnic group. She observed elders constantly correcting the young speakers' Dyirbal, which was greatly influenced by English. This created linguistic insecurity among young speakers, accelerating language loss.

Even without coercion or linguistic assimilation policies, the language of one of the groups in contact often gains higher symbolic value and authority, perhaps because it is seen as being the economically more advantageous or prestigious. A hierarchy of languages and language varieties, or more precisely speaking, sociolinguistic hierarchy of speakers, then develops. The French sociologist and anthropologist Bourdieu (1991) speaks of "symbolic domination," where those who do not control (i.e., speak) the valued language (or language variety) begin to consider it as more credible or persuasive than the varieties they do speak and control over time. The more prestigious language would come to be learned ahead of the others leading to imbalanced bilingualism or multilingualism. In such situations, only the speakers of the less prestigious or less powerful language become bilingual in the more prestigious group's language.

For example, in her study of language shift in the originally Hungarian-speaking community of Oberwart, a town in Austria near the border with Hungary, Gal (1979) examined the cause of the shift from Hungarian to German and concluded that it was motivated by differences in symbolic value of the two languages: Hungarian was associated with peasants way of life, and came to be devalued as backward, versus German, a language associated with industrialization and valued as a means to economic advantage and social mobility. Her ethnographic study revealed that young peasant women were the front-runners in this shift because they, more than others, aspired to change their social position—through job opportunities and marriage for themselves and their children—by acquiring and speaking German. Hill and Hill (1986) studied the situation in the indigenous Mexicano (Nahuatl)-speaking communities of Central Mexico where bilingualism in Spanish has developed and maintained a presence at the community level for the past five hundred years. They found that men, especially landholding senior men, are much more likely to be bilingual in Spanish and to mix Spanish in their Mexicano speech for prestige. Furthermore, with the introduction of wage labor for which many young men work outside of the communities, young men are leading the language shift toward Spanish. Woolard (1989) looked at the situation in Catalonia, Spain, where the regional language of Catalan had been maintained despite attempts by Dictator Franco to repress it and impose Castilian (Spanish), the national language. By combining linguistic anthropological methods with a sociolinguistic technique called the matched-guise test,[3] Woolard found in 1980 that Catalan was associated with positive values such as leadership and intelligence in spite of the political dominance of Spanish (e.g., in school and other government institutions). The prestige associated with Catalan came from regional economic dominance of the Catalan bourgeoisie, and Castilian-speaking immigrants to the area were making efforts to learn Catalan. The maintenance of Catalan, Woolard argues, also depended on face-to-face everyday reproduction of the

language among the Catalan speakers, who highly valued their language as an expression of solidarity.

Depending on circumstances of language contact, a creole might instead develop as a medium of intergroup communication. For example, a creole language called Solomon Island Pijin developed as a language in labor plantation settings where there were intense and sustained interactions among laborers from multiple mutually unintelligible language communities who had no previous relationships and were suddenly placed into contact. Jourdan (2007) studied the social circumstances that led this new language to become the de facto national language of the still highly multilingual country of Solomon Islands (although without official status). The spread of Pijin and its reevaluation in recent decades as the language of national pride and primary medium for interethnic communications among sixty-four ethnic groups resulted in reversing the earlier sociolinguistic hierarchy established in the colonial period, which placed English at the top.

· In the processes of language contact, previously separated language communities become more deeply interconnected. The nature of their relationships is established and then renegotiated over time in a myriad of individual encounters as well as, sometimes, through explicit bargaining between groups on the design of language policies. In cross-cultural encounters where a new language is learned, the original language of a group of people might be maintained for in-group communication, but in learning a new language, they might also develop a new variety of that language and/or a new style of speech. The social circumstances under which languages spread often leave traces of this sort. Depending on circumstances, links between a way of speaking and an ethnic group sometimes become accentuated, or where they are viewed as undesirable or less prestigious, they may be downplayed. For example, many Spanish-speaking immigrants to the United States have become bilingual in English and developed new ways of speaking by mixing Spanish and English. Their choice of language or code is then made depending on the interactional situations, such as whom they are speaking to. In her study of working-class Puerto Rican migrants in New York City, Urciuoli (1996) discusses situations in which Spanish-English bilingual Puerto Ricans assign different symbolic values to their native language, Spanish, and to mixing English and Spanish depending on social contexts. Speaking Spanish or mixing Spanish and English was considered "good" in interactions among equals, family, and friends and bad in those characterized by power imbalance, for example, in speaking to bosses and landlords. Such responses are based on perceptions of the nature of one's relationship with other people and how networks and groups of people associated with different ways of speech establish claims to material and symbolic resources.[4]

Language ideologies, or cultural conceptions of language, are important in determining the direction of changes in languages and speech ways. They are also often crucial in maintaining or altering the nature of the links between language and ethnicity. Sociolinguistic hierarchies and symbolic values associated with languages are reflected in the direction and domains of borrowing or transfer, patterns of language acquisition and language choice across speech situations, and direction of language shift. For example, devaluation of one's language has been

found to be one important reason that motivates the process of language shift and eventual loss. Some communities develop styles of speech characterized by conversational code-switching, where multiple language varieties are juxtaposed within conversational stretch, whereas other communities develop a "diglossic" norm in which the languages are kept apart across domains of language use. For example, Woolard found that Catalans did not engage in code-switching very much because they considered the Catalan language to be intimately connected with Catalan ethnic identity, to be reserved for in-group communication, and did not consider Castilian useful to switch into as a conversational strategy. Rather, they would use Castilian when speaking with non-Catalan and reserve Catalan for fellow Catalans. Similar interlocutor-based code choice patterns separating languages were observed by Gal among Hungarians in Austria and by Dorian (1981) among Gaelic speakers in Scotland. Thus, important influences in the development of community patterns of language use—for example, whether to mix or separate languages—come from linguistic ideologies the community members have in respect to the nature of language, symbolic values of particular languages, and in particular their link to social identity.

Furthermore, the conceptions and their influence change over time. For example, elsewhere I have described the postcolonial history of the Rapa Nui–Spanish bilingual community of Easter Island, Chile, which by the 1960s had come to be characterized by a development of a sociolinguistic hierarchy and the functional compartmentalization of Spanish, the national language, and Rapa Nui, the indigenous Polynesian language (Makihara 2004). Devaluation of Rapa Nui language contributed to language shift through the restriction of Rapa Nui use to in-group communication and leading to a growing intergenerational gap in bilingual competence. More recently, however, bilingual ways of speaking have gained value as a symbol of modern Rapa Nui ethnic identity. The expansion of Rapa Nui syncretic language practice and consciousness combined with the political successes of a local indigenous movement and changes in the local economy have contributed to the breakdown of the original sociolinguistic hierarchy and improved conditions for the maintenance of the Rapa Nui language.

Conclusions

In summary, in this chapter, I have discussed how the discipline of anthropology has contributed to the study of ethnic identity and language by reviewing several of its theoretical and methodological orientations and debates, providing examples of current research. The major contributions come from the subdiscipline of linguistic anthropology, which views ethnicity as socially constructed, dynamic, and changing practices of identity. Combining ethnographic and linguistic methodologies and attention to the microsocial details of everyday interactional contexts of language use, linguistic anthropological studies have presented a wealth of data and case studies and hypotheses that have served to deepen understandings of the nature of ethnicity and its relations to language. In particular, case studies

have highlighted, across different cultures, the importance of language ideology in steering the direction of language change and changes in social meanings of language, such as the link between language and identity.

Questions for Further Thought and Discussion

1. Discuss different approaches to characterizing ethnicity. What are their advantages and disadvantages? How do anthropological debates on the concept of ethnicity differ from those of other disciplines?

2. What are some of the reasons for ethnic conflicts in this globalizing world? Do different approaches to ethnicity offer any perspective on this question? Would you expect globalization to lead to more homogenization of language and culture or more differentiation?

3. When does ethnic identity become more salient compared with other social identities? Discuss examples mentioned in the book as well as others, perhaps those you have noticed in your experience.

4. Do the language(s) you speak determine how you think? Why or why not? How might this question relate to the study of ethnic identity and language?

5. What are the linguistic anthropological approaches to the relationship between language and ethnic identity?

6. What sort of data do linguistic anthropologists collect to study how language and ethnic identity are constructed, negotiated, maintained, or transformed?

7. In what ways may language be important to ethnic identity formation and interethnic relations?

8. What are some of the reasons for language shift or maintenance?

9. When does bilingualism arise? Why do people become bilingual (or multilingual)? When do bilinguals keep their languages apart? When do they mix? Discuss how bilingual and multilingual communities can be characterized by different patterns of language use.

10. Why is it the case that bilingual or multilingual communities or nations often return to monolingualism? What factors promote the speakers to abandon one language for another?

Notes

1. The general point is well taken, but this example has some problems. There is no one Eskimo language (depending on which variety the number fluctuates), and English also has more than one word.

2. See Kulick (1992) for a case study of language shift toward Tok Pisin in Gapun, Papua New Guinea, where Tok Pisin is considered the language of modernization, civilization, Christianity, knowledge, and men, and Taiap, the local language, is associated with paganism, backwardness, anger, and women. Kulick argues that Gapun and some other cases in Papua New Guinea illustrate the process of language shift where ethnicity is not relevant.

3. A matched-guise test is designed to assess language attitudes. Subjects are asked to evaluate recorded speeches of the same person in different languages according to personal characteristics, such as likability, leadership, and education. The subjects do not know that the speeches in two guises belong to the same person, and the differences in evaluations are considered to reveal values attached to the different languages.

4. See also Morgan (2002), Goodwin (1990), and Zentella (1997) for discussions on code choice, speech style, and situations among African Americans and Puerto Ricans in the United States, respectively.

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