

Multilingual Females and Linguistic Change: A Quantitative and Qualitative Sociolinguistic Case Study of Minority Speaker in Southeast Asia

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Abstract : Men and women use minority and majority languages differently and with varying confidence levels. This paper contrasts gendered differences in language use with socioeconomic status and age factors of minority language speakers in Southeast Asia. Language use and competence are conditioned by the variable of gender. Potential reasons for this variation by examining gendered language awareness and sociolinguistic attitudes will be given. Moreover, it is analyzed whether women in multilingual minority speakers' society function as 'leaders of linguistic change', as represented in Labov's sociolinguistic model. It is asked whether the societal role expectations in collectivistic cultures influence the model of linguistic change. The findings reveal speaking preferences and suggest predictions on the prospective language use, which is a stable situation of multilingualism. The study further exhibits differences between male and females identity-forming processes and shows why females are the leaders of (socio-) linguistic change.

Keywords : gender, identity construction, multilingual minorities, linguistic change, social networks

Conference Title : ICILLS 2020 : International Conference on Interdisciplinary Linguistics and Language Studies

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : November 17-18, 2020