Review of Sociolinguistics: The Study of Speakers' Choice
Florian Coulmas

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The content of the book is comprehensive in considering the fundamental topics of its two main sections; Part 1: Micro-choices (from Chapters 2-6) and Part: 2 Macro-choices (Chapters 7-13). As the title itself suggests the book predominantly focuses on the notion of 'choice' and its effects on communicative speech.

In the Introduction**,** Florian Coulmas initially mentions the characteristics of language, its being a natural (biological) fact within a human-being [universal and unrelated to intelligence] as well as a social fact (a means of communication). The author puts forward the main issues of the book along with why he finds the concept 'choice' very important. His statement "Sociolinguistics is the linguistics of choice" is based on the presupposition that choices rule human behaviour, and agreed norms generate cooperative speech behaviour (unmarked choice). The author concludes the opening chapter with implications of the concept 'choice' in light of 'Sociolinguistic perspectives'. There are two main parts in the book: Micro and Macro Choices.

Part 1

Part 1 of the book focuses on Micro-choices with reference of Sociolinguistics.

Chapter 2 "Standard and dialect: social stratification as a factor of linguistic choice" starts with an elaborate example of how a 19th century samurai uses different Japanese dialects and encounters different reactions from people each use of a different accent. The

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author points out that a dialect does not only identify the regional background of a user but also displays social stratification. Sociolinguistics, according to Coulmas, attempts to explain how the social segmentation and movements up and down the social scale are reflected in language behaviour. He also questions why people, who obtain a higher status in society, persist in using their own local dialect even if it may be negatively evaluated. New dialects keep emerging especially when people migrate to urban cities. Thus he concludes that language varies along a social dimension, and this 'effectuated diversity' generates social differentiation.

In Chapter 3 entitled 'Gendered speech', Coulmas states that there exists a male-dominance in most languages, which he characterizes as inequality, and this inequality stems from discriminatory attitudes toward women. Both genders tend to have different conversational norms and thus to be concerned with different linguistic patterns. Boys are concerned with status and self-assertion and girls with involvement and understanding. The author also emphasizes that women have a higher tendency to use more standard language and hence more appropriate pronounciation. The author concludes that such patterns create choices which derive from both different perceptions on cultural understandings and the speaker's identity as a member in the society.

Chapter 4 'Communicating across generations: age as a factor of linguistic choice' discusses the four age segments of a life span; infancy, adolescence, adulthood, and old age, showing different language utilization for each. The chapter states that this utilization is not confined only to the speaker's language competence; this is so, because each group has different social-interaction styles, perceptions and attitudes.

Chapter 5 entitled 'Choice and change' starts with the proposition that language change occurs so slowly and gradually compared to other social phenomenon that it should be assessed as an event rather than a thing. The chapter discusses how speakers change their choices in their phonetic features. To observe all these changes requires that researchers look into ongoing change, 'apparent time' is what Coulmas calls it. Different ways of language and language use among the generations may only be observed by longitudinal studies conducted by institutions, not individual researchers. Throughout the linguistic change process, speakers adjust to more accepted prestige norms to act in accordance with others. In the end of the chapter, the author articulates what gender factors predominantly drive language change in light of other studies.

Chapter 6 highlights the aspect of "Politeness." The chapter begins with the notion that politeness should not be only perceived as decorum, but also as basic to social life. Coulmas later discusses Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, and its negative, positive and face-threatening acts. Many examples have been offered especially in Far-eastern languages (Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese) where different degrees of formality, deference between family members and generations are to be reflected in language-use. Coulmas also suggests that some strategies like indirectness, syntactic devices and elaboration may be implemented to express one's kindness.

Part 2

The second part of the book concentrates on higher-level aspects of Sociolinguistics, in other words, macro-level choices in social contexts.

Chapter 7 is based on 'Code-switching' which occurs where more than one language converges in the same person. The author elaborates on why the term is introduced as 'code'

rather than language-switching. This is because speakers select some portions of a given language and later on the other, switching back and forth between the two. The chapter elaborates on three main questions; who switches codes, how and why they practice code-switching.

Chapter 8 focuses on 'Diglossia and Bilingualism', where the author states that in the diglossic communities where two or more dialects or close languages exist, the key determinants to choosing a proper dialect are *function* and *context*. He points at that there are two variations of one language, high (H) and low (L), where H refers to one's learning procedure within a schooling environment, and thus functions in a more formal, power-oriented, and mostly written context, whilst L is acquired in the house, being informal and predominantly spoken. The terms 'writing and standardization' fall into the grouping of the high variant. As for bilingualism, Coulmas states that the speaker may choose one particular language for status and for the function it has within a given society.

Chapter 9, 'Language Spread, Shift and Maintenance', proposes that language spread does not develop naturally, it happens mostly due to mass migration, colonialism, or imperialism. Coulmas also emphasizes that the major/big languages, especially the European languages, account for just a small portion of the world languages although the number of speakers of these languages reaches into the billions of user at large. The author also gives many details on language loyalty with respect to immigrant cases. Although the general trend is that major languages invade smaller ones, small languages become more common in time, as evident in colonized African contexts. The chapter also mentions how languages, especially English, have become marketable goods due to a high demand on them and a higher level of turnover in turn.

Chapter 10, with a title 'Language and Identity', is based on the idea that language is viewed as a marker of identity [an individual being identical with itself]. This is because, according to the author, linguistic identity is achieved deliberately, and by choice, rather than something that is inevitable, or destined. In this chapter, Coulmas also states that identity is malleable and a 'multilayered dynamic process,' and that this inescapable identity, originating within a given language user, is constantly reconstructed by its users. Amazingly, the author suggests that while acquiring a linguistic identity –when one learns a language, s/he should not necessarily possess enough competence in the target language.

In Chapter 11, with its focus on 'Language Planning; communication, demands, public choice and utility', Coulmas asserts that a certain language may be defined with such terms as national language, official language, regional language, minority language, and so forth. These terms actually set the status of the language in a given society, resulting in symbolic construction being established by laws and tradition. This status may change over time, so, it is sometimes possible to determine a language for a certain purpose, and the use of it in a given society, by means of political decisions makers. But the process entails the respective parties to engage in language planning, since they intend to change a language regime, by replacing the current language policy with a new one. Historically, this has even caused civil war within some societies (Sri Lanka, 1956) as it is absolutely a deliberate choice. In addition, the non-national languages like Hokkien and Teochew may have no status at all in China and likewise in some other totalitarian states. The author also highlights that some natural shifts apart from the political decisions may force a language to be among the endangered languages; these reasons may be due to parents' deliberate choices for their children to speak a more-widely spoken language and domains of use and number of speakers. The author puts forward some suggestions to address these problems. In terms of the language planning process, the

author additionally discusses corpus planning to regulate micro-choices of grammar, lexicology and pronouncation.

Chapter 12 entitled 'Select Letters: a major divide' mainly focuses on writing which is, according to Coulmas, a process of *selection* influenced by social, religious and political domains. Thus, it has accumulated a wide range of literature over time, being a collection of cultural capital. He mainly states that linguistic choices that are deliberately made in the written mode are more obvious than those in other modes. He also criticizes multilingualism in its written format, which he suggests may be a good field for further studies in academia.

In the last chapter, the discussion turns to the fact that English has become the language of *choice by* millions; this is simply because people want to address a larger audience through the phenomenon of language and the English users who deliberately choose to communicate in English believe that English 'promises a higher reward'. The author draws attention to the fact that more linguistics studies are in English than all other languages combined. This incredible popularity of English worldwide is due to the British Empire, its colonized states, and the wake of the USA military and its pop culture, says Coulmas. And this phenomenon has brought about a crucial issue: English as a *killer* language. English is taken as a status, more than a communication tool over the globe, having replaced many so-called less prestigious languages not only in the classroom but also in speech communities. English also functions as a native language, or a second language or a foreign language to millions of people around the world.

Overall Review

The book 'Sociolinguistics: Speaker's Choice' is an extended argument which studies the language user's deliberate choices of a given linguistic item throughout the entire book. Each chapter discusses a sociolinguistic topic, and provides highly descriptive, explanatory information and ground work. Coulmas later tends to explain how any particular chapter fits into the overall argument. Thus it could be assessed as a book, full of *consistency*.

The book has a comprehensive glossary for those who do not have a good grounding in the field 'Sociolinguistic'. At the end of most of the chapters, an executive summary is provided for those interested. Additionally, the book offers rich samples from various languages in accordance with the arguments in the book. It would be a good choice as the main course book for undergraduate students in Linguistic departments and for those interested in the social side of languages.

Additionally, the author properly exploits the mathematical figures within a sociolinguistic context. The figures nurture comprehension, being an easier form to understand than explanations of the issues in long paragraphs. For example, where G stands for the generation and L for mother language in an immigrant family context, he states that "For each generation recreates $L\alpha$ of its predecessors, in the event, speakers of G_{n+1} fail to use in the same way the generation G_n did." (p. 52). In addition, there exists a wide range of evidence to the discussion provided in the book, providing statistics, figures, tables and so forth.

Some Critics

The book generally discusses the topics at a higher level in a more complicated context, thus it requires more background knowledge. Therefore, this book is not appropriate for an ordinary reader, due to the sophisticated nature of the arguments offered therein.

Additionally, the book has too many examples of far-eastern languages like Japanese, Korean. Too much of this may tend to bore the reader as most readers will not be familiar with the mentioned languages. The language Coulmas uses is highly advanced in a few chapters, thus obstructing the reader's comprehension. For instance, to comprehend Chapter 7, which discusses on how code-switching occurs, requires a higher level of competence on the topic than an ordinary reader will likely possess. Moreover, in Chapter 13, the author might have talked about English as a technology language, given that technological developments have been a great influence on the nations, and English has informed a wide scope of vocabulary in this field, and is more adaptable to a wider range of technical contexts.