

Key hypotheses

1. Hypotheses concerning communicative sustainability

Communicative sustainability is defined in the first place as auto-propagation of an exogenous innovative message in the target community, independently of external stimuli. Communicative sustainability, in other words, results from the substitution of an endogenous source to the original exogenous source of an innovative message.

In a more explicitly participatory mood, communicative sustainability can alternatively be defined as the set of conditions under which sustainable knowledge can be constructed collaboratively between the exponents of the DSL and DTL poles. In either case, the DTL is assumed to be central to the process leading to communicative sustainability.

Communicative sustainability presupposes *control over linguistic and other communicative resources* required for debating issues in DC (the *konon* principle), for naming new objects (2), monitoring inferences drawn by participants from debate and argumentation relative to a given field of activity (3), and management of face of the players involved in the DC arena (4).

2. Hypotheses concerning conceptual and lexical innovation

Indigenization of innovative concepts are subject to the "host" principle. Contrary to a common assumption according to which innovative concepts and their terminological correlates are adopted through exposure to appropriate verbal or visual stimuli (e.g. Mutembei et al. 2002:3), the construction of an object, phenomenon or procedure as a reproducible, i.e. a sustainable value in local discourse is contingent on its being assigned its place in the relational network of culturally pre-existent knowledge structures¹ (Dudley 1993:71; Bearth 2000b:85f.; see also Tourneux 1993 regarding visual stimuli).

Lexical innovation and empowerment. Lexical innovation is generally regarded as accessory to development, having to do with assimilation and understanding of new concepts. However, naming new phenomena in the local language is a means of classifying and appropriating them; it is tantamount to gaining control over things and states-of-affairs in the field of action constituted by a given development process. Control over processes of conceptual innovation and, as its linguistic corollary, over neology, is therefore an essential aspect of local empowerment.²

3. Hypotheses concerning negotiation, argumentation and decision-taking

Participatory action as a subtype of collaborative action presupposes prior negotiation of direction of action, actors' roles and means of action through discourse procedures recognized as valid and appropriate by the community or group concerned by the action. Empowerment for negotiation presupposes argumentative competence, i.e. control over linguistic resources required for argumentation. Argumentative competence includes the capacity to monitor inferences drawn from one's own and other participants' utterances or discourses. The usual medium which meets these requirements is the local language.

¹ E.g. notions such as calorie, protein, vitamin etc. are part of a system of knowledge from which the value of each individual term is derived via its relation to the others.

² Considering language as a local institution, the definition of empowerment offered on the World Bank homepage perfectly applies <www.worldbank.org>: "Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives."

The *Konon* principle (Tura): Its main purpose is to establish *control over communicative resources* relevant to a given issue, *prior to any decision regarding the issue itself*.

Strategies of argumentation and decision-taking rely on culture-specific presuppositions and on inferential knowledge which is not usually made explicit. As was observed in the Tura pilot study, a general property of local knowledge is its circumstantial nature. Cultural presuppositions are crucial in influencing decisions but are not usually made explicit, and, from the perspective of local participants, do not need to. From the researcher's perspective, this constitutes a major methodological challenge (see 3.2).

Recast in terms of face theory (Brown/Levinson 1987), constraints on utterability may be assumed to obey the principle that domains whose evocation is potentially face-threatening to either party or appears to incur social risks difficult to calculate for the speaker or his/her group, tend to become "discourse taboos".³

4. Hypotheses concerning the nature and effects of the DSL/DTL boundary

Epistemic and social barriers due to the DSL/DTL frontier restrict exchange in predictable ways. True dialogue (which is more than an exchange of words) is very difficult to achieve in a situation constituted by two different, not mutually controllable discourses only linked by a translational interface which itself is not mutually controllable. (See "The interpreter's paradox" in Bearth/Fan 2005, 2.2.)

Assumptions concerning the incidence of "discourse taboos" on development:

- Less a given topic is talked about, the more powerful it is as a potential obstacle to change.
- The more deeply resistance against change is embedded in specific local experience, the more negotiating effort is needed to overcome it, but the less it is likely to surface in the presence of outside agents, i.e. in typical DSL/DTL dichotomous speech situations, where the social consequences of what is said cannot be fully monitored.

5. Hypotheses concerning gender specific discourse in development communication

The inquiry into gender role and discursive strategies starts from the hypothesis that women's discourse in traditional society shows a persistent preference for *strategies of verbal indirection*, and sometimes *strategic ambiguity*, in expressing or defending their views, and for attenuating strategies in asserting themselves. To consolidate this hypothesis, *in-group verbal behaviour* (women only) and *out-group verbal behaviour* (mixed consultation groups, public debates) will be systematically contrasted. Preliminary observation suggests a further hypothesis in need of elucidation: the same preferential strategies tend to be (deliberately?) maintained in spite of the loosening of traditional constraints against female self-assertion which is taking place even in many of the more remote ethnic groups with traditionally strong patriarchal structures.

³ E.g. negative evaluations of outsider's actions who are in a position of superiority, or are considered to be affiliated to local or state government, are not only threats to those to whom criticized action is imputed, but constitute a potential threat to those who utter them.