

BOOK REVIEWS * CRITIQUES DE LIVRES

Linguistic Consequences of Language Contact and Restriction: The Case of French in Ontario, Canada, by Raymond Mougeon & Édouard Beniak. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. 247. \$75. ISBN 0-19-824827-X.

Mougeon and Beniak present a valuable compilation of years of research performed on the Franco-Ontarian adolescent speech community. The numerous works of Mougeon, Beniak, *et al.* are already well known after more than a decade of sociolinguistic research conducted in Ontario. This book represents a synthesis of the major findings of this important long-term sociolinguistic study.

The linguistic consequences alluded to in the title refer in particular to language change. Thus, the study entails an extensive linguistic investigation into the specific nature of language change as illustrated in the speech of francophone adolescents who live in a predominantly anglophone province. The context of the linguistic change, therefore, is a minority language environment as it takes place in a contact situation. Adolescents were chosen as informants since the younger generation displayed wide variation in levels of bilingualism and restriction. The main thrust of the discussion is the interplay of French and English regarding lexical borrowing, morphological simplification and stylistic reduction. From this in-depth grammatical analysis, the authors attempt to distinguish internally versus externally motivated change, an important contribution to the field. According to their study the prime determinants of change are imperfect mastery and restricted use. Mougeon and Beniak then compare their findings with cross-dialectal research on other varieties of French spoken within and outside of North America. In general, the authors state in the Introduction that they hope that their book '...can be seen as [constituting] a response to [a] call for systematic research on the linguistic attributes of language attrition which involve the dual phenomenon of bilingualism and language-use restriction' (p. 4).

Following the Introduction, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide the necessary context for the ensuing linguistic analyses found in the latter part of the book. These initial chapters cover important sociohistorical and sociolinguistic information on the community, this vital data lending depth to the study. The interplay of English and French is linguistically interesting in this speech community where French often does not rank high on prestige, usefulness, and visibility. Chapters 5-11 form the core of the linguistic analyses. These sections explore various types of overt and covert interfe-

rence and lexical borrowing in consideration of the minority language environment. In the Ontarian speech community interference from the majority language may be accompanied by system-internal tendencies to restructure linguistic forms. The main linguistic consequences analyzed are simplification, absence of child or popular speech features, sociolectal reduction, aborted sociolectal reduction, and interference.

Chapter 5 examines simplification or internal restructuring as illustrated in the loss of subject-verb concord. Speakers substitute morphologically singular verb inflections for plural ones. The authors found that 'restricted users of a language will at best only variably preserve certain morphological distinctions that are categorically maintained by full-fledged users of that language' (p. 5).

Chapter 6 considers another linguistic outcome of language restriction, the absence of child or popular speech features. The form *sontaient*, a nonstandard vernacular variant of the third person plural imperfect of the copula, is common to the frequent users of French as well as to the speech of children. This linguistic form, however, is absent in the speech of restricted speakers of French. When minority-language transmission is relegated to the schools, minority-language learning is delayed. The authors surmise that the restricted speakers skip an important developmental stage in child language acquisition, and as a consequence, are not exposed to this linguistic innovation in childhood.

Chapters 7, 9, and 11 discuss sociolectal reduction. As the minority language in Ontario, French is not only used less frequently, but also in fewer social contexts. In these chapters, Mougeon and Beniak examine this reduction of the social stratification of speech. In the Franco-Ontarian speech community this linguistic consequence is unique in that the speakers, unlike in most other minority-language communities, have access to a full-fledged system of schooling in the minority language. The outcome, then, is the reverse pattern of domain restriction: the competence is high for formal domains of French, but low for vernacular domains.

Chapter 8 studies the linguistic attribute of aborted sociolectal reduction which looks at analogical leveling of the verb morphology of *aller* 'go' and *s'en aller* 'go away, leave' from both a diachronic and synchronic perspective. The diachronic discussion is enriched by a comparative examination of sociolinguistic data on colonial varieties of French. This approach represents a departure from that of traditional language historians who exploit either literary texts or the observations of prescriptive grammarians. Mougeon and Beniak contend, with other researchers, that data on popular language add important 'chapters' to the sociolinguistic history

of French and its varieties. The synchronic analysis revealed that the loss of non-standard variants in restricted speaker performance may be constrained by the socio-stylistic status of the variants.

Chapters 9, 10, and 11 investigate interference or transfer from the majority language. The authors note the serious neglect of this topic in sociolinguistics and enter into the theoretical debate of whether minority language change is internally or externally motivated. Mougeon and Beniak found that neither of these extreme positions is valid. First, they claim that it is hard not to find both types of change, and second, some changes may be classified as both internal and external depending on one's theoretical persuasion. Furthermore, these positions exclude the possibility of linguistic universals. These authors avoid falling into the pitfall of previous researchers by discussing change in terms of 'causally ambiguous developments' (p. 10). This makes for a much more palatable argument since it is difficult to ascertain whether one putative cause is more likely than another.

In the concluding Chapter 12, Mougeon and Beniak present an overview of the four main types of linguistic change studied, the four extralinguistic parameters which were found to be associated with these changes, and the particular effects these parameters have on the changes. The extralinguistic parameters involved are French-language-use restriction ('plays a significant role in linguistic change' (p. 218)), locality of residence ('an important predictor' (p. 225) of variation), social class ('relatively modest predictive power' (p. 225)), and sex ('a non-negligible predictor of variation' (p. 226)). They then compare these findings to those in other major sociolinguistic studies.

The first change found, morpho-syntactic simplification, is the leveling of the distinctive third person plural verb forms by a substitution of the unmarked third person singular forms. Leveling also occurs between pronominal and non-pronominal verbs by deletion of the reflexive pronouns. The second change, interference-induced change, is the rise of the use of *à la maison* over *chez*, *sur* over *à* before *radio*, *télévision*, etc., and *so* over *ça fait que* and *alors*. The third change, ambiguous change, is seen in the examples such as the emergence of the generic locative preposition *à* as an alternative to *chez* and the emergence of the transparent prepositional phrase *à la maison de*, again, as an alternative to *chez*. The fourth change (sociolectal reduction) is the loss of *sontaient*, of possessive *à*, of *sur* meaning *chez*, and the loss of *ça fait que* for *alors*.

Finally, Mougeon and Beniak add an important chapter to the on-going debate in sociolinguistics concerning the extralinguistic parame-

ter of sex and linguistic change. Past research has demonstrated the difficulty of predicting the behavior of men and women in linguistic variation. Some studies found women to be leading in the use of the standard variant, while at other times men were found to be leading. In this study Mougeon and Beniak present convincing evidence supporting the view put forth by Trudgill that 'in societies where women hold a subordinate position, they will tend to favor what they perceive as prestigious variants (usually standard variants)' (p. 227). They also state that this behavior mirrors general sociological trends as well, since Franco-Ontarian women still guard traditional roles in society.

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Vers une approche panlectale de la variation du français, de Robert Chaudenson, Raymond Mougeon et Édouard Beniak. Aix-en-Provence, Institut d'Études Créoles et Francophones, Université de Provence, 1993. Pp. 139. ISBN: 2-86460-216-4

Cet ouvrage est d'un très grand intérêt méthodologique, à la fois pour la linguistique descriptive et pour la linguistique théorique. D'une part, la grille d'analyse qui est présentée pour l'étude de la variation du français offre un précieux outil de travail aux linguistes de terrain, quelle que soit la langue étudiée. D'autre part, le cadre théorique qui est développé, en ce qui a trait aux seuils de restructuration et aux processus évolutifs d'une langue, fait avancer la réflexion sur le sujet de la variation et du changement linguistique, aussi bien en linguistique française qu'en linguistique générale.

Le but de l'ouvrage est clairement indiqué dans le titre. Il s'agit d'élaborer un modèle théorique de la variation linguistique qui puisse rendre compte du plus grand nombre de variétés d'une même langue (en l'occurrence le français), ce qui comprend aussi les variétés historiques. Le modèle repose sur deux séries de travaux, qui à la base ont une même orientation méthodologique de type structuraliste, mais qui abordent la variation d'un angle différent. Les uns (ceux de Chaudenson) décrivent la langue d'un point de vue statique, une fois le changement révolu. Les autres (ceux de Mougeon et Beniak) adoptent un point de vue dynamique, en observant la langue en cours de changement. Cette différence de points de vue, loin de nuire à l'analyse de la variation, permet de nuancer et d'enrichir le modèle.