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ICTs Use on Linguistic Change and Identity

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Abstract

Language dynamics are related to an important set of factors – age, gender, history, geography – and as well to new means of communication used in daily life. With the extensive use of new technologies, and the implementation of the latest approaches dealing with learning and understanding, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), have become one of the necessities of modern learning and communication. Even in developing countries like Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, these technologies have overwhelmed schools, colleges and universities. The issues addressed in this paper concern primarily understanding lexical innovation in the speech of Algerian Oran teenagers spoken variety, and how the use of ICTs influence their understanding and learning. This will contribute to language innovation and change, semantically and pragmatically in use throughout society, more specifically at the impact of ICTs usage and integrationist approaches to language in the current linguistic market.

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1. Introduction

Because language changes with every alteration witnessed by humankind, linguists are compelled to understand how and why language evolves alongside the changes that occur in life. As a result, the field of linguistic development has given rise to a great number of sub-branches, and each of these branches investigates issues relating to language varieties, aspects, functions, etc. In terms of language varieties, several linguistic disciplines look into why languages have different variations (dialects, spoken varieties, lects, vernaculars…). The concept of ''lect'' is considered one of the most complex linguistics units and it refers to any variety of language related to a given feature: gender (sexlect), age (agelect), social class (sociolect), individuality (idiolect).

Agelect marks the distinction between different generations in terms of age. It is widely-accepted that age differences result in differences at the level of behaviour, of mentality, and of ways of speaking. In a given speech community, one may find clearly distinct agelect due to a set of salient factors that people of the same age share as part of their culture. The question is whether this distinction will give rise to a gap between generations or to an interesting medley of spoken varieties**.**

In this paper, we look at the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by Algerian and particularly Oran teenagers from an integrationist perspective in order to uncover the extent of its influence on their ways of behaving and speaking. Mobile phones, computers and Internet have had an interesting impact on their lifestyle and culture. ICTs have become so useful that many people, mainly teenagers, cannot live without them.

To know more about the ICTs and their use, this paper investigates developments in the usage of ICTs by teenagers in Algeria. We will explore whether ICTs are effective instruments for changing the linguistic behaviors of young people in their social living situations, and/or if they are a representation of their lifestyle.

2. Literature Review And Hypotheses

The creation of new words, i.e. neologisms constitutes a first step in language change and language evolution; this is also referred to as language dynamicity.

Language changes for several reasons. First, it changes because the needs of its speakers change. New technologies, new products, and new experiences require new words to refer to them clearly and efficiently. "Consider the fax machine: originally it was called a facsimile machine, because it allowed one person to send another a copy, or facsimile, of a document. As the machines became more common, people began using the shorter form *fax* to refer to both the machine and the document; from there, it was just a short step to using the word *fax* as a verb" Birner, Betty, Ed. (1999)

Language is a changing social phenomenon. It changes through time, space and even situations; this is why there exist a great number of languages, dialects, and spoken varieties. Globally speaking, thousands of languages exist, though many of them belong to one language family: the Indo-European family. For example: French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese are four different languages, but they all belong to the Latin (Romance) sub-family of the Indo-European family.

In each speech community, different groups of people of different ages, sexes, regions or setting and social categories co-exist. This co-existence fosters communication, which calls for a mutual intelligibility from those engaged in it. The notion of intelligibility informs the theoretical framework of the present research. To observe, examine, and analyse language dynamicity, we chose to analyse the speech variety of young people. The objective of this paper is to present how young people ''speak'', what are the new words they have ''innovated'' and how they ''create'' their own repertoire. To do so, we will characterize the informants, and describe their speech. Then, we will offer an interpretation of what the youngsters say, by classifying their speech in a table.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Goal

It was decided to use in-depth interviewing, in this paper, as the main method to collect data for the study since an interpretative approach (qualitative in nature) was adopted for the investigation. The central concern of the interpretative research is to understand human experiences at a holistic level. Because of the nature of this type of research, investigations are often connected with methods such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation and the collection of relevant documents. Our informants were given, orally, a series of questionnaires, and then given time to answer them. Their answers were analyzed considering any linguistic and/or speech variation arising from the use of ICTs, and the Internet in particular. What was observed at a linguistic level in our data analysis is that neologisms and new linguistic features came out of not only the Internet use but also other means of communication, notably satellite channels, use of mobile phones, and other means of communication widely used among youngsters. Hence, our data would be classified accordingly by following the sources of neologisms and new linguistic behaviors.

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

For the purpose of this study, students from a third-year and a fourth-year class from the middle school level and students from a second-year and a third-year class from the secondary or high school level were selected as participants. Each class counts an average of 35 students, for a total of 140 youngsters. The age range of the informants was between 14 and 19 years. All informants live in Oran, but most of them are not originally from there. Ninety percent (90%) of the informants came from middle class families, and this characteristic served as a feature of excluding any social class differentiations. Participants were male and female students and ninety percent (90%) of them were acquainted with ICTs. They were familiar with new communication technology and were using ICTs intensively in their daily life. Most of them owned mobile phones and used the Internet to complete their projects as partial requirements of their courses. The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling, a method considered appropriate within the realm of qualitative research. According to Fraenkel and Wallen, "[r]esearchers who engage in some form of qualitative research are likely to select a purposive sample, that is, they select a sample they feel will yield the best understanding of what they are studying".

3.3. Analyses and Results

In fact, Algerians are still having difficulties accessing Internet. However, we notice the continual increasing of the number of cybercafés. The latter may be one of the most preferable places young people like to go to, whether to play electronic and virtual games, or to chat on messengers, or even to do research. But I am, as Algerian, talking about our country "Algeria"The Internet also creates new behaviours among the youth. Okay we can say the internet contributes to create new.... It is considered a major factor which contributes to the speech of young people on the streets, in universities and at homes and their way of speaking is influenced by the Internet. It can be deleted because it is considered as extra information   Many adolescents' way of speaking is influenced by the Internet. They use words that are part of the Internet's use either in a good or a bad way, such as [magravi:]that means: The word was coined by Algerian Oran teenagers to mean 'counterfeit' or 'fake'. , when referring to their origin.

Figure 1 gives an idea of the impact of the use of Internet and its increasing frequency. Even though it is limited to a specific period from 1998 to 2010, we observe that this increasing use of the Internet affects the Algerian young people – aged 14 to 19 years – in their way of speaking by being exposed to a new spoken variety. They use new words, expressions, and everything which is related to the Internet. Why? I am trying to explain the increasing use of the internet by youngster of 14-19 years old .
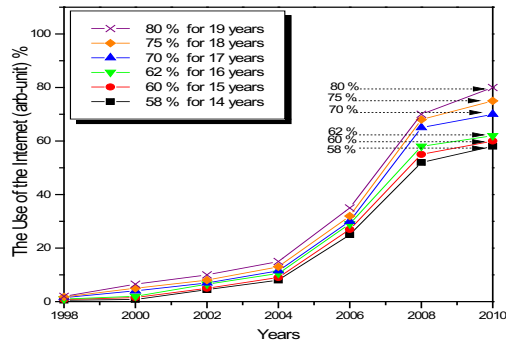
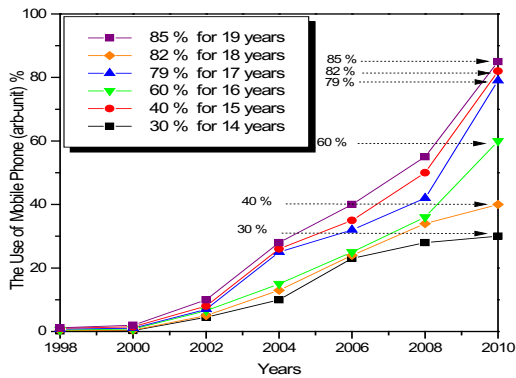Fig.1. The Use of the Internet by Oran Youngsters

Fig. 2. The Use of Mobile Phones by Oran Youngsters

Figure 2 represents the increasing percentage of the use of mobile phones by Oran youngsters, aged 14 to 19 years, between 1998 and 2010. According to this figure, there is an increasing use of mobile phones, mostly by young people.

3.3.1. Practical implications of the use of ITCs

Figures 1and2 depict the changes in media usage through Internet use, and mobile phone use over the last 12 years. These changes have compelled us to examine how the ICTs affect youngsters' language, and why their use has become increasingly important in its frequency and evolution. Though the use of ICT may be a "blessing" for some, it is a "curse" for others. Nowadays, mobile phones are widespread all over the world. Mobile phones affect the new generation by limiting the youngsters' emotional expression by using Short Messages Script (SMS), abbreviating their speech, using a lot of time in playing games or calling back missed phone calls and so on. That what we have witnessed on streets, classrooms and among families consequently, inundated by calls, youngsters' language use changed due to newly created words related to mobiles and other new technologies. The next section presents the spontaneous speech of the youngsters interviewed, questioned and observed, in four extracts. We chose to classify and analyse the words according to their use, their origin and their nature.

3.3.2. Speech of Informants

We shall, in this section, introduce the different lexicons we have registered from our interviewees. We have selected expressions our teenage informants are using in their everyday conversations by way of examples from extracts from their daily conversations. I did not delete expressions, I just paraphrased.

Extract 1 is from a conversation between two of our informants. The topic of the conversation was a kind of verbal quarrel between the two youngsters (two boys).

> I$_1$: [ya mħjæjnək wəlit kəlhæbʃ] "Oh man! You've become so stupid!"
> I$_2$: [əddi roħ tʃatʃI ʕlæ roħək] "Hey! Leave me alone!"
> I$_1$: [æ jʔ ə´nu:ʃ ʁadi nmqski:] "Hey pampered guy! I'll crash you!"
> I$_2$: [ha sətəfroħək mælək rək tvi:brI] "Watch your words, I'm telling you! Why you're shaking like a mobile?"
> I$_1$: [roħ al mşəntaħ Rak or ʃ ã] "Go to hell! Stupid guy! "
> I$_2$: [hælik lhadra tæʕ ʃku:pI] "Look! What are you gagging?"

[nmaskik] means [I'll destroy you!]; it comes from the word [masqué] (*appel masqué*) or [hidden ID] and it is a kind of threat for someone meaning that I will make you disappear. [Rak tvibri] is an expression used among youngsters to mean [You are turbulent!] because when mobiles are vibrating, they are shaking. And **[**Rak or ʃ ã **]** [u are out of network]: just like mobiles can be out of network, someone who is not concentrated is out of network, i. Yoe., absent minded.

Extract 2 is taken from a conversation that took place in a cybercafé. Two young people were chatting on the Internet and talking to each other at the same time.

> I$_1$: [a barka ma tʃæ tʃI ʕljja a blutu:t] "Come on! Stop bothering me you're too talkative! You're like a Bluetooth!"
> I$_2$: [saħi:t lĩnfra ruʒ rah yahdar] "Oh! I forgot you are the infra-red!"
> I$_1$: [mʃi ni mkonikti jæmħæjnək] "I'm connected with a lady!"
> I$_2$: [saħħa ʔə´nu:ʃ ħsæbli rak dekonnecti] "Oh pampered! I thought you were disconnected."
> I$_1$: [stʁəl ʃat ki dæjjəra papiʃa rani ãlinj mʕaha] "Wow! Look! What a lady I'm connected with!"

[mkonikti] [I am all ears] comes from the word "connecté" [connected].

4. Conclusion

Language changes because the needs of language users continue to change. The use of ITCs is a notable factor in the creation of new words by young people. Youngsters tend to create new vocabulary items to show their existence, affirm their independence and their peculiarity. In this paper, we presented a number of neologisms found in the speech of young people in their everyday life conversations. Some of these new words are the result of technological influence. This phenomenon of creating new words by young people is by no means arbitrary. It is the result of several factors discussed in this paper, notably the use of new technologies: Internet, satellite dishes, mobile phones among others.

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