Analyzing Discourse Through the Real World

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Abstract

Through the diversity in language within New York City, this study attempts to understand what percentage of language goes unnoticed and are insignificant through the daily lives of native English literate New Yorkers. Through the inclusion of one table and one chart, this research attempts to analyze language use over a period of 24-hours in a multitude of locations within New York City. The analysis of the results shows that unacknowledged language use creates the majority of daily encounters for native English literate New Yorkers.

Keywords: multilingualism, discourse community

Introduction:

Language is a universal concept that is internationally diverse. Each place that we enter has different interpretations of language; while, each individual that we meet has been raised on diverse languages themselves, depending on the community in which they were raised. Discourse is a term for language that represents the meaning behind a language and how these languages are used to form the way we view each of our own realities and the formations of societies and communities; thus, creating the idea of multilingualism (Gee, 1989). Multilingualism is explained as the use of multiple languages, which is an idea that creates diversity amongst the world (Garcia, 1992). Within this report, both New York City and my personal multilingualism will be observed and understood as providing an extension to communication and comprehension outside of the boundaries that knowing a single language provides. Being a native English speaker, born and raised in rural Ohio, and having literacy in the Spanish language for 5 years, I am multilingual. New York City's diverse language structure has been caused by the extensive amount of cultures making their way through the city. The ideology behind discourse community is a community or group's shared ideals and terminal goals, surrounding the use language (Swales, 1990). Throughout this research report, this idea of discourse community will be shown through data collection of places within the New York City area; ultimately, showing the discourse community surrounding the diversity of languages within the body of New Yorkers. This research will be pondering the question surrounding the amount of languages that are present throughout a native English speaker's day, within New York City, that go unnoticed and unused. What percentage of the day do these languages make up?

Methodology:

The process of raw data collection involved the written recording of observations and interactions using the "Notes" application on my iPhone for a period of 24-hour from Tuesday, March 27th, 2018 at 1:45 p.m. to Wednesday, March 28th, 2018 at 1:45 p.m. Included within this gathering of raw data, I observed and recorded the following information: the specific language encountered; whether the interaction was observed through listening, reading, writing, or speaking; the location of the observation; and the length that the interaction lasted. Following my written recording of those four domains, I wrote a series of field notes based on the context of the situation. These contexts included: information about the persons involved within the language interaction and/or information on the environment of where the observation took place.

After obtaining the raw data and field notes, next was its interpretation and analyzation. Beginning with an attempt at understanding what was collected, the raw data was interpreted. With the formation of a raw data table, there was an ability to create an organized look at the collection, to gain an understanding of any patterns or interesting phenomenon collected. Through the raw data table, a pie chart was created to show percentages of language usage in a 24-hour period. For this pie chart, each encounter of the same languages were added, and divided by the total number of language encounters. After this, the given fraction was turned into a decimal and moved two places in order to create percentages. To further explain, the calculations were conjured to ultimately show the percentage that each language holds within a typical day of mine. The last step of the methodology was the analysis of my findings. To analyze the data and search for interesting findings, there was a focus on the

comparison between the percentages of languages that are significantly used and the languages that hold little significance in my day.

Through the process of the raw data collection, there were measures followed to ensure that no use of language was unintentionally or intentionally overlooked through the data collection process. The "Notes" application on the iPhone was left constantly open as I was in public; this insures that data is able to accurately and precisely be recorded. To ensure the best results for capturing non-visual language domains, such as listening or speaking, headphones were not left in nor other distractions.

Results:

Figure 1:

Discourse Data Collection			
Language	**Domain**	**Location**	**Duration**
English	Speaking (Conversation)	F Train	Entire 45 minute train ride
French	Written (name of restaurant)	57th and 8th Ave restaurant	Few seconds (title of place)
Spanish	Written (advertisement)	F Train	1 minute read
Spanglish	Listening (conversation)	Dorm room	~25 minutes
Spanish	Written (poster)	ER	15 second read
Japanese	Written (MTA advertisement)	F Train	15 second read
English	Listening (Conversation)	F Train	10 minutes
Chinese	Written (MTA advertisement)	F Train	15 second read
Russian	Written (MTA advertisement)	F Train	15 second read
African	Written (MTA advertisement)	F Train	15 second read
Bangla	Speaking (Conversation)	Facetime	30 seconds

Bangla	Reading (Social Media Post)	Facebook	Short phrases (5 seconds each read)
Bangla	Written (Text message)	iMessage	Short phrases (5 second read)
Bangla	Listening (Conversation)	Facetime	~1 minute
English	Written (HW)	Doing HW in my dorm	1.5 hours
Spanish	Speaking (Conversation)	Dorm room/Facetime	~ 2-3 minutes
English	Reading (Course reading)	1st floor NB School	An hour read
English	Written	Psychology class	1.15 hours
Emojis	Written	Texting	Short text

Figure 1 shows the complete collection of raw data collected on March 27th-28th.

Figure 1 shows the raw data encounters recorded during a 24-hour data collection of languages. Listed are four columns: the first column shows the specific language that was witnessed; the second showing one of four domains of the language that was used, either reading, writing, speaking, or listening; the third showing the general location of where I found the language in use; the last column showing the length of time that I witnessed the language. There are a total of 19 interactions of languages during this data collection period.
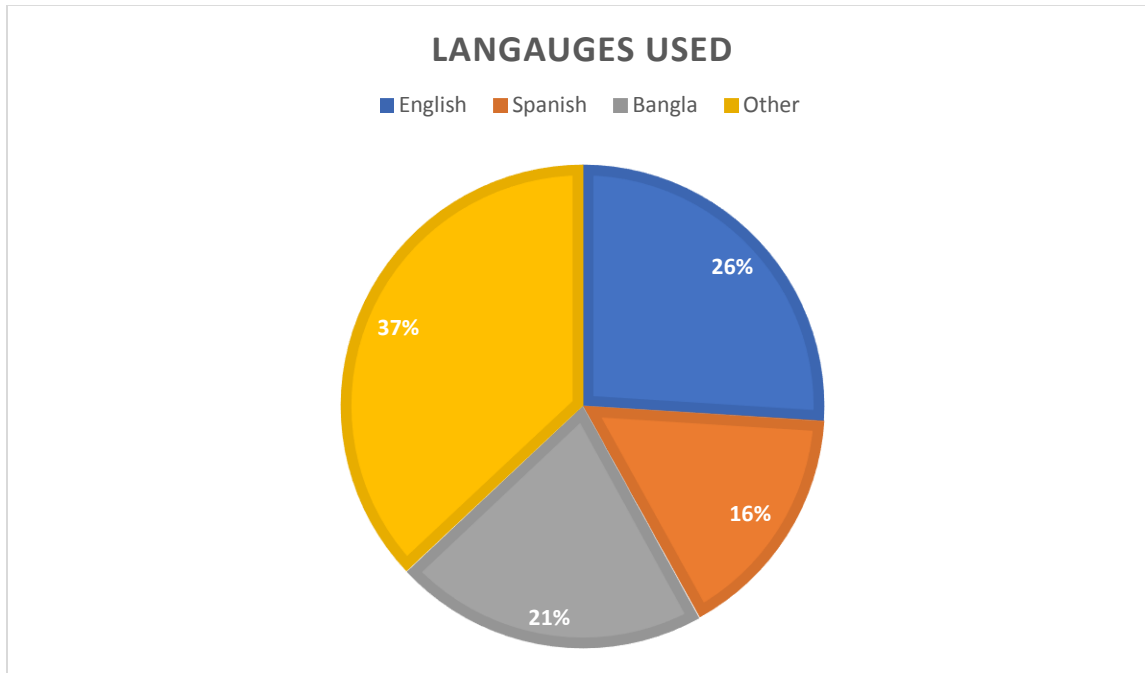
Figure 2:

Figure 2 shows a visual representation of the percentages of each encountered language within the raw data collection.

Figure 2 shows percentages as to what languages appeared most in the 24-hour data collection. The amount of experiences within each language was divided by the total language encounters observed, which was 19. Shown in the figure are the languages and the percentages, in a color-coded fashion. A large portion of the witnessed languages are shown as "Other" in the above chart. The languages included within this category are: Japanese, Chinese, Spanglish, French, Russian, African, and Emoji's. These 7 languages listed under "Other", were all observed once within the duration of this 24-hour period; whereas, English, Spanish, and Bangla were observed more than once within this data collection. The English language held 26% of the observations. The language of Bangla (from Bangladesh) held 21%. The Spanish

language held 16%. The 7 "Other" languages, that had minor appearances in my day, held 37%.

Discussion:

This 24-hour study was able to provide a basis for, not only my personal language use and witnessing, but for the majority of native English literates who live in New York City, through the implementation of percentages. These percentages were able to show how much each language is encountered. Clearly through this research, the city of New York's multilingualism is prevalent, by the observation of 10 different languages. Personally, I am multilingual: being able to read, write, speak, and comprehend English and Spanish; and in a current stage of attempting to learn Bangla, so understanding only a few phrases. Thus, the 24-hour experience collecting data could be applied to others who live in the city as well, simply by understanding multilingualism.

The majority of language encounters observed within this research were through the public; such as, subway advertisements and outside conversations. Since these were public observations, these experiences could be similar to other native English speakers in New York City. To continue, through the analyzation of this data, English is the prominent language used in both my life and in New York City. Being that English held 26% of the pie chart, it shows that it was the primary, singular language that was witnessed. To conclude this idea, the results may be proof as to how the prominent language used within a population shows through the advertisements, signs, conversations, and menus within a community. Thus, showing that the idea of discourse grows within and forms directly from a community or population... otherwise known as

discourse community. The largest finding within this research was the percentage of languages encountered daily that hold little significance in my personal life, yet still are witnessed. The highest percentage found in the pie chart was 37%, being the "Other" category. Being that this category was the majority, it can be concluded that most of the languages that I encounter daily consist of a variety that do not hold major significance to me.

Just as any reliable researcher must admit, my data had flaws within the methodology. This in turn could have affected the final analysis and drawing of conclusions for my findings; thus, as the reader, take these possible systematic errors into consideration. To begin, I feel that there is a possibility to have missed a language that I encountered. Possibly, overlooking an aspect revolving around language that I am so used to in my daily life, could have affected the raw data. Clearly, this is a major flaw since it would change my statistical data within the pie chart, and ultimately my analyzation and conclusions drawn from the study. To continue, there were some data that I was unable to configure what language was being used; thus, excluding those from the raw data. Also, during the period of raw data collection, I was in a stage of attempting to learn Bangla. My results are abnormal, in a sense that I was focused on learning the Bangla language; thus, spending more time using and experiencing the language than I would on a normal, regular basis. Although there were these possible flaws, the raw data was observed and recorded accurately and to the best of my abilities.

Through a 24-hour research period, data was gathered and analyzed, surrounding my personal and situational interactions about discourse. Through the

collection of data, its interpretation, as well as its analyzation, conclusions were able to be drawn. Through analyzation, I found that the majority of my daily language encounters involve language usage that go unrecognized and are not significant parts of my personal daily use of language. Through this research study, the simplistic idea of language use proved to be more complex, by showing how discourse community and multilingualism affect our daily lives.

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