CHAPTER 3
An Introduction to Sociolinguistics By Janet Holmes
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Language Shift
And
Language Maintenance
Language Shift

- It happens when the language of the MAJORITY displaces the MINORITY mother tongue language over time in migrant communities or in communities under military occupation.

- Therefore, when language shift occurs, it shifts most of the time towards the language of the dominant group and the result could be the eradication of the local language.
What factors lead to language shift?

• **A. Economic, social and political factors:**
  1. The dominant language is associated with social status and prestige.
  2. Obtaining work is the obvious economic reason for learning another language.
  3. The pressure of institutional domains such as schools and the media.

• **B. Demographic factors:**
  1. Language shift is faster in urban areas than rural ones.
  2. Intermarriage between groups can accelerate language shift.

• **C. Attitudes and values:**
  1. Language shift is slower among communities where the minority language is highly valued. Therefore when the language is seen as an important symbol of ethnic identity, it is generally maintained longer, and visa versa.
Language Death/ Language Loss:

• *When all the people who speak a language die, the language dies with them.*

• So, with the *spread* of a *majority* group language into more and more *domains*, the number of *contexts* in which individuals *use* the ethnic language *diminishes*.

• The language usually *retreats* until it is *used only at home*, and finally it is *restricted* to such *personal activities* as *counting*, *praying* and *dreaming*. 
Language Revival

- It is the **attempt** of the interested parties (individuals, cultures, governments) to **recover** the **spoken use** of the language.
- The process is also referred to as **Language Revitalisation**.

- It happens when a **community** becomes aware that its language is in **danger** of **disappearing** and takes steps to revive it.

  - **Example:** In 1840, **two thirds** of the **Welsh** people spoke **Welsh**, but by 1980, only **20%** of the population spoke **Welsh**, therefore the Welsh people began a **revival process** of **Welsh** language by using a **Welsh-language TV** channel and bilingual **education** programmes that used **Welsh** as the medium of instruction at schools.
How can a minority language be maintained?

1. A language can be maintained and preserved, when it is highly valued as an important symbol of ethnic identity for the minority group.

2. If families from a minority group live near each other and see each other frequently, their interactions will help to maintain the language.

3. For emigrants from a minority group, the frequency of contact with the homeland can contribute to language maintenance.
How can a minority language be maintained?

- 4- **Interruissance** within the same **minority** group is helpful to maintain the native language.

- 5- **Ensuring** that the **minority group language** is **used** at **formal settings** such as **schools** or **worship places** will increases language maintenance.

- 6- **Institutional support** from **domains** such as **education, law, administration, religion** and the **media** can **make a difference** between the success and failure of **maintaining a minority** group language.