Adaptive Linguistic Change and Ecolinguistic Structures: Some processes of language dynamics within an Algerian Dialect

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Résumé : *Le monde arabe identifié comme zone culturelle a été sujet à des mutations écologiques assez importantes. Ces changements ont suscité des transitions linguistiques en corrélation avec trois structures écolinguistiques : bédouin, rural et urbain. Ce travail de recherche s'inscrit dans un cadre conceptuel inauguré par Cadora (1993) afin d'analyser l'évolution lexicale de certains items dans le parler de TRT.*

L'étude de certains changements lexicaux dans le parler TRT qui subit des changements importants conduit inévitablement à la conclusion que la langue est avant tout un phénomène social en constante évolution, et ne peut donc être étudiée sans référence au système social de valeurs et de croyances communes. Désormais, le changement linguistique est le produit d'une dynamique du tissu social qui se traduit par des variations sociolinguistiques et des postures de changement linguistique.

Les modèles de transition des éléments lexicaux à l'étude sont en corrélation la plus étroite avec les changements de type de communauté. Les trois structures bédouine, rurale et urbaine peuvent expliquer la diffusion des innovations lexicales à des rythmes différents et peut-être dans des directions différentes. Les changements dans les structures écolinguistiques en TRT s'accompagnent de changements sociaux progressifs, notamment l'augmentation de la mobilité géographique de la population, l'économie de marché et les troubles politiques. L'étude des développements évolutifs de certains items lexicaux conduit à la conclusion que TRT subit des changements drastiques et d'autres investigations approfondies révéleraient de tels changements.

Mots clés : *Écostructures, dynamique du langage, évolution lexicale, schèmes de variation, TRT arabe parlé Tiaret.*

Abstract: *As a culture area the Arab world had undergone tremendous ecological changes which triggered off transitional stages as natural correlates to three ecolinguistic structures, namely Bedouin, rural and urban. Within this framework advocated by Cadora (1993), we try in this paper to identify some lexical developments in concomitance with ecological transitional change within a variety of Tiaret (hereinafter, TRT) in continuous transformation.*

The study of some lexical changes in TRT which undergoes significant changes inevitably leads to the conclusion that language is primarily a social phenomenon under constant development,

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and cannot thus be studied without reference to the social system of values and common beliefs. Henceforth, linguistic change is the product of a dynamic in the social fabric that is reflected in sociolinguistic variation and language change stances.
The transitional patterns of the lexical items under study correlate most closely with changes in community type. The three structures Bedouin, Rural, and Urban may explain the spread of lexical innovations at different rates and perhaps in different directions. The changes in ecolinguistic structures in TRT are paralleled with progressive social changes, notably increased geographical mobility of the population, the economy of market, and political disturbances. The study of the evolutionary developments of certain lexical items leads to the conclusion that TRT undergoes drastic changes and other deep investigations would reveal such changes.
Keywords: *Ecostructures, language dynamics, lexical evolution, variation patterns, Tiaret spoken Arabic TRT.*

1. Introduction

This paper is not meant to be an exhaustive study of the process of language change. It rather presents some preliminary observations on what is referred to as language dynamics. It discusses mainly some evolutionary lexical items in relation to some forces that reveal the dynamics of social change such as population movements mainly rural exodus.

2. The Process of language Change

One of the most important characteristics of language is that it is continuously changing. If we observe around us, we will easily detect the amount of divergences arising in the course of time and space in our language and speech. Old words blot out, new expressions spring up and new constructions are being adopted on the expense of old ones to new aspects of language use. Linguistic change generally tends to slow down when the social conditions are relatively stable. At a particular point in time, some linguistic structures change while others resist to change and remain stable. Language is heterogeneous in nature; it is not a monolithic entity. In the study of language change, this linguistic heterogeneity may be observed through geographical and social variation.

According to Saussure (1916), language at a given point in time, is a system où tout se tient in a coherent self-contained structure of interdependent parts. This uniformity within a linguistic system where everything holds together, however, is just an idealisation.

Milroy (1992: 3, 4) argues persuasively that "Synchronic states of language at a given time are therefore changing states, and stable states of language of the kind postulated in Saussurean theory are idealisations". This idea of homogeneity or statism my thwart the linguistic reality in Algeria as a whole and necessarily hampers the appropriate sociolinguistic frameworks and models by which linguistic diversity and language variation could be investigated.

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The claim for singularity is not unique to Algeria. Nevertheless, it has spawned the monolingual/mono-cultural ideology and consequently any discussion of language variation is moreover taboo. Notwithstanding with these limitations, few studies have been done on diglossia and bilingualism. Yet, the study of linguistic change reveals the social nature of this natural process. It is, therefore, the product of external circumstances, which cannot be wholly detected from within the properties of linguistic systems themselves. Moreover, the understanding of the nature of linguistic change may explain more directly the socially-based development of this abstract system which is language.

In this paper, we suggest that language change may be enhanced by some preliminaries on lexical evolution of certain words. But, first it would be necessary to understand what is meant by the concept of "evolution".

Mufwene (1998) points out that "evolution has no purpose of defined goals. It should be interpreted as progress (Gould, 1993:323), although it is often characterised in terms of adaptations to the changing ecology which actually explains why at least some evolutionary paths are reversible (as acknowledged by Nichols). Linguistic systems may evolve as much toward complexity as toward simplicity, just as they may be restructured (i.e., reorganised)".

Thus, this idea of evolution matches in this respect with the notion of ecolinguistic structure (Cadora, 1992) in the explanation of language change in the Arab world. The stages of development of lexical items may reveal the transitional evolution of a given variety from bedouin to rural to urban, sometimes to rural again. The three structures of the Middle East (bedouin, rural and urban) highlight the different community types in the Arab world.

The linguistic variability in the use of Arabic which marks the transition from Poetic Koiné to Modern Arabic is roughly coincident in time and space with marked shifts from relatively bedouin Arab culture of the Pre-Islamic period to more urban of today. Yet, these cultural patterns of transition are attributable to population mobility caused by natural disasters, draught and the search of water sources.

3. Lexical Evolution

The appeal to the different linguistic developments of certain lexical items may help us arriving at a clear understanding of the correlation between language change and ecostructure (social environment). Put otherwise, it shows as to how the processes of language, culture, and society interact.

Representative instances are illustrated in the table below:

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Table (I)

Lexical Evolution	Community Types	Transitional Patterns
[χuff]/[buməntəl]/[buskæ:l]/ [məʃʃæ:ja]/[ʂobbɑ:ʈ]	B → R → U	cl.Ar / Berber / D.f / Sp borrowing
[ba:bu:r]/[kænu:n]/[ri:ʃu]/ [forno]/[ga:z]/[kwizinjer]/[fu:r]	R → U	D.f / Fr borrowing
[boɾma]/[ʈɑndʒɾɑ]/ [mɑɾmeʈɑ]/[gədra]	B → R → U → R	cl.Ar / Fr borrowing / D.f
[mri:ra]/[səkka]/[mandʒo:ɾ]/[ʈɾeg]	R → U	cl.Ar / Fr borrowing / D.f
[loʈħe]/[gərwæ:ni]/[garwi]/[mu:s]/[χudmi]	R → U	D.f
[magru:n]/[lħæwli]/[məlħfa]/[ħæ:jək]/ [bʒəllæ:ba]/[mlæ:ja]	R → U → R	D.f
[kæ:btʃa]~[kæ:mʃa]/[muʏrof tsəgja]/[ʈɑ:wt lʕʃa]/[ɭɑlu:ʃ]	R → U	D.f / Fr borrowing
[χajma]/[nwæ:la]/[gurbi]/[da:ɾ]	B → R → U	D.f
[məɾʕu:b]/[ku:k]/[əħæm]/ [fħæm]	R → U	D.f
[foɾʂɑ:ʈɑ]/[za:wra]/[kæ:ʃa]/[rfæ:fa]/[kofeɾʈɑ]~[koveɾʈɑ]	R → U	Berber / D.f /Fr borrowing
[guffa]/[sæʕfa]/[pɑ:ni]/[fi:li]/[bu:rsa]/[ʂɑʃe]	R → U	D.f / Fr borrowing
[dukkæ:na]/[qɑʂbɑ]/[ħæps]	R → U	D.f

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The above table exhibits the evolution of some lexical items that betray changes in the social environment and therefore changes in the culture patterns[1]. Consider:

[χuff]→[bumənṭəl]→[buskæ:l]→[məʃʃæ:ja]→[ʂobbɑ:ʈ]

This change divulges a transition in community type. In other words, it reveals a change from bedouin to rural to urban. The word [χuff] concurs clearly with the meaning exhibited by the word [χuffun] of Cl .Ar.

The variation [bumənṭəl ⌈~ [bubəntəl] has replaced [χuff] to denote slippers, a type of shoes used by bedouin to endure the extreme heat of the desert. Yet, this form is no longer used to designate the previous meaning but rather it develops a different sense comes to have an abstract meaning. Subsequently, it has been used primarily in contexts referring to something very small, as is sometimes in the case of eyes. We may hear the utterance [ʕæjni:h # sʏa:ɾ# kiχræ:jəg # bumənṭəl], literally " his eyes are small like the shoe-hooks" with the meaning of "his eyes are tiny".

The word [hærkæ:s] derived from the Berber word [ihərkæ:sən] replaces [buskæ:l]. Formerly meant a type of shoes used when getting harvest. From this it has been extended to mean any shoe, and stretches or widens its meaning. Similarly, the use of the word [məʃʃæ:ja] which derives from the defective verb /maʃa/ stemming from the root <mʃj> carrying the idea of walking , would be regarded as inappropriate since young speakers tend to use the trade marks to distinguish between different types of shoes [ʂobbɑ:ʈ], such as [adida:s], [naik] and [ribuk]. This change is affected on the one hand by a change in the physical environment i.e., a change from a desert landscape to rural with unpaved roads to urban with tarred ways, and by a change in culture on another hand which is ultimately related to individuals' proness to identify themselves to modernity.

Another change illustrates a similar tendency. The lexical evolution for cooking-pot is:

[boɾma]→[ʈɑndʒɾɑ]→[mɑɾmeʈɑ]→[gədra]

[1] The arrow indicates a transition from Bedouin (B) to Rural (R) to Urban (U), Fr and Sp denote French and Spanish borrowings, and DF refers to dialectal form.

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The words [boɾma][2] and [ʈɑndʒɾɑ] are obviously the nearest forms to the Arabic words [burmatun] and [ʈɑnʒɑɾɑ], respectively. These forms (stone-pot and pressure-cooker) betoken a change in terms of ecostructure. They illustrate not only a transition in use, relatively from stone or earthenware pots put on iron-trivets to tightly-closed pots in which food is cooked quickly by steam under the high pressure of gas-stoves; but also reveals a progressively dynamics in the social environment and hence new cultural valuation.

Another outstanding change is the lexical replacement for the word "bucket" or simply "pail".

[mardʒən]→[qubb]→[bi:du]→[dʒirika]→[bərmi:l]

The word [mɑɾdʒən] exhibits a slight deflections, namely that of l ~ n, from the originally form [mardʒan] of Cl.Ar. The use of this bucket shows presumably the rural areas in the absence of taps. The French borrowed forms [bi:du] and [dʒiri:ka] come to substitute the dialectal forms for pails". Then, the word [bərmi:l] is gradually becoming more common, while [qubb] seems to disappear. Changes in specific vocabulary related to water arise mainly from changes in people's needs. Expressions like [noḍḍ tʕammaɾ dʒa lma] and [ħadʒdʒɑɾ lma fəl bərmi:l] are clearly the result of the interaction of the three processes language, culture and society *(ecolinguistics).*

Another interesting instance in Table (VI) is the change for "house":

[χajma]→[nwæ:la]→[ɡurbi]→[da:ɾ]

The form [χajma] reveals the migratory lifestyle of bedouin. As we know, the economy of bedouin is primarily based on raising livestock, and their need for movements is determined by water supply and the availability of grazing lands. These tents generally ease their movements for they are woven from camel or goat hair. The word [nwæ:la] which denotes a dwelling built of stones and reed-roofs echoes a change in ecosructure i.e.; it suggests a transition from bedouin into a rural community.

Lastly, the word [dɑ:ɾ] cancels out the form [ɡurbi] which is used as a stable for keeping animals nowadays. This change is usually aligned by another change

[2] It is interesting to mention that the word [burma] plural [buram] or [biram] is different from the word [birma] since they convey two different meanings: pail and twist, respectively.

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.A change from [qindi:l] "lantern", generally used in the so-called [nwæ:la], into[ɭɑmpu:la] "bulb" used in the houses where electricity is available nowadays .

Besides these obvious changes in the in use of the previously mentioned examples, there are other cases which yield new symbolic and cultural significance, among which the lexical for basket[3].

[χajma]→[nwæ:la]→[ɡurbi]→[da:ɾ]

The transitional patterns for this lexical has already been discussed at length elsewhere (Bouhadiba, 1999) with more accurate explanation. The word [ɡuffa] may precede the form [sæʕfa] since it is the nearest to the Arabic form [quffatun]. Conversely, the earlier word for basket [ʂɑtɭun] fails to subsist either in TRT or in another dialect of Algeria. Clearly, the linguistic forms [pɑni] and [fail] stand in [sæʕfa] and [ʂɑʃe] "a small bag made of plastic" supersedes all forms.

Unlike in ORSA, in TRT it is the word [sæʕfa] which re-emerges with a different socially-grounded meanings .It ceases to yield its intimate relation with poverty and rurality .On another hand, it symbolises wealth and power within a society with no clear-cut social stratification. This change in cultural value of basket reflects simultaneous changes in society, such as the instability of the individuals' standard of living, the disequilibrium between demand and supply and therefore the fall of the buying power.

As such, single lexical items change their meanings and acquire different social significance as natural responses to the changes in the immediate social environment. The processes language, culture and society are continuously changing but it is at the inter-idiolectal level that these evolutionary developments really begin. Moreover, the resultant linguistic variations spread over large geographical areas to reach cross-dialectal differences.

4. The Dynamics of Social Change

To speak about the dynamics of the social change implies speaking about the different events that might have occurred within a particular speech community over time and space. Several factors have existed in Tiaret that would create an auspicious environment for language change including population movements (rural exodus), unemployment, the fall of buying power, the inauguration of the economy of market in addition to political disturbances.

[3] For a better understanding of this particular change, see: Bouhadiba, F (1999) "Some Observations On Language Use and Culture in Algeria", In Cahiers de Linguistique et Didactique; Vol 2, I.L.E, Oran, pp.12,13.

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Everything started with the political disruptions. Indeed, the partition or division within society brings about numerous social results. As such, the search for security and better living conditions has resulted in the growth of the centre, extirpating a considerable proportion of farm population. Therefore, the centre becomes socially and economically outstanding. In fact, the flee of a massive population of speakers from the nearby adjacent areas of the countryside may have been influential in promoting a change in language use.

A case in point is the sound shift f-ɵ which may be traced back to the phenomenon of rural exodus. Still another factor influencing language use is the economic conditions. Probably because of the open market policy and free exchange, the emphasis upon agriculture has lessened. With the actual withdrawal of agriculture, in the beginning the only jobs available are those of illegal business. The most disturbing impact of many social and economic problems surely is unemployment. The young adults rejected from school and non-integrated into the economic fields beget their own social environment. The economic problems also exert serious impact on the vast majority of the population, whose standard of living is continuing to fall. All these significant changes in the social environment are reflected in language use.

An important range of lexical items emerge to fulfil the individual speakers' needs. For instance, lexical items such as [ħaɾɾɑ:ɡ] and [ɤabbar] were meaningless outside the business environment. Moreover, they were generally non-existent. [ħaɾɾɑ:ɡ] appears to signify a job rather a profession since the person in question facilitates the illegal immigration. The causative verb [ɤabbar]; however, has acquired a different meaning from the substantive [ɤabbɑ:ɾ] "dust". It signifies "to buy opium". As such, these forces of social dynamics are correlated with language dynamics, reflected through speech performance of individuals.

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6. Conclusion

The study of some lexical changes in TRT which undergoes significant changes inevitably leads to the conclusion that language is primarily a very variable social phenomenon, and thus rests mainly on the social system of values and common beliefs. This linguistic variability may have as much to do with society as with language. Hence, linguistic change is the product of a dynamic in the social fabric, reflected in sociolinguistic variation and language stances.

The transitional patterns of these vocabulary items correlate most closely with changes in community type. The three structures Bedouin, Rural and Urban may explain the spread of lexical innovations at different rates and perhaps in different directions. The changes in ecolinguistic structures in TRT are paralleled with progressive social changes. The increased geographical mobility of population, the economy of market, political disturbances are reflected in language use. The study of the evolutionary developments of certain lexical items leads to the conclusion that TRT undergoes drastic changes.

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