

Abstract

Linguistic strategies and adaptations in Norwegian immigrant families

What could possibly be the best approach to language variation within the family is through analysis of language transmission (Labov 2001). Within the sociolinguistic field language transfer is viewed mainly as between older and younger members of the same speech community with the primary point of transfer as the peer group. There is a need to investigate further how family can be put into the model of language transfer. In my talk I will present the core of my PhD project, which is linguistic strategies and adaptations in immigrant families from different parts of Norway in a specific Northern Norwegian city. This urban area unites traditional minority languages and various immigrant languages in addition to the Norwegian majority language. People have been moving to this area from all over the North Calotte, and the city has had an enormous growth in population during the last decades, largely due to immigration from other parts the country. Thus, this is a unique community of dialect and language contact in a Norwegian context.

Other researchers have studied language in the city, but without the urban dialect itself as the main object of study (e.g. Kerswill 1985, Mæhlum 1986, Omdal 1994). Such studies investigate how immigrants adapt to the language norms of a city. The PhD project encompasses language practices both within the family and in the face of language norms elsewhere in the speech community. I will be presenting findings from a survey used to map language choices and language use in the families, in addition to language ideologies and attitudes in general in the speech community towards various forms of dialect use. Notably, the questionnaire used provides information about *reported* language choices and language use. To study the language practices that *actually* occur within the families the project will also use qualitative sociolinguistic methods, such as interviews and ethnographic fieldwork.

The project combines more traditional approaches to sociolinguistic variation with a strong focus on the speakers' own constructions of linguistic identities. Discourse analysis will be central and an important base for understanding identity negotiations in various contexts (Bamberg & Georgakopolou 2010, De Fina 2003). An analysis of discourses may provide insight into how language use and certain linguistic choices index social affairs (Schilling-Estes 2004). It is expected that speaker narratives will offer information about how the informants have experienced their own language choices and which strategies that underlie linguistic choices in certain situations. The meta perspective has become a significant topic in sociolinguistics. By analyzing narratives, the aim is to examine negotiation and positioning surrounding language, language identities and language ideologies that can be associated with linguistic variation (cf. Jaworski et al. 2004). As the data collection is on going, and the project still is in an early phase, I will focus on two main points in this talk. First, I will review previous literature and research on language practices within the family and the family as a community of practice in addition to language attitudes and ideologies. Second, I will discuss the use of a quantitative survey method and preliminary findings from the on-going data collection.

References:

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