Social Justice Infusion Module Section

Language Ideology and Attitudes

Key Concepts

- Ideology
- Language Ideology
- Language Status
- Language Attitudes

Ideology

- 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

Ideology

- 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

Ideologies about Deafness

DEAFNESS AS PATHOLOGICAL

- Deafness as a form of disability.
- Speech and hearing as a norm.
- Treatments necessary to restore speech and hearing.
- This ideology is rooted in audism.

DEAFNESS AS SOCIO-CULTURAL

- Deafness as a trait.
- Signing as a norm.
- Sign language as a natural resource.
- This ideology is about language and cultural rights of deaf and hard of hearing people.

Sources: Baynton 1996; Lane et al. 1996; Lane 2002; Leigh 2009

Influence of Dominant Language Ideology on Language Status

- 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

- 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.

How does this apply to you as an interpreter?

- 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

- Baynton, D.C. (1996). *Forbidden signs: American culture and the campaign against sign language*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Eagly, A. and S. Chaiken. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Javanovich College Publishers.

- Lane, Harlan L. (2002). Do deaf people have a disability? *Sign Language Studies*, 2(4), 356-379.

- Lane, H., R. Hoffmeister, and B. Bahan. (1996). A journey into the DEAF-WORLD. San Diego: Dawn Sign Press.

- Leigh, I. (2009). A Lens on Deaf identities. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Recommended Readings

- Bloch, N. " Marginalization within the sign language interpreting profession: Where is the Deaf perspective?" April 23, 2014, *Street Leverage*. Online: http://www.streetleverage.com/2014/04/marginalization-within-the-sign-language-interpreting-profession-where-is-the-deaf-perspective/

- Hill, J. (2012). Language attitudes in the American Deaf community. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.

- Milroy, J. 2001. Language ideologies and the consequences of standardization. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 5(4), 530-555.

- Tevenal, S., and M. Villanueva. (2009). Are you getting the message?: The effects of SimCom on the message received by deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Students. *Sign Language Studies*, 9(3), pp. 266-286.

- Suggs, T. "Deaf empowerment and today's interpreter." December 11, 2012, *Street Leverage*. Online: http://www.streetleverage.com/2012/12/deaf-disempowerment-and-todays-interpreter/