PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE USE AMONG ARMENIANS IN BEIRUT IN THE LAST 95 YEARS

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INTRODUCTION

In a discussion I recently had with a religious leader in Beirut he recounted how a young Armenian philanthropist had requested that all communication with him from the Prelacy be in Arabic, as he did not read, write, or speak Armenian. "After all, this is Lebanon not Armenia," the patron had argued. The leader's dilemma was, "How can I write a 'thank you' letter or even speak in Arabic to an Armenian? It just does not feel right."

Such an incident exemplifies negotiation of identities, language choice and attitudes in multilingual contexts, where different ideologies of language and identity come into conflict with each other with regard to what languages should be spoken by particular kinds of people and in what context.[1]

Most researchers agree that it is within historical contexts and extralinguistic environments that the linguistic ideologies of a community exist. Hence, this paper first provides a brief history of Armenian settlement in Lebanon and an examination of the socio-economic, educational, religious, multilingual, and political contexts in which Armenians live. It then presents a discussion of terminological conceptual issues in the field of linguistic maintenance and shift, examines extra-linguistic factors such as sociological, ethno-historical, cultural, and economic issues related to language maintenance, and lastly presents the patterns of language use among Armenians since their arrival in Lebanon 95 years ago.

ARMENIANS IN LEBANON

The Armenian presence in Lebanon resulted from a series of immigration waves during the nineteenth century. However, the process of these waves reached its peak with the 1915 genocide, marking the formation of the contemporary Armenian Diaspora. A new wave of Armenian refugees arrived in Lebanon between 1937 and 1940 from Alexandretta, after the annexation of the latter by Turkey and its evacuation by the French forces. Armenian immigration into Lebanon continued in the late 1940s from Palestine as a result of the Arab-Israeli war and the early 1960s from Syria and other Arab countries owing to political instability and Arab nationalist sentiments of its ruling circles which curtailed cultural and educational rights of the Armenians.[2]

Armenians were granted Lebanese citizenship in 1924 by the French mandate authorities in accordance with the 1923 Lausanne Treaty.[3] It boosted Christian numbers in the newly-created state of Lebanon. In 1926 the presence of some 30,000 Armenians in Lebanon, demographically played an important role in the "equitable distribution" of the country's political and administrative positions, as its Constitution specified a balance of political power among the major religious groups.[4]

In the years between the two world wars, many churches, community clubs, athletic, educational, philanthropic, theatrical, and youth organizations were established. Armenian political parties began functioning regularly. Besides the humanitarian efforts of these parties, an important outcome which played a big role in the language maintenance efforts was the formation of the press. The first long-lasting Armenian-language daily, *Aztag*, was established in by Hagop Balian in 1924 as an individual enterprise. In 1927 it was transferred to the Tashnaks. *Zartonk*, another daily, dates from October 1937 as an organ of the Ramgavar Party. *Ararad*, also a daily, was established in November 1937 by the Henchag party. Besides newspapers, there are dozens of monthly and quarterly literary journals, in-house magazines and newsletters of organizations, churches, schools, and centers.

Though supporting or rejecting the Soviet regime in Armenia polarized Armenians all over the world, the importance of the homeland for national survival has rarely been questioned. Hence, when after WWII the highest councils of the Soviet Communist Party and Stalin himself gave permission to diaspora Armenians to return to the homeland, 150,000 Armenians from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, France, the United States, and other countries immigrated to the Armenian Soviet Republic.[5] After the collapse of the USSR a new wave of repatriates from all over the diaspora poured into Armenia, especially young male repatriates during the fierce battles with the Azeris over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karapagh in the early 1990s.

The Armenian community adopted a position of "positive neutrality" during the 16-year-long civil war in Lebanon, 1975-1991. Some militant Lebanese Christians resented the Armenians' reluctance to join the fight in what was in the early days of the conflict seen as a Muslim-Christian battle. The Armenian neutrality paid off; however, thousands along with many Lebanese sought refuge in Canada, the United States, France, Australia and many other European countries.

The Armenians of Lebanon were, for a time, one of the most important Armenian communities outside of the Soviet Union and the United States.[6] This was expressed in the description of the community as the "most Armenian" of all diaspora communities and as the "second Armenia". The Armenians in Lebanon constituted one of the largest diaspora communities in the world, counting 175,000 in 1983 eight years after the cycle of violence had started.[7] They had two dozen churches, sixty schools, a college (now a university), more than fifty athletic, patriotic, benevolent organizations, numerous literary, cultural periodicals, and newspapers.[8]

Survivors of the Genocide who reached Lebanon recount how they could not afford the time to study, as they worked to establish themselves in the new land. But they considered education for their children of paramount importance. "*Tebrots kena vor mart ellas*" (go to school to be successful/educated/cultured) was a popular injunction, and older children took jobs to make sure that their younger brothers and sisters would receive the prized high school diploma or college degree. Moreover, phrases like, "The Armenian school is the home of the Armenian" and "Armenians' survival can be ensured only through the Armenian

school", served as the underlying impetus for the proliferation of Armenian schools, as verified by many survivors, first as wooden shacks with tin roofs, then annexed to church compounds, and later as spacious, modern constructions.

In time, the schools Armenian students attended became regular schools that nowadays, in addition to Armenian language, history, literature, religion, and culture, teach a basic curriculum of general studies that prepares students for the Lebanese official baccalaureate exams. They are multilingual institutions because students are taught subjects, such as, mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography, history, civics, science, and literature in Arabic and French and/or English. Lebanon is a multilingual country, where Arabic and French are recognized as official languages, and schools teach these two languages concurrently with English. It is also worth mentioning that schools in Lebanon teach Standard Arabic devised from the old classical language of the Qura'n but use Colloquial Lebanese everywhere else. Hence, a characteristic feature of virtually every conversation that occurs between multilingual Lebanese is code-switching (CS). Therefore, most of the CS that occurs among Armenians in Lebanon is between Armenian, Turkish, French, English, and Arabic; while, other Lebanese CS between Arabic, French, English, and increasingly, with the return of some families that had left Lebanon during the war for Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela, also Spanish and Portuguese.

There are no official statistics specifying the present number of Armenian or non-Armenian citizens in Lebanon. The popular perception is that the number of Armenians is somewhere around 100,000. They are scattered all over the country, especially in major towns of Mount Lebanon, as well as in Beirut, Tripoli, Anjar, Zahle, Batroun, and Jbeil. The largest concentration of Armenians is in Beirut.

The two Armenian stations, Radio Van and Radio Sevan, established in 1986 and 2007 respectively, focus on news about the Armenian communities in Lebanon and the diaspora, and political, social, and cultural issues in Lebanon and Armenia. According to their directors, the goals of the stations are to provide cultural nourishment, information, and community services to their listeners and to promote Armenian culture, language, and music. In 1999 Al-Mustakbal (Future) and more recently, in 2009, O (Orange) television stations started broadcasting daily 30-minute Armenian news programs.

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT (LMLS)

The phenomenon of language maintenance and shift (LMLS) and how various communities have tackled it is a subject that has developed into an issue of immense interest to linguists. Coined by Joshua Fishman in 1964, language maintenance is defined as the preservation of a language or language variety in a context where there is considerable pressure for speakers to shift towards the more prestigious or politically dominant language.[9] Language shift is defined as the inability of a speech community to maintain its language in the face of competition from a regionally or socially more powerful or numerically stronger language.[10]

The burgeoning of investigations into LMLS, however, especially in the last fifty years, has resulted in a plethora of terms and definitions. The field is overloaded with metaphoric expressions: language atrophy, attrition, contraction,

death, decay, demise, drift, endangerment, erosion, healing, hybrid language, loss, maintenance, obsolescence, preservation, reconstruction, replacement, restricted code, resuscitation, retention, revival, shift, etc. Most researchers use some of these terms interchangeably, but there are also preferences, and sometimes even insistence on differentiating among them. However, it should be added that there is also an emerging "coverall term 'language death' which is "closely linked with language viability.[11] Simply and briefly put, the latter occurs when a community shifts to a new language totally so that the old language is no longer used.

A SURVEY OF SIGNIFICANT FACTORS IN LMLS

Along with the excess of terminology there have been substantial efforts among researchers to identify and pin down the main variables in LMLS. Such recent scholarship has suggested that there is a significant relationship between ethnic languages and extra-linguistic factors, that is, cultural, psychological, social, and historical processes. For example, family, neighborhood, political affiliation, and education are crucial factors in LMLS.[12] In this context, in 1972 the term *language ecology* was coined which is defined as the study of interactions between a language and its environment, the true environment of a language being the society that uses it as one of its codes. Part of the ecology of a language is psychological, that is its interaction with other languages in the minds of bilingual speakers, and part sociological, that is its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication. It is argued that the ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others.

In 1953, a comprehensive survey of factors significant in language contact situations underlined geography, indigenousness, cultural or group membership, religion, sex, age, social status, occupation, and rural versus urban residence as decisive variables in determining LMLS.[13] In 1962, on the other hand, crucial additional factors were put forward, such as duration of contact, frequency of contact and pressures of contact with an/other language/s derived from economic, administrative, cultural, political, military, historical, religious, or demographic sources as causes deciding the maintenance or shift of a language.[14] In 1966, targeting language maintenance, six important variables were pinpointed: religio-societal insulation, time of migration, existence of language islands, parochial schools, and pre-immigration experience.[15] In 1971, in a paper in *Advances in the Sociology of Language,* Joshua Fishman, a leading contributor to the study of LMLS, proposed three essential variables for a systematic exploration of issues in the study of LMLS: psychological, social, and cultural factors and their relationship with stability or change in habitual language use, behavior towards language in the contact setting, and habitual language use at different times and under conditions of intergroup contact.[16]

Bilingualism, lexical borrowing, and problems of ethnic and linguistic identity are identified as common preliminary features and conditions for language shift.[17] At the same time though, others argue that even though CS, a phenomenon that is common in bilingual situations, has often been cited as a factor leading to language shift, in some cases CS and diglossia are seen as positive forces in

maintaining bilingualism.[18] For instance, some researchers agree that some minority language speakers will be more motivated to maintain and use their languages if they prove to be useful in increasing their employability, since, in some cases, certain jobs are reserved for bilingual speakers only.[19]

CS does not usually indicate lack of competence on the part of the speaker in any of the languages concerned, but that it results from complex bilingual skills that enables speakers to code-switch between turns of different speakers in the conversation, sometimes between utterances within a single turn, and sometimes even within a single utterance.[20] The switching of codes enables speakers to change footing within the same conversation, to show solidarity or distance towards the discourse communities whose languages they are using, and to whom they perceive their interlocutor as belonging. By crossing languages speakers perform "cultural acts of identity".[21] A similar opinion states that "not only are identities reflected in languages but also constructed in, through and within them. Language can be or is a political statement and is or can be a medium of identity performance".[22]

Serious attempts have been made to typologize ailing minority languages based on extra-linguistic and speech behavior phenomena. These studies seem to conclude that the fundamental cause for shift is well known: speakers abandon their native tongue in adaptation to an environment where use of that language is no longer advantageous to them. This much might appear simple and uncontroversial. The more complex and obscure issue is w*hat* brings about the decreased efficacy of a language in a community. Besides access to material prosperity, researchers outline an intricate matrix of variables dealing with the community's self-identity, the relationship with other groups, the prestige of the language, the degree of political autonomy of the group, and linguistic attitudes among the speakers.

Emphasizing the strength of the speech community as a main factor in language maintenance, researchers also underline the idea that language preservation cannot be done by others and that the will and the attempts of the community itself are decisive for language maintenance. Linguists may help inform and advise the language community through research on language maintenance efforts or on the circumstances under which speakers may lose their first language and shift to the dominant language. Nevertheless, it requires enormous social and psychological self-confidence for any small group to insist on the importance of ancestral-language retention. This effort is considered as a struggle for a more humane, better society.[23]

THE STUDY

The next section presents an analysis of language use patterns of the Armenians in Lebanon. This process is the starting point for understanding the current everyday places and situations in which the interviewees use Armenian. In turn, the investigation of the frequency, usefulness, and opportunities interviewees have shed light on their use of Armenian in various contexts and situations, the choices they make, and the views they hold on the amount of Armenian they draw on in their everyday life relationships.

Interviewing was deemed crucial for a study that had not been embarked on before because respondents are "not so much repositories of knowledge – treasures of information awaiting excavation, so to speak – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers".[24] The main goal of the interviews was to assess on a large scale the level of language use in Beirut. For these purposes, two sets of questions were prepared. The first set included a short demographic questionnaire that would provide information about age, sex, education and training, occupation, languages spoken, and information on how to contact the participants. The second group contained questions on language use (Appendix A). The interviews were carried out between January and August 2005 and were all conducted by the researcher herself. The interviewees are all Armenians, that is, their fathers are Armenian, and consequently they have the suffix *–ian* in their family name. They come from different neighborhoods and educational and socio-economic backgrounds.[25]

Some of the old people interviewed resented the study openly because they believed that these were private issues and that they should not be focused on directly and the findings made public. I tried to allay their concerns by explaining to them the importance of studying the present linguistic state of the community, diagnosing the situation, and finding practical solutions that would help the community maintain its ancestral language in the Lebanese diaspora. On the other hand, those between 40 and 55 welcomed the study and congratulated me on embarking on such an important and much needed examination of the community.

The extracts are designated by the age, gender, and number of the interviewee. The contribution, for example, of a 24-year-old male who was interviewee number 35 will be designated as 24M35, and so on.

PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE USE

Academic research is lacking, yet historical facts and the older interviewees' reports suggest that the pattern of language use was very different in the period following the survivors' settlement in Lebanon from what it is today. In the early and well into the mid-20th century, most Armenians used Turkish, Kurdish, village dialects, and Armenian, and the interviewees' anecdotes testify to the fact that Turkish was widely spoken by their grandparents and parents.

In retrospect, 80M75 notes,

> The Armenian language was forbidden in some of the Armenian villages of the Ottoman Empire, so our parents were obliged to speak Turkish. Therefore, when the survivors of the 1915 massacres reached Lebanon, for some the main language of communication was Turkish. I learned Turkish as a child because that was how we communicated at home and with most of our relatives.

There is further information, gleaned mostly from interviewees' memories, which allows comparisons between the language of the survivors and their offsprings:

> Looking back, I can understand why my father insisted that I go to school. He wanted me to learn Armenian rather than Turkish or Kurdish which were the main languages that we spoke at home. They reminded him of

the old country and the cruelty of the people his ancestors had lived with for very long years. (65M33)

Speaking Turkish was something natural for us. It was the only language we spoke at home. But my mother always made sure I spoke Armenian with my friends. I could feel inside of me that she wished I had never learned Turkish, but there was nothing she could do about it. I learned Armenian when I began going to the school behind our house. (70F63)

In fact, many interviewees report that even though Turkish was spoken with grandparents and parents, children spoke Armenian to each other:

As children, we spoke Armenian with each other at home, at school, and in the neighborhood but Turkish with our older relatives and grandparents. First, our parents encouraged us to use Armenian. Second, our teachers inculcated in us a sense of duty towards our language and ancestors. It is true that we learned Arabic at school, but it was not that important for us. (66M76)

My uncle, a prominent leader back then, used to visit the homes of the refugee Armenians and insist that they send their children to [Armenian] school, as he firmly believed that *hai tebrotse hai azkin miyag pergoutyounn e* (the Armenian school is the only salvation of the Armenian nation – A.J.). Turkish, however, constituted a major part of all our communications at home and in the neighborhood. (78M70)

My father did not speak Armenian. But that did not stop him from volunteering to build a tin-roofed school in the neighborhood for teaching Armenian language and history. He had lost his family and lands and had had enough of Turkish. It was too late for him to learn Armenian, but I could see his determination to make his children learn it. For him, learning Armenian meant defeating the enemy who had killed his father and uncles. (72M49)

These accounts explain the proficiency in Turkish of those interviewees who were over 55 and shed light on the historical impetus for clinging to Armenian and deeming it crucial at a time when the survivors most probably needed to learn Arabic to get along in their new environment. Another factor that might have retarded the acquisition of Arabic by the Armenians was the fact that Syria and Lebanon were under French mandate until 1943. Therefore, the official language was French. The situation changed when Lebanon gained its independence, and Arabic became the official language. However, even though the majority of the older interviewees answered that they are almost fluent in Turkish, they said that they hardly use it any more. Some admitted to still using it for story telling and proverbs.

Several interviewees mentioned that the Armenians lived in ghetto-like milieus complete with exclusive church, school, and market place. They led a life style where sometimes one could spend an entire existence without being exposed to any "outsiders". As in the case of other ethnic groups, Armenian communities tended toward social insularity in diaspora settings. While economic ties were quickly established with the larger society, Armenians tended to view excessive social and cultural relations with non-Armenians as being inimical to their survival as a close-knit community. "Centuries of persecution have deepened the sense of paranoia toward outsiders – *odars* – who, even in democratic settings, are

sometimes regarded with apprehension lest they marry Armenians, thereby hastening the community's assimilation".[26] Hence, even though their school curricula included Arabic, Armenians made no effort to learn it as they did not need it. 70F63, who still lives in such an area, indicated that she hardly uses Arabic in her daily interactions. The main language of communication is Armenian. Her words, though, are instructive of the future that awaited Armenians once they left Bourj Hammoud, an area in Beirut known as "Little Armenia",

> I live in Bourj Hammoud where my neighbors are Armenian. Actually, once all my neighbors were Armenian, but they left looking for something better. They prefer to mingle with Arabs, and send their children to Lebanese schools. They hardly speak any Armenian. I am happy that I stayed here where my grocer and butcher are Armenian. I work in an Armenian institution, so unlike those who left, I can say that I hardly use Arabic. (70F63)

Similarly, 63M32 explained,

> I hardly use any Arabic. But sometimes I have to use it to communicate with the Arabic teacher at our school. You see, I like to mix with my own people with whom I know how to speak. I even buy my things from Armenian stores. I read and write Arabic well, but since I do not practice it a lot, I have come to notice that increasingly it takes me time to remember words.

70M85, who owns a publishing company, said jokingly,

> I just moved to a suburb of Beirut, and my neighbors call me *baron* (a term for a gentleman that Arabs use when talking with elderly Armenians – A.J.) because they know I am one of those Armenians who does not speak Arabic very well. The funny thing is that they start to talk to me in broken Arabic.

58M40 disclosed his knowledge of Arabic thus, "I avoid working with Arabs because my Arabic is very weak". 63F52 said, "We underestimated the importance of Arabic in school and concentrated on learning Armenian, English, and French instead. Now I can hardly say a sentence in Arabic". 74M47 said, "I can hardly speak Arabic, and when I need to, which is not that often, I quickly resort either to English or French". 55F26 said, "Luckily, my French is very good. It saves me from many awkward situations where I cannot express myself in Arabic. And I believe it is too late now for me to try and learn a new language".

These and other interviewees' accounts suggest that poor knowledge and restricted use of Arabic further limit their need or use of Arabic. On the other hand, they reported using Armenian almost everywhere and with everybody they meet, very little Arabic, and occasionally English or French, even though some of them had a fair knowledge of both or one of these western languages.

In fact, Armenians who settled in Lebanon after the Genocide opted for western languages, especially French and English, before they spoke Arabic. One reason, other than the one mentioned above, is that the prestige of Arabic and the power of the Lebanese government were disputable, as Lebanon was a French mandate. Moreover, self-imposed residential segregation kept the Armenian community insulated and made the need for Arabic unnecessary or basic in their daily interactions but French and English important for travel and commerce.

Hence, it is safe to say that these interviewees have frequent chances of using a little Turkish and more Armenian in their homes, neighborhoods, for their daily needs, and with the people they come across or interact with.

Akin to these responses, the majority of the interviewees between 40 and 54 reported that increasingly they speak Armenian only at home and with friends. 53F68 stated,

> Almost all my friends are Armenian, and I speak Armenian with them. At home my children know that they are not allowed to speak in any of the other three languages they know. They often complain, but I think they are doing fine.

58M40 said,

> Actually, your questions made me realize how little Arabic I use in my daily interactions. I have enough self-confidence to engage in a conversation in Arabic, but I have few opportunities to do so. I work in an Armenian school, where even the Arabic language teacher is Armenian. When I go home, the cycle continues. My neighbors are mostly Armenian, so I find it natural and comfortable communicating in my mother tongue.

Similarly, 42M86 summed up his peers' position when he reported,

> I have no contact with my college friends anymore, and all my friends are Armenian. Like me, they believe that we have to set good examples to our children by speaking 'clean' Armenian with each other. My children feel very proud of their Armenian heritage.

Exceptions were cases where the wives or mothers were Arabs. For example, 35M69 preferred to have the interview in English because he does not speak Armenian,

> Before we got married, we agreed that my wife would learn Armenian. Now my children speak Arabic and English. We mingle with her side of the family more, since my parents live in the mountains. Our neighbors and friends are Arabs, and they all know either French or English. I come home late, so I hardly have time to teach my kids Armenian or speak it with them.

Similarly, 39M28 interviewee speaks no Armenian. At first, though, his Armenian name deceived me, and I started talking in Armenian with him. I remember him explaining to me in Arabic, "Please, do not continue. I do not speak Armenian." During the interview, he explained,

> My mother is an Arab, and I grew up with practically no Armenian. My father always hoped that my mom would learn Armenian, but she did not. I married an Arab myself, and the only language we speak at home is Arabic. I wish I knew Armenian or at least my children could learn it, but it is too late now. (39M28)

By contrast to the older interviewees, most of the interviewees between 25 and 39 interviewed for this study reported using Armenian only with their parents and increasingly Arabic, French and/or English with siblings and maids. This age group disclosed that their Arabic was good or very good, and that they used it all the time with their neighbors, friends, while shopping, at the bank, in restaurants, at work, and government offices. While 73M35 sums up the position of his peers when he said, "Let *them* (the Arabs – A.J.) learn Armenian. It is too late for me to

learn Arabic", the accounts of the younger interviewees show that they prefer to use Arabic in order not to offend the Arabs, to show respect, good manners, and good will. As they expressed themselves in Arabic with greater ease, younger speakers answered that they had no problem refraining from using Armenian and communicating in Arabic in the presence of Arab friends.

For instance, 35F64 imparted, "When we get together with my neighbors for morning coffee, I speak only in Arabic because they do not know Armenian, but I know Arabic". 34F51 said, "I have many Armenian patients, but I have made it a rule to speak Arabic with them for the nurse to understand what is going on". 34M73 explained his reasoning, "I always stick to Arabic otherwise they feel offended and think we are keeping things from them or badmouthing them". 34M68 said, "Armenian is not accepted at all. My colleagues get angry if they hear me speak Armenian with a student or a colleague. So, I have learned to change my ways for their sake". "I automatically use Arabic and then switch to English or French as most of my friends are multilingual, like me," were the words 25F23 used to describe the languages she used when with Arab companions. The older groups had revealed that they were accustomed to communicate in Armenian and had to be reminded to use Arabic when in a group that does not speak Armenian.

Concurrently, we learn from the responses of interviewees between 18 and 24 that Armenian is mostly restricted to their home. The majority of these also reported that they used mainly Arabic, English, and/or French with siblings, maids, friends, teachers, at the university, in cafes, shops, and workplaces. Almost all reported that they knew English and French very well or fairly well. Moreover, the majority of them said that they had practically no Armenian friends. These interviewees also chose to label their proficiency in spoken Arabic as very good, and in fact some of them preferred to have the interview either in Arabic, English, or French rather than in Armenian. The samples below illustrate some of their language choices and patterns of language use, and their interpretation of the motivation guiding their choices:

> I use Armenian only with my father. With my mother I speak Arabic because she is an Arab and does not know Armenian. I find it very difficult to communicate with my grandparents on my father's side because I cannot seem to find the words in Armenian. (21M25)
>
> I have no Armenian friends. The school I went to was a local one. Even there, half of the student body was Armenian, but I refused to mingle with them. I was there to learn Arabic and make friends with the Arabs. Now that I am in college, all my friends are Arabs and like me they are multilingual. So we keep on jumping between Arabic, English, and French all day long. That is also what I do at home with my younger sister. (20M22)
>
> You should interview my younger brother. He can hardly make a sentence in Armenian. I at least can manage, but I use it only at home. (23F13)
>
> I use Armenian a little when I am home. Outside, I use only Arabic and English. I sometimes feel guilty though, especially when I go visiting my grandmother, and she recounts how her ancestors often paid with their lives for their choice to remain Christian and Armenian. (21M25)

These extracts from the youngest interviewees in the study highlight their interpretation and perception of their knowledge of Armenian and motivation in their choices. 21M25's words above echo what De Vos (1995) alludes to as feelings of guilt for failure to remain in one's group. Furthermore, her ancestors' act is explained by Fishman as a struggle for a life with dignity for the beloved language which is "often a struggle not merely metaphorically and defensively put but quite literally and physically expressed as well".[27]

Here are also some of the young interviewees' words repeated by more than one speaker: "I feel I am weak in Armenian. I cannot find words easily" (23M9), "I am criticized for switching to Arabic or French, but I have to" (22F66), "It takes time to make myself clear in Armenian because I do not know many Armenian words" (21F77), "I do not know if I will ever be able to conduct a conversation in only one language. It is natural. Everybody in Lebanon does it" (21F1).

The latter statement rings true because not only Armenians CS but almost all bilingual Arabs in Lebanon CS between Arabic, English, and French. However, one of the prominent differences between the two groups' linguistic practices is that Arabic, and to a certain extent English and French, dominate the media, politics, economy, school, administration, and other domains, unlike Armenian which is limited to being used exclusively within the speech community. Linguists describe such a situation as a hostile environment for a minority language to exist in. Moreover, the external threat to a minority language derives from these other domains and the weight of pressure falls in line with the importance these domains hold within the community. Researchers agree that the expansion of dominant languages is achieved by the means of spreading ideologies through the mass media, economy, and the education system. "Terms such as westernization, christianization, islamization, modernization, industrialization," Brenzinger remarks, "point towards reduction of diversity," and, consequently, assimilation by choice "will be the main cause of the worldwide decline of minority languages".[28]

It may be too ambitious to present a detailed reconstruction of language use patterns in the last 95 years, the time when the survivors arrived in Lebanon; however, these insights and comparisons between speakers of the same age but different generations show that language use in the community has changed. It is interesting to note that the frequency of Arabic, English, and French among Armenian speakers is increasing. It also shows that speakers below 40 are more likely to use more Arabic, English, and French in their daily interactions. They are more likely to use it because they have more opportunities to, as this is also the period when life changes from having a close affinity to the Armenian community to a more open, Arab-oriented life based on demography, communication, education, and employment.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

What is the future of the Armenian language in Beirut? Apart from the fact that predictions about language shift are hazardous to make, the present study is the first step towards understanding the historical, social, and linguistic circumstances which are giving rise to changes. Even though some conclusions may be reached and educated guesses made, we cannot make generalizations. The

analysis and interpretation of further and larger amounts of empirical data are needed.

Another limitation of this study is that the sample does not include interviewees younger than 18. As the topic had not been researched before, it was necessary to include a representative number of older speakers in order to be able to make comparisons. It would be worthwhile undertaking another study that would target the younger members in the community to have a more complete picture of the present situation in Beirut.

In future research, including data concerning actual level of structural changes in grammar, types of changes, as well as structural motivations of change may enrich the data presented in this study or stand as independent studies, and broaden our knowledge and contribute to the wider field of LMLS.

A closely connected issue would be exploring the phenomenon of CS and its relation to linguistic loss. At present, many Armenian children are not acquiring Armenian as their first language. However, there are no scientific studies to back this up, and observation alone is not enough. Thus, it may be productive to extend the current research and examine a range of constructs, both at the level of language acquisition and at the level of individual speech behavior. Such a study would analyze the chances of the future transmission of the language and broaden and deepen our understanding of LMLS among Armenians.

As a pioneering study, it is beyond the scope of this paper to prescribe a detailed, step-by-step procedure that would make language maintenance likely. Therefore, it is essential that future studies target the development of operational, realistic, and practical steps and programs towards promoting language maintenance. In this sense, the present study might serve as a helpful resource for such future endeavors.

CONCLUSION

As shown above, the Armenian neighborhoods supported a pattern of social networks which were very localized and restricted in spatial scope well into the later years of the last century. The relative stability of these network boundaries was an important factor in sustaining Armenian-speaking communities. However, the 16-year-long civil war in Lebanon caused population density to change drastically. By the mid 1980s, the population had been halved, and major structural changes continued happening within the community in the years following the cessation of the conflict, that is, in the early 1990s. Population levels were no longer able in many areas to support traditional activities like schools, parish, and socio-cultural events. Changes in shopping, life style and recreation patterns, and shifts in migration patterns signified major transformations of social network patterns which occasioned changes in patterns of language use. These developments in the structure of the community and young people's choices of working outside the community served to intensify the frequency of interactions between Armenian-speakers and Arabic-speakers. There was also a growing involvement in social and occupational networks outside of the Armenian-speaking area.

Ongoing social, political, and economic changes affect identity, language maintenance, and language choices offered to individuals at a given moment in history.[29] For almost a century now, millions of Armenians have been living in diasporic communities where they have been subjected to shifts and fluctuations of language ideologies, ranges of identities, sociopolitical and socioeconomic trends, geographic adjustments, and more recently to globalization, consumerism, explosion of media technologies, and the post-colonial and post-communist predicament of belongingness.

This and other instances involving other minority or immigrant populations are becoming a major concern for scholars in the field of sociolinguistics. Consequently, while acknowledging that globalization is progressively increasing, (with religious fanaticism and political unrest punctuating recent history, especially in the Middle East), broadening the range of available language and identity options, there is growing concern among scholars about language use and language attitude, and patterns and networks of the use of minority ethnic languages in the world. What makes it difficult for minority languages to defend their position is that globalization as a whole is not rejected, but "an internal re-allocation of languages to functions is pursued that will also be partially acceptive of the culturally stronger Big Brother language".[30]

Retention of an original language is seen as disadvantageous as it interferes with internal desires of social mobility, power, and material advancement. The majority language is attractive because it facilitates outward movement from the indigenous community; there are new horizons which members of the community wish to reach towards, new standards of living to be achieved, and a new quality of life to be pursued.[31] The dominant language is necessary because it provides people with a bridge between the two worlds – an intelligibility bridge, without which their progress would be negligible. The minority/subordinate language by contrast has quite another role – to express the identity of the speakers as members of their community, foster family ties, maintain social relationships, and preserve historical links giving people a sense of their pedigree.

Linguistic human rights and minority education are increasingly recognized as burning social issues that must be resolved if multilingual societies are to be culturally and linguistically democratic and avoid fragmentation through internal implosion or revolutionary explosion.[32] Before the twentieth century, people speaking majority languages thought that speakers of minority languages were simply unlucky or backward.[33] Such people were encouraged to abandon their language and their old-fashioned ways as soon as possible. In other words, attitudes were unfavorable to minority languages but benign. This view is countered by sharply different perceptions in certain of the diaspora's home country: that language rights are basic to pluralistic democratic societies, indeed that they are part and parcel of human rights.[34]

Researchers, concur that neither institutions nor technology can replace individuals or home-based activities. Thus, optimally, efforts need to be exerted towards creating a linkage system, whereby young parents and adolescents engage in functions organized by cultural, sports, literary, or historical clubs in order to utilize their ethnic language or to relearn it and to socialize children into an

environmentally utilized language. Intergenerational mother-tongue transmission and historical knowledge are crucial, and they should constitute the goal of every activity.

For successful language transmission and maintenance, regular social interaction between community members, use of the community language in the home, positive attitudes to the language, residential contiguity, resistance to inter-ethnic marriage, support for community-language schools, a positive orientation to the homeland, and community-identified religious organizations are of utmost significance.[35] However, that for these functional objectives to be successful, they should be coupled with "a continuing ethnohumanistic, ethnoreligious and ethnocultural constellation of beliefs, behaviors and attitudes," for only these have the potential to take precedence over the materialistic view of a globalized world.[36]

A language is the emblem of its speakers. That is, the words people utter refer to common experience. They express facts, ideas, or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. From this membership, they draw personal strength and pride, as well as a sense of social importance and historical continuity. Sociolinguists assert that researchers must create opportunities for the people "to improve morale so that they come to think of their language with feelings of confidence, self-esteem, and pride. Only in this way will the community develop an ability from within to deal with the pressure of ongoing change".[37]

APPENDIX A
Questions on the use of language

1. List the places in which you use the Armenian language.
2. List the places in which you use the Arabic language.
3. List the places in which you use English/French.
4. With whom do you speak mainly Armenian?
5. What language do/did you speak with your grandparents?
6. What language do you speak at home?
7. What language do you speak in the street in Beirut?
8. What language do you speak with friends you meet?
9. What language do you speak in restaurants?
10. What language do you use at the supermarket?
11. What language do you use in a bank?
12. What language do you use in a group of friends where there are both Armenian and Lebanese people?
13. What language do you use to email Armenian friends and relatives?
14. Do you know how to write in Armenian?
15. Do you know how to read Armenian?
16. Can you tell of times when the expression you want to use comes to you only in Armenian, but you can't say it because you're in a group that does not speak Armenian?

17. Have you ever wanted to conduct a discourse in Armenian, but you couldn't think of the words, and so you had to speak Arabic/English/French? Can you mention one or two situations in which this has happened?
18. How is / was the Armenian spoken by your parents?

APPENDIX B
Participants in the interviews

Age	Female	Male	Total
18-24	19	18	37
25-39	13	8	21
40-54	8	16	24
55 and older	4	16	20
Total	44	58	102

Age	Attended Armenian schools
18-24	14 out of 37
25-39	11 out of 21
40-54	23 out of 24
55 and older	19 out of 20

Educational level	Number
Elementary	9
High school	8
University student	42
BA/BS	18
MA/MS	22
PhD	3

Occupation	Number
University student	42
Housewife	6
Administrator	7
Taxi driver	3
Journalist/Editor	6
Writer/Poet	5
Medical doctor	4
Educator	13
Businessperson	9
Unskilled jobs	5
Priest	2

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ԼԵԶՈՒԻ ԳՈՐԾԱԾՈՒԹԵԱՆ ՁԵՒԵՐԸ ՊԷՅՐՈՒԹԻ ՀԱՅ ՀԱՄԱՅՆՔԻՆ ՄԷՋ ԱՆՑՆՈՂ 95 ՏԱՐԻՆԵՐՈՒՆ

(Ամփոփում)

ԱՐՏԱ ՃԷՊՉԵԱՆ

Յօդուածը նախ կ՚անդրադառնայ լեզուապահպանումի եւ լեզուափոխութեան տուն տուող ընկերային, տնտեսական, պատմական, մշակութային եւ այլ ազդակներու՝ ընդգծելու համար որոշ գործօններու ազդեցութիւնը փոքրամասնութիւններու դիմագրաւած մարտահրաւէրներուն, եւ ներկայացնելու անոնց լեզուական անդրադարձը ներկայի եւ ապագայի սերունդներուն լեզուապահպանման ճիգերուն վրայ։

Յօդուածը հակիրճ կը ներկայացնէ 1915էն առաջ Լիբանան հաստատուած հայերուն ընկերային, տնտեսական, քաղաքական եւ կրթական իրավիճակները։ Ան կը վերլուծէ 18-րդ դարէն սկսեալ հայերէնի գործածութեան պարագաները՝ տարբեր միջավայրերու մէջ։ Սերտողութիւնը ցոյց կու տայ թէ համայնքին լեզուներու գործածութիւնը փոփոխութեան ենթարկուած է՝ արաբերէնի, անգլերէնի, ֆրանսերէնի գործածութիւնը աւելցած է, եւ 40 տարիքէն վար անձեր աւելի հաւանականութիւն ունին զանոնք գործածելու իրենց առօրեային մէջ, որովհետեւ անոնք աւելի առիթներ ունին ոչ-հայ ընկերութեան հետ շփումներ ունենալու՝ բնակութեան վայրի, հաղորդակցութեան, կրթութեան, գործի, եւ այլ պատճառներու բերումով։

Հետեւաբար, ըստ ընկերալեզուաբաններու, մայրենի լեզուի պահպանման եւ յաջող փոխանցման համար անհրաժեշտ է որ փոքրամասնութեան անդամները յաճախ հանդիպին, տան մէջ գործածեն իրենց լեզուն, դրական կեցուածք ունենան իրենց մայրենի լեզուին հանդէպ, հետու մնան օտար ամուսնութիւններէ, նեցուկ կանգնին իրենց զպրոցներուն եւ ամուր պահեն իրենց հաւատքը։