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The typology of small-scale multilingualism: a brief overview and open research questions compiled for the conference of the same name (Lyon, 15-17 April 2019)

Small-scale multilingualism (Lüpke 2016) is typical for small socio-political groups which have no overarching hierarchical political structure joining them (Singer & Harris 2016); it has also been termed *reciprocal* by Jourdan 2007, *balanced* by Aikhenvald 2007, *traditional* by Brandl & Walsch 1982, Di Carlo 2016, Wilkins & Nash 2008, and *egalitarian* by Francois 2012. This type of societal multilingualism is characterized by the absence of power or prestige relationships between languages.

After being, for a long period, overshadowed by studies of urban multilingualism, small-scale multilingualism started receiving more attention in the last years (Lüpke 2016, Singer & Harris 2016, Vaughan & Singer 2018, di Carlo et al., forthcoming). The increased interest to the domain of small-scale multilingualism is boosted, first, by recent realization of its significance for reconstructing social conditions which favoured linguistic diversity in pre-colonial world (e.g. Evans 2010: 10, Evans 2013, Lüpke 2016), and second, by the growing understanding that the traditional multilingual settings are highly endangered. Indeed, the competence in small local languages is displaced by the usage of lingua franca (Pidgin English in Cameroon - Lüpke 2016, Pijin in Solomon islands - Jourdan 2007, Hicks 2017, Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea - Romaine 1992, Aikhenvald 2010, Tukana in Brazilian Vaupes - Aikhenvald 2003 Russian in Daghestan – Dobrushina et al. 2018, and Siberia – Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018, Khanina forthcoming).

The aim of the conference is to widen our understanding of the particularities and commonalities of the precolonial multilingual ecologies. The domain would benefit both from developing a set of parameters for comparing different sociolinguistic settings across the world and from descriptive studies from the less known geographical locations. We would like to attract researchers to test the existing observations about typical features of small-scale multilingual societies on new data, and to discuss new facts. Descriptive studies on how multiple codes are employed in natural discourse in small-scale multilingualism would be very welcome.

The following assumptions will be tested and challenged during the conference.

1) Equality of languages

Different scholars have claimed that a typical feature of the language ecology of small-scale multilingualism is the equality of languages (Sankoff 1980, 8–9). Egalitarian multilingualism as a social norm is reported for Torres and Banks archipelago (Northern Vanuatu) (Francois 2012), Solomon islands (Jourdan 2007), Amazonia (Epps 2018), and Cameroon (di Carlo forthcoming). Equality is however not a simple notion, and needs further refinement. How the equality of languages is manifested and how to measure it? Does it presuppose a comparable size of the language groups in contact? Is it represented at the level of linguistic ideology («No language in this region is ever represented as more prestigious, useful, or important than another» - Francois 2012: 93)? is it reflected at the level of language acquisition, when all participants communication learn each other's languages (“...all vernacular languages... were learnt by neighboring groups as needed” - Jourdan & Angeli 2014)? Is absence of language shift a consequence and robust indication of egalitarian multilingualism, since people can extensively use other peoples' languages

without losing their own? To what extent does the equality of languages correlate with such patterns as symmetrical (bilateral) and asymmetrical (unilateral) bilingualism? How do the different aspects of the notion of equality, e.g. quantitative, ideological, acquisitional, symmetrical, etc., interact with each other?

## 2) Linguistic ideologies

What kind of linguistic ideologies can be found in small multilingual communities and how to uncover them? As shown by Kroskrity 2018, one of the key points of a linguistic ideology is the ways a community uses languages in acts of identification. For example, it has repeatedly been claimed that the hallmark of the area of Vaupes River is the speakers' primary identification with their father's language (Sorensen 1967). Australian languages are known to be linked with land (estate) (see Verstraete & Hafner 2016 for further references). While language is understood as the 'essence' of group identity, the consequences of this can vary across communities. In Amazonia, cases of shift are observed where the target of shift is referred to as a borrowed language (Fleming 2016, Epps 2018). In Siberia, change in the dominant language of communication is accompanied by change in the speakers' ethnic identity within the first decade of their migration to the land of a different ethnic group (Khanina forthcoming).

## 3) Marriage patterns and language acquisition

Another issue from the domain of linguistic ideology, which was repeatedly discussed in relation to the Vaupes area, is the observed strict linguistic exogamy: "My brothers are those who share a language with me" and "We don't marry our sisters" (Jackson 1974: 62, also discussed in Sorensen 1967, Stenzel 2005, Aikhenvald 2010, Chernela 2013 and others). The patterns of exogamic marriages have also been described for Lower Fungdom area of Cameroon (Lüpke 2016: 53). Is small-scale multilingualism inextricably linked to linguistic exogamy? Singer & Harris 2016 (167) identified linguistic exogamy as a practice which was common to all communities with small-scale multilingualism. There is however a clear counterexample: in most villages of Daghestan, marriage partners were taken exclusively from the same village and often from the same patrilineal clan (Comrie 2008, Karpov 2010). Linguistically mixed marriages were and still are uncommon (Karafet et al. 2016). Endogamy in highland Daghestan is presumably not an innovation, since there is historical evidence that the tradition of endogamic marriages goes far back in time (more than a thousand years ago, according to Lavrov 1978, Bulaeva et al. 2008). On the other hand, even for Vaupes exogamy is not a general rule. As reported by Epps 2018, the Hup, Yuhup, and Kakua peoples of the Vaupés marry mostly amongst themselves.

Linguistic exogamy as it is described for Vaupes enhances early acquisition of second languages, since the child is exposed to at least mother's and father's languages from the birth. In the opposite case, e.g. that of Daghestan or Manadar region of Cameroon (Moore 2004, Evans 2010: 10-11), the acquisition of the second languages usually happened at a later age (different in different areas). What do we know about the age when the second languages can be learnt in small-scale multilingual societies? The answer to this question is crucial for our understanding of the linguistic consequences of language contact.

## 4) Range of use of languages and language acquisition

Another generalization suggested by Singer & Harris (2016: 167) is that in small-scale multilingual societies multiple languages are typically used within each family or each household. The patterns of multilingualism differ on an individual rather than group level (Verstraete & Hafner 2016). This is, again, not true for highland Daghestan. Since the villages are ethnically and linguistically homogenous, second languages are not spoken on

a daily basis but much less often, on occasions such as visiting friends in other village, celebrating wedding, trading at the market etc. What fostered multilingualism in the traditional rural societies with only one language within a family? In such settings, why did the indigenous peoples need to speak other languages, how and when were the second languages actually spoken? Is it always connected to the desire to maximize alliances and to enlarge one's protective network as reported by (Di Carlo 2016; Di Carlo et al. forthcoming; Lüpke 2016; 2017) for some parts of sub-Saharan Africa? Were the sources of second language competence different in different localities? This could be another parameter for the typology of small-scale multilingualism.

#### 5) Lingua francas

Lingua francas are usually considered to be in complementary distribution with small-scale multilingualism, since a lingua franca by definition stands above other languages. Lingua francas are however found in some areas where the precolonial patterns of multilingualism are still preserved. For example, although highland Daghestan lacked any single lingua franca common for all of its territory, and the typical pattern of language contact was reciprocal local multilingualism, there were areas that used a lingua franca (Avar in Central Daghestan, Azerbaijani in Southern Daghestan, etc.), see Wixman 2008. What do we know about lingua francas across the world before the colonial contact? Was their machinery different from what is known about the postcolonial world?

#### 6) Comparing the incomparable

Building a typology of small-scale multilingualism is confronted with a major problem of generalizing over parameters which are hard to compare: it is often specific linguistic biographies and unique constellations of factors that stand beyond linguistic repertoires of individuals or beyond her/his language choices (Singer & Harris 2016, Lüpke 2013, Busch 2012). As (Di Carlo et al. forthcoming) put it, «understanding multilingual behavior in rural Africa requires knowledge of the details of the specific situation in which any given interaction takes place (i.e. setting and participants) and also knowledge of what has been called “extra-situational context” (Goodwin and Duranti 1992:8), which, in this instance, includes local patterns of social organization, cultural values, and language ideologies». How can we then compare multilingual behaviors observed in Africa, South America, Australia, and Siberia, when all the parameters involved differ tremendously? Is there a chance that research in multilingualism goes beyond a set of descriptions of unique sociolinguistic constellations, and at the same time deeper than only high-level demographic categories of age, sex, social class, etc.?

The following are other possible issues of interest:

- Is there any correspondence between a specific type of multilingual ecologies and other properties of the community, such as social economic structure (being hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, horticulturalists, nomads), culture (being shamanists, Muslims etc.), or the landscape (rivers, altitude, barriers, cf. Nichols 2013, Nichols 2018)?

- How can we produce and support a plausible hypothesis about (dis)continuity of the multilingual patterns observed today with respect to those practiced earlier by the same community (e.g. see Di Carlo et al. forthcoming, Singer & Harris 2016)?

- What are the available methods to study multilingual patterns of the past? They definitely differ for the areas where the former practices are yet remembered by the elders (e.g. see

Dobrushina 2013, Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018), and for the areas where actual multilingual practices discontinued hundreds or even thousands years ago (e.g. see Pakendorf 2014a, 2014b, 2017).

We invite contributions about currently under-researched multilingual areas of the world, such as North America, Siberia, India, China, Tibet, etc. along with those already represented in the sociolinguistic literature, such as Australia, South America, Africa, Pacific, etc.

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