

Current Language Maintenance Research in Jordan

Abdelkader M. Alshboul

Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arabia

Tel: 966-642-2102-0425 E-mail: Abdm1982@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This paper investigates the methodology utilized in Jordanian language maintenance and shift research on six minorities including Chechens, Armenians, Gypsies, Druze, Circassian, and Kurds. It argues that the methodology has been based on the macro-level analysis that examined the role of a number of sociodemographic factors in the LMLS process. However, this analysis does not offer a complex picture of immigrants' language use and attitudes. It is suggested in this paper that the micro level analysis should also be employed to illuminate the way language is negotiated and used.

Keywords: Methodology, Immigrants' language

1. Introduction

Jordan (the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) is situated by Saudi Arabia to the east and south, Iraq to the northeast, Syria to the north, and Israel and Palestine to the west. According to the Jordanian department of statistics, the population estimating in 2016 is about 6,184,527 (Population and Housing, 2010). The official language is Arabic and Islam is the main religion. The sixth article in the chapter two of the Jordanian constitution declares that the discriminations shall not be between Jordanians as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion (CHAPTER TWO, Article 6: Rights and Duties of Jordanians, 1952). Therefore, many minorities like Circassians, Armenians, gypsies, Kurdish, Chechens, and Druze have been settling in different areas in Jordan since the early 1910s (Dweik, 2000; Rannut, 2009; AL-Khatib, 2001)

Consequently, researchers like Al-Khatib, Alzoubi, Rannut, Al-Ali, and Dweik have made considerable research about these minorities to calibrate to what extend these minorities use their mother tongue in their daily speech. First, (Dweik, 2000) investigates linguistic and cultural maintenance among the Chechens of Jordan. According to him, some of Chechens, estimated about 8776, live in Sweileh (a suburb in Amman) and Al-sukna near Zerka. Second, (AL-Khatib, 2001) researches language shift among the Armenians of Jordan. He illustrates that the first move of Armenian refugees to Palestine and Trans-Jordan took place during the early 1910s. Thirdly, (Al-Khatib & Al-Ali, 2005) examine language and cultural maintenance among the Gypsies of Jordan. They indicate that a common language used by all Gypsies in the Arab World is called 'Dome'. The names Zott and Nuri are still widely used for the Gypsies of Jordan. Fourthly, (Al-Khatib & Alzoubi, 2009) have written the impact of sect-affiliation on dialect and cultural maintenance among the Druze of Jordan. According to (Swayd, 1998), it is estimated that the majority live in Syria and Lebanon and only 1-2 percent of them live in Jordan. Later, (Rannut, 2009) investigates Circassian language maintenance in Jordan. Next, she illustrates that the official language in their community is Caucasian. According to her, they live in different areas in Jordan such as Wadi-Sseer, Jerash, Naur, and Russaife. Finally, (Al-Khatib & Al-Ali, 2010) have published language and cultural shift among the Kurds of Jordan. They add that the Kurds mainly live in the large urban centers of the country like Amman, Irbid, Assalt, and Al-Zarqa.

Accordingly, the author has reviewed the methodologies of the above mentioned research done among minorities and critically evaluated them as used in data collection. It is obvious that the researchers investigate the role of a number of sociodemographic factors in the LMLS process, such as the size of the group, demographic concentration, intermarriage with other Jordanians, and attitudes and values these minorities place on their languages. They obviously used such demographic factors to enable them to compare between different groups, such as age groups and gender. They chose their samples according to age, sex, education and occupation. While some of their samples were selected randomly, others were selected according to the “social network” model proposed by (Milroy & Milroy, 1978).

2. Review of the Methodology and Data Collection Instruments

Generally, in terms of methodology, the majority of the researchers mentioned former have

utilized the quantitative methodology included questionnaires and interviews in their research. First, it is believed that the questionnaire is a data analytical method based on statistics as shown in the Table 1 (Neuman, 2005). It uses particular questions to collect numerical data about a specific issue (Macaulay, 2009). Moreover, it provides the research with a huge amount of objective information compared with interviews (Neuman, 2005). The second method of data collection was interviews. It is very significant because the participants can talk freely about issues in concern (Macaulay, 2009). It helps the researchers to observe the emotions and behaviors of the interviewees. Furthermore, researchers are the controllers of the conversation, which play a main role in keeping the interviewees focused on the track of the interview (Macaulay, 2009).

(Table 1). Methods of LMLS research among minorities done in Jordan

Research title	Date	Authors	Methodology	Data collection techniques
Linguistic and cultural maintenance among the Chechens of Jordan	2000	Dweik	quantitative	questionnaires and interviews
Language shift among the Armenians of Jordan	2001	Al-Khatib	quantitative	a questionnaire and interviews
Language and Cultural Maintenance Among the Gypsies of Jordan	2005	Al-Khatib and Al-Ali	quantitative and qualitative	questionnaire, observations and interviews
The impact of sect-affiliation on dialect and cultural maintenance among the Druze of Jordan	2009	Al-Khatib and Alzoubi	quantitative	interviews, questionnaires, and self-report observations
Circassian language maintenance in Jordan	2009	Rannut	quantitative and qualitative	personal observations, survey, and videotaped interviews
Language and cultural shift among the Kurds of Jordan	2010	AL-Khatib and AL-Ali	quantitative and qualitative	questionnaires, interviews, and observations

As indicated in table 1, it is obvious that the researchers used the macro level analysis recommended by (Fishman, 1972). The macro level analysis is very beneficial because it shows large-scale social processes. However, it is less specific and does not give a complex picture for the social issues. For example, (Dweik, 2000) used the questionnaires and interviews to show that the Chechens still maintain their native language but the analytical tools he used do not transfer deep social issues about this minority. (Neuman, 2005) anticipated that questionnaires might not be appropriate for research discussing attitudes and beliefs, which cannot be transferred into numerical scales. In addition, the respondents may reply on the questionnaires based on their comprehension leading to analyzing data which does not show LMLS among the minorities (Neuman, 2005).

Furthermore, (Al-Khatib & Alzoubi, 2009) asserted that they used self-report observations, which they were very limited. They took some observations from some interviews made by themselves or assistants. These observations were not enough to explore and evaluate the complex picture of LM among the Druze. As a result, they cannot contribute to wide generalization for the usage of the native language among this minority. (Rannut, 2009) used videotaped interviews to gather enough observations about the Circassian minority and their shifting to the dominant language. It was very little to show deep social issues in the Circassian community as well. Her research would have highlighted more understanding of the LM among Circassian if she had used more observations ethnographically and recording of natural home and ethnic center interactions between the community members. (Revis, 2015) emphasizes that home interactions which is the essential part of the micro level, contribute to exploring to what extent the minorities maintain their heritage language/shift to the dominant language. Furthermore, it shows the complicated picture of the minorities' attitudes and beliefs toward their native language.

As a result, the research has not explored the LMLS in these minorities yet. They show that these minorities have a gap in their heritage languages, which reflects their weakness in their language performance and competence. Moreover, it does not show the reaction of these minorities toward their native language (Yu, 2005). In other words, their response to the questionnaires and interviews that have mentioned in the research, are attributed to their positive attitudes to their native language and not to their real native language usage.

3. Conclusion

Overall, it is clear that these researchers have mainly focused on quantitative Analyses, which are questionnaires and interviews. While acknowledging the significance of these methods for the research, they are, as argued earlier, nevertheless with their shortcomings. LMLS can also benefit from participant observation and home recordings. Observations enable the researchers to understand language use dynamics in-depth which were absent from research on minorities in Jordan. They can also yield more information directly and accurately in nature (Mulhall, 2002). On the other hand, home recordings can identify the complex interrelationships between attitudes and language use at the micro-level. Therefore, quantitative oriented research is not enough; researchers need to utilize methods of micro-level analysis such as participant observation and home interaction recording to

comprehend the language use and practices of the people under study in the natural settings. LMLS research still has research gaps that the researchers should pay more attention in order for them to gain more deep understanding of linguistic situations of these minorities.

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