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**Sociolinguistic Problems
in various Regions of the World**

**International Conference Abstracts
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Fumio Inoue (Japan) S-SHAPED CURVES OF LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION AND THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE DEATH

In this paper processes of language standardization of phonetic items will be discussed on the basis of actual sociolinguistic surveys conducted several decades apart. After applying a method of multi-dimensional analysis to the data, it was found that changes take the form of S-shaped curves. This model of change can be applied to the process of language death too, though the scale of change is quite different.

LANGUAGE DEATH AND LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION

The process of language standardization will here be investigated as a typical case of "language suicide". The usual theoretical distinction of language and dialect is not so important in discussing the sociolinguistic process of language death. Languages and dialects are thus considered in the same theoretical framework in this paper.

It is argued that most of the languages presently spoken on the earth will die out in the next century. The problem of the endangered languages are so large that dialectologists often feel hesitated to say that various dialects of most of the languages are also facing extinction. If considered in the context of language death, the process of standardization of dialects can be classified into two through an analogy with minority languages.

Language death can be classified into two types: language murder and language suicide. LANGUAGE MURDER is not always accompanied by the death of the speakers. The death of the last native speaker is often reported and recorded because it can be judged objectively. More influential to language murder, however, is the loss of speakers who use the language in question on a daily basis. A decline in the usage of minority language amongst bilingual speakers is a major factor influencing language murder. Speakers of a minority language cease to use the language just because there is not enough merit to make use of it. Thus, an increase of bilingual speakers is the beginning of language murder. A parallel process can be observed among modern dialects in contact with the dominant standard language. This is a social phenomenon.

LANGUAGE SUICIDE on the other hand can be explained as a purely linguistic phenomenon. It is a process of language change losing linguistic characteristics due to influence from (contact with) a dominant language. A typical case of language murder is the process of "de-creolization". However, process of language standardization of dialects is also a typical case of language suicide. Language standardization has occurred in many modernized states of the world. Even though the language types and social systems of these states differ, it seems that the standardization process retains many common characteristics.

REAL TIME SURVEYS OF LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION IN JAPAN

Sociolinguists have recently been paying attention to language change in progress. Several scholars have pointed out that the diffusion of linguistic phenomena often takes the form of S-shaped curve.

Language change in progress can be more appropriately observed through REAL TIME surveys conducted in the same community several years apart. Japanese sociolinguistics contributed very early to this area by conducting large scale surveys on language standardization just after the Second World War. The third survey 40 years after at Tsuruoka city, Yamagata Prefecture brought fruitful results. Two similar surveys have also been conducted in a nearby village Yamazoe. I have analyzed the results of these repeated sociolinguistic surveys in Japan. It is also interesting to ascertain the applicability of S-curves to the actual data from these surveys. This will show how dialects lose their characteristics, revealing a kind of language SUICIDE of the dialect concerned.

APPLICATION OF A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

By applying a multi-dimensional analysis to the survey data, phonological standardization phenomena were found to be divided into several types, each representing a different period of time. It was found that standardization in Yamazoe district consists of several layers of linguistic change differing chronologically. Various steps of change including the incipient, middle, and the last stages have actually been observed. This shows that various aspects of linguistic changes have been observed on the basis of the real time surveys.

S-CURVE OF LINGUISTIC CHANGE AND YEARS REQUIRED FOR CHANGE

Results of these surveys can be compared in order to calibrate the years required for linguistic changes to diffuse and to reach completion. The results of the five surveys at the two localities were analyzed according to the hypothesis that all linguistic changes follow the so-called S-curve. In analyzing the patterns of sound changes (or language standardization) in the Yamazoe area, the graphs actually showed S-curves when combined. By applying the method of arranging the partial curves of changes in order to form one ideal S-curve, hypothetical years for linguistic change - more than 120 years - were proposed.

However, observation of individual phonetic items showed that the changes are often completed within 100 years. Various linguistic survey data also show that changes of APPARENT TIME on the basis of age differences take less than three generations when lexical

items are chosen. Several factors which determine the time span required for linguistic changes are theoretically discussed on the basis of the two surveys conducted in Yamazoe district. It was advocated that in language standardization where various phenomena are treated at the same time, changes appear to take more than 100 years to reach completion. Thus in some ideal circumstances single linguistic changes need less than 100 years to reach completion.

THE FUTURE OF DIALECTS IN MODERN SOCIETY

The standardization of dialects seems to be inevitable in modernized society where communication in a wider geographical sphere is essential. At the same time dialectal characteristics should be preserved as a kind of intangible cultural treasure reflecting people's traditional culture in the past.

It is difficult, however, to enforce the use of traditional dialects in a population. Sometimes conscious efforts to preserve the social vitality of dialects are observed. Bi-dialectalism is said to be important to keep both standard and dialectal varieties alive. New dialect forms are often born and spread, showing the vitality of dialects among young people. This process is a counterforce against the language MURDER of dialects. However, the future of dialects seem to be destined. What linguists can do seem to be making records of dialects spoken at present.

THE S-SHAPED CURVE AND LANGUAGE DEATH

The results above give yet another example of concrete evidence for the mechanism of linguistic change. The S-shaped curve seems to be one of the universal processes of language change, which can be found in the languages throughout the world. The S-shaped model of change also seems to be applicable to the overall process of language death, both by MURDER and SUICIDE. That is, the process develops slowly at first, then quickly, and then slowly again at the end. In the case of MURDER, languages lose speakers, and in the case of SUICIDE, languages lose their characteristics, showing S-curves.

The process of language MURDER involves a change in the language system as a whole. Though the scale of change is quite different, the basic mechanism of change seems to be similar to language standardization. In the case of language MURDER too, speakers decrease slowly at first, but then begin to decrease rapidly after a certain period of time. At the end of the 20th century we may be approaching a period when many languages begin to decline. Language death and language standardization is sociolinguistically the same process. They correspond to the era when communication patterns of people suddenly widened. We should not however expect that numbers of speakers will decrease in the same manner. When a language seems to be doomed, newer bilingual speakers are often found, especially when the value of the language is known to the group of speakers. As the last stage of the S-shaped curve is reached, the number of speakers will continue to slowly dwindle.

CONCLUSION

In this paper the standardizing process of a dialect in Japan has been discussed. The data was based on real time sociolinguistic surveys. The theoretical model offered for language

changes in Europa was shown to be applicable to the Japanese data. The same model is applicable to the process of language death. It has been shown in this paper that dialects should be included for the investigation of language death.

В этой статье описываются результаты повторных социолингвистических обследований, которые проводились в Японии в течение 40 лет Институтом исследований национального языка и Токийским Университетом иностранных языков в городе Цуруока и деревне Ямацу. После многофакторного анализа данных, явления фонологической стандартизации были разделены на два типа, каждый из которых соответствует определенному временному периоду. Некоторые типы языковой стандартизации распространяются через индивидуальное общение, другие - через средства массовой коммуникации. Расположив полученные данные в соответствии со временем начала фонологических изменений, мы получили график четко выраженной S-образной формы. S-образная конфигурация, как представляется, является одной из универсальных характеристик языковых изменений, которые можно обнаружить в языках всего мира.

Если сравнить результаты этих обследований, то можно сделать вывод о том, сколько времени требуется для распространения и стабилизации фонетических изменений. Сравнение нескольких графиков показало, что для полной стандартизации требуется более 120 лет. С другой стороны, данные различных обследований (на материале нескольких лексических единиц) показывают, что изменения, обусловленные возрастными различиями, происходят в течение жизни менее чем трех поколений. Оказалось, что стандартизация в районе Ямацу состоит из нескольких пластов фонетических изменений, различающихся хронологически. Выяснилось, что фонетические изменения могут быть завершены в течение 100 лет, если учитывать изменение каждого звука в отдельности.

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