PLURICENTRIC LANGUAGES

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Introduction

- **Pluricentric**: “Languages with several interacting centres, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own norms.”
- Unifiers and dividers of people
- Group boundaries are marked
- Pluricentric model is rather followed by linguists outside major centre of the language
- These tend to see other varieties as deviations from their norm
Introduction

• This model has been employed much longer in Eastern Europe than in the west
• “standard language variant”
• “national variety”
• These are differentiated from dialects at the status level
• They are identified with a particular nation and are used to exclude “non-nationals”
Introduction

• Pluricentric languages
  – are employed across the boundaries of individual political entities
  – may form a (almost) contiguous region
  – may be dispersed
  – or may be used over both contiguous and dispersed areas

• Distinction between traditional substratum national, immigrant and nativized colonial varieties
Introduction

• Nativized varieties have evolved → e.g. French, English
• Different “centres” of a pluricentric language may have varying attitudes to the transfer of items and constructions from other languages
• Co-operation between nations can facilitate planning
Introduction

• Bi- or multilateral agreements can have the effect of equalizing both varieties or of strengthening one variety
  - higher prestige of French French programs than local ones in the French-speaking part of Belgium
  - “pluricentric” French-language TV program TV5 receives different amounts of program input from the various countries
French as a pluricentric Language
French as a pluricentric language

• Stereotype: one and the same variety is spoken by all educated French speakers all over the world

• Analysis has proven this statement wrong
French as a pluricentric language

• “La Francophonie”: The conglomeration of wholly or partly French-speaking states

• Divided into three subcategories
  1. Territories where French is the 1st language of a significant part of the population
  2. Countries where French is the official language without generally being among the languages of the primary socialization of the population
  3. French is a frequently spoken vehicular language and usually the 1st foreign language
French as a pluricentric language
French as a pluricentric language

• Unilingualism seen as warranty for the unity of the nation and for cultural and moral salvation of citizens → Raymond Barre

• During Middle Ages one dialect (*Francien*) became dominant (9\textsuperscript{th}–13\textsuperscript{th} cent.)

• *Francien* developed into French – other regional varieties “decayed” into dialects (end of 13\textsuperscript{th} cent.)

• Paris enforced the use of French in the south (middle of 16\textsuperscript{th} cent.)
French as a pluricentric language

• French spread in France (16\textsuperscript{th} century) and regional variants emerged which aroused negative attitudes in Paris → turned from diatopic (regional) to diastratic (social) forms

• 1635 Académie française was founded

• French Revolution: Barère wants to eradicate regional languages

• Key term: *bon usage* (i.e. correct usage)
French as a pluricentric language

- One unique *bon usage*, but many “bad usages”
- The French taught in the schools doesn’t always meet this criterion
- Spoken and written French is, in fact, quite heterogeneous
- Attitude of censorship was extended to regions outside France
French as a pluricentric language

- Notion of *français régional* is a negative one
- Usual standard of comparison is *bon usage* as described in dictionaries
- Regionalisms are identified in comparison with general ("correct") usage → regarded as less prestigious
French as a pluricentric language

French varieties in Canada:

• The “Acadian”

• The French of Quebec → THE “national” variety of Canada

• Quebecisms = words exclusively used in Canada

• e.g.: auteure/ female author (autrice) magaziner/ to shop (faire les courses)
French as a pluricentric language

- char/ car (voiture)
- Various dictionaries have been published
- Phonetic study of Franco-québécois spoken in the mass media showed slight differences to French French:
  - Closed vowels are less closed
  - Nasal vowels clearer
  - Singing intonation
  - Light shifting of rhythmic accent
French as a pluricentric language

French varieties in Africa:

• The French of Black Africa is often confused with “petit-français” spoken as vehicular language by large parts of the illiterate population

• Characterized by far-reaching simplification and code-mixing

• Inquiries have proved this wrong
French as a pluricentric language

• French in Africa is the speech of competent educated speakers
• It reveals the emergence of regional norms responding to communicative and expressive needs
• Non-native speakers of francophone Africans can form French-speaking language communities
French as a pluricentric language

• Regional peculiarities are mostly of a phonological or lexical nature:
  – a rolled [r] instead of French [R] = typical trait of the French of the Ivory Coast

• French as the language of the former colonial power led to insecurity

• 1973 Makouta-Mboukou (*Grand Prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire* winner) urged Africans not to passively consume ...
French as a pluricentric language

• but to reshape French in order to adapt it to daily life
• This right to differ from the French norm (*bon usage*) forms part of the cultural identity
English as a pluricentric Language
Major stages of the spread of the English language

1) The Elizabethan and Jacobean periods (middle of the 16th century to the late 17th century): most of Great Britain

2) The Victorian period (industrialization, and colonization): overseas expansion

3) the post-World-War II period with the important role of the US in world affairs: global role
English in America

- the development of English in America involved people from vastly differing ethnic backgrounds – the English, Scots, and Irish settlers, ones from non-English-speaking European and Asian countries; the African slaves; and the Indians

- they many of them maintained their own language over long periods of time and then shifted to English or adopted it as a second language
- other influences were maritime and port jargons and pidgins

- Irish influence was very strong: they migrated to the 'New World' seeking religious and political freedom, but formed fairly homogenous ethnic settlements
- the American Revolution marked a turning point in the making of American English

- the increasing population of the states and their universal connection and correspondence with all nations were the first signs that English might turn into a global language
Beyond the British Isles: the West Indies, Africa, Asia

- First British Empire: explorers settled in the West Indies, West Africa, South Asia and beyond

- slaves were taken to Britain and the West Indies and English-based pidgins began to develop everywhere (maritime)

- the forms that developed spread worldwide, wherever the regular routes of the trading ships took them
- the East India Company held a monopoly on the trade with the East and intervened heavily in local political matters: permanent settlements and a growing number of military, administrative personnel, of traders, missionaries and educationists lived in India: Anglo-Indian developed

- by the late 18th century, English was present on all the continents: two centres, England and the US, had established themselves
- as the British Empire grew and consolidated its power, the formulation and implementation of educational and language policies became a necessity: English was imposed as the official language and native languages were neglected – English alone could open up careers and other paths to social and economic advancement

- native speaker-based forms of English only appeared in colonies like Australia, New Zealand and (Anglo-)South Africa, where Anglophone settlements were numerically strong
Post-War period

- English had established a firm foothold in all the major national domains, even in ordinary communicative contexts, in all British and American colonies by the middle of the 20th century

- English was accepted as a lingua franca
Spanish as a pluricentric Language
Spanish as a pluricentric Language

- Spanish is spoken in more than 20 countries
- 300 mio. speakers
- One of the 3 most widely spoken languages
Spanish in Spain

- Has a population of 40 mio.
- Has 4 different Languages:
  1. Castilian (official language)
  2. Galician (17%)
  3. Catalan (7%)
  4. Basque (2%)
Canary Islands

- Politically part of Spain
- A population below 2 mio.
- Language is much nearer to Latin American Spanish
Spanish in Latin America

- Latin America was divided into Spanish and Portuguese colonies
- Independence came for most by 1825
- Still very similar to Galician dialect
  - More immigrants
  - Media
Zones of Linguistic Prestige

1) Mexico, New Mexico and Central America
2) The Antilles, Venezuela and the Atlantic Coast of Colombia
3) Western Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Northern Chile
4) Central and Southern Chile
5) Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
1. Mexico, New Mexico and Central America

- Tend to use Mexican dialect
- Influenced by countries like Cuba
- Linguistic epicentre is Mexico City
2. The Antilles, Venezuela and the Atlantic Coast of Colombia

- Influenced by African immigrants
- Important centres are Cuba and Caracas
3. Western Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Northern Chile

- Influences by Inca-culture and Quechua
- Bogota-dialect well respected
- A lot of indigenous languages
4. Central and Southern Chile

- National Standard originated in Santiago
- Dropping of last syllables and /s/
5. Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

- Major influence from Italian immigrants
- Rio de la Plata is the linguistic epicentre
- Guarani co-exists with Spanish in Paraguay
Spanish in the USA

• Spanish-speaking population of 30 Mio.
• Biggest influence from Mexicans
• Also Puerto Ricans and Cubans
Development of the Languages

- Mixing of pre-existing languages with Castilian in Latin America
- Influence by the Real Academia Española

→ guarantees uniform written Spanish!
Important Differences

1. Distinción/ceseo
   - Castilian distinguishes between /s/ and /\theta/ whereas most Latin Americans only speak the /s/

   Castilian          Latin Amer.
   → casa (house)    /kasa/       /kasa/  
   → caza (hunt)     /kaθa/       /kasa/
Important Differences

2. **Aspiración de las eses**
   - In Latin American Speech /s/ is left out or weakened when syllable-final
   - This is often accompanied with the opening of the previous vowel or modification of the following consonant
Important Differences

3. Use of 2\textsuperscript{nd} Person forms

- Numerous Latin Americans only use the “formal” forms of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} person pronoun: \textit{vos/ustedes}
- Castilian speakers would say: \textit{tu/vosotros}

(There is considerable regional difference in this point.)

\textbf{Latin American:} Qué hacéis \textit{vosotros}?

\textbf{Galician:} Qué hacen \textit{ustedes}?
• Spanish is pluricentric, as there is a gap between Castilian and Latin American dialects

• There is one general grammar and varieties in speech do not actually block understanding
Thank you, for your attention!