Language Ideology and Attitudes
Key Concepts

- Ideology
- Language Ideology
- Language Status
- Language Attitudes
As defined by Merriam-Webster:

- a systematic body of concepts especially human life or culture
- a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture
- the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program
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### Ideologies about Deafness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deafness as a form of disability.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Speech and hearing as a norm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatments necessary to restore speech and hearing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This ideology is rooted in audism.</td>
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<th>Deafness as a trait.</th>
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<td>Signing as a norm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sign language as a natural resource.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This ideology is about language and cultural rights of deaf and hard of hearing people.</td>
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</tbody>
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Sources: Baynton 1996; Lane et al. 1996; Lane 2002; Leigh 2009
Language status is determined by

- Population size in a region (majority vs minority);
- Extent of language use;
- History of language;
- Social capital and prestige of language users
  - Educational, socio-economic, and political advantages

In the case of signed language, its language status is questionable.
- Linguistic insecurity as a result.
Processes of Normalization

- Enforcement of oralism
- Mainstreaming and its effect on signed languages
- Varieties of sign communication systems
Attitudes

- **Attitude**
  - “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chaiken 1993: 1)

- **Three aspects**
  - Cognition – knowledge and believe about objects
  - Affect – feelings toward objects
  - Behavior – reactions toward objects

- **Language attitudes**
  - Cognitive, affective, and behavioral expressions toward a language variety as an object
Attitudes about signed languages have been driven by the ideology of human communication.

The factors that drive the attitudes are:
- Contrasting models of deafness: pathological and socio-cultural
- Modalities of communication: spoken vs. signed
Consequences of the Dominant Ideology

- Disadvantages due to structural inequality
- Alternative communication systems as a form of colonialism
- Linguistic insecurity
Defense against the Dominant Ideology

- Preservation and standardization of signed languages
  - Video collections
  - Curriculums
  - Course and supplementary materials
  - Signed language assessments

- Social space as a sanctuary for sign language users
  - Signed language as a default communication.
  - Not using signed language violates the cooperative principle of communication.
Questions to consider

• **Cognitive**
  • What is your belief about languages?
  • What is your opinion about language variation?
  • What do you know about languages and how much?
  • What is your judgment of a person or a group?

• **Affective**
  • How do you feel about recent findings about signed languages?
  • How do you feel about deaf people using signed languages or communication systems that are not familiar to you?

• **Behavioral**
  • How much do you actually use signed language and with whom?
  • When and where do you speak instead of sign?
  • How involved are you in a community of signed language users?
References


Recommended Readings


