Sociolinguistics

The Essential Readings

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Bilingualism With and Without Diglossia; Diglossia With and Without Bilingualism

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The psychological literature on bilingualism is so much more extensive than its socio-logical counterpart that workers in the former field have often failed to establish contact with those in the latter. In the past decade a very respectable sociological (or sociolog-ically oriented) literature has developed dealing with bilingual societies. It is the purpose of this paper to relate these two research traditions to each other by tracing the inter-action between their two major constructs: bilingualism (on the part of psychologists) and diglossia (on the part of sociologists).

1 Diglossia

In the few years that have elapsed since Ferguson (1959) first advanced it, the term diglossia has not only become widely accepted by sociolinguists and sociologists of lan-guage, but it has been further extended and refined. Initially it was used in connection with a society that used two (or more) languages for internal (intra-society) communi-cation. The use of several separate codes within a single society (and their stable main-tenance rather than the displacement of one by the other over time) was found to be dependent on each code's serving functions distinct from those considered appropriate for the other. Whereas one set of behaviors, attitudes and values supported, and was expressed in, one language, another set of behaviors, attitudes and values supported and was expressed in the other. Both sets of behaviors, attitudes and values were fully accepted as culturally legitimate and complementary (i.e., nonconflictual) and indeed, little if any conflict between them was possible in view of the functional separation between them. This separation was most often along the lines of an H(igh) language, on the one hand, utilized in conjunction with religion, education and other aspects of high culture, and an L(ow) language, on the other hand, utilized in conjunction with everyday pursuits of hearth, home and work. Ferguson spoke of H and L as superposed languages.

To this original edifice others have added several significant considerations. Gumperz (1961, 1962, 1964a, 1964b, 1966) is primarily responsible for our current awareness that diglossia exists not only in multilingual societies which officially recognize several "languages" but, also, in societies which are multilingual in the sense that they employ separate dialects, registers or functionally differentiated language varieties of whatever kind. He has also done the lion's share of the work in providing the conceptual ap-

DIGLOSSIA

BILINGUALISM	+	−
+	1. Both diglossia and bilingualism	2. Bilingualism without diglossia
−	3. Diglossia without bilingualism	4. Neither diglossia nor bilingualism

Figure 1   The relationships between bilingualism and diglossia

paratus by means of which investigators of multilingual speech communities seek to discern the societal patterns that govern the use of one variety rather than another, particularly at the level of small group interaction. On the other hand, I have attempted to trace the maintenance of diglossia as well as its disruption at the national level (1964, 1965a, 1965c, 1965d, 1965f, 1966a, 1966b), and in addition have attempted to relate diglossia to psychologically pertinent considerations such as compound and coordinate bilingualism (1965e). The present paper represents an extension and integration of these several previous attempts.

For purposes of simplicity it seems best to represent the possible relationships between bilingualism and diglossia by means of a fourfold table such as that shown in Figure I.

2   Speech Communities Characterized by Both Diglossia and Bilingualism

The first quadrant of Figure I refers to those speech communities in which both diglossia and bilingualism occur. At times such communities comprise an entire nation, but of course this requires very widespread (if not all-pervasive) bilingualism. An example of this type of nation is Paraguay, where almost the entire population speaks both Spanish and Guarani (Rubin, 1962; 1966). The formerly monolingual rural population has added Spanish to its linguistic repertoire in order to talk and write about education, religion, government, high culture and social distance or, more generally, the status stressing spheres; whereas the majority of city dwellers (being relatively new from the country) maintain Guarani for matters of intimacy and primary group solidarity even in the midst of Spanish urbanity.[1] A further example is the Swiss-German cantons in which the entire population of school age and older alternates between High German (H) and Swiss German (L), each with its own firmly established and highly valued functions (Ferguson, 1959; Weinreich, 1951; 1953).

Below the level of nationwide functioning there are many more examples of stable diglossia co-occurring with widespread bilingualism. Traditional (pre-World War I) Eastern European Jewish males communicated in Hebrew (H) and Yiddish (L). In more recent days their descendents have continued to do so adding to their repertoire a Western language (notably English) for *intragroup* communication as well as in domains of *intergroup* contact (Fishman, 1965c; Weinreich, 1951, 1953; 1962).[2] A similar example

is that of upper and upper middle class males throughout the Arabic world who use classical (koranic) and vernacular (Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqui, etc.) Arabic and, not infrequently, also a Western language (French or English, most usually) for purposes of *intragroup* scientific or technological communication (Blanc, 1964; Ferguson, 1959; Nader, 1962).

All of the foregoing examples have in common the existence of a fairly large and complex speech community in which the members have available to them both a range of *compartmentalized* roles as well as ready *access* to these roles. If the *role repertoires* of these speech communities were of lesser range, then their *linguistic repertoires* would also be(come) more restricted in range, with the result that separate languages or varieties would be(come) superfluous. In addition, were the roles not compartmentalized, i.e., were they not *kept separate* by dint of association with quite separate (though complementary) values, domains of activity and everyday situations,[3] one language (or variety) would displace the other as role and value distinctions merged and became blurred. Finally, were widespread access not available to the variety of compartmentalized roles (and compartmentalized languages or varieties), then the bilingual population would be a small, privileged caste or class (as it is or was throughout most of traditional India or China) rather than a broadly based population segment.

These observations lead to the conclusion that many modern speech communities that are normally thought of as monolingual are, rather, marked by both diglossia and bilingualism if their several registers (speech varieties related to functional specificity; Halliday, 1964) are viewed as separate varieties or languages in the same sense as the examples listed above. Wherever speech communities exist whose speakers engage in a considerable range of roles (and this is coming to be the case for all but the extremely upper and lower levels of complex societies); wherever access to several roles is encouraged or facilitated by powerful social institutions and processes; and finally, wherever the roles are clearly differentiated (in terms of when, where and with whom they are felt to be appropriate), both diglossia and bilingualism may be said to exist. The benefit of this approach to the topic at hand is that it provides a single theoretical framework for viewing bilingual speech communities and speech communities whose linguistic diversity is realized through varieties not (yet) recognized as constituting separate "languages". Thus, it becomes possible for us to note that while nations characterized by diglossia and widespread bilingualism (the latter term being understood in its usual sense of referring to separate languages) have become fewer in modern times, those characterized by diglossia and diversified linguistic repertoires have increased greatly as a consequence of modernization and growing social complexity. The single theory outlined above enabling us to understand, predict and interrelate both of these phenomena is an instance of enviable parsimony in the behavioral sciences.[4]

3 Diglossia Without Bilingualism

There are situations in which diglossia obtains whereas bilingualism is generally absent (quadrant 3). Here, two or more speech communities are united religiously, politically or economically into a single functioning unit notwithstanding the socio-cultural cleavages that separate them. At the level of this larger (but not always voluntary) unity, two

or more languages or varieties are recognized as obtaining. However, one (or both) of the speech communities involved is (are) marked by relatively impermeable group boundaries such that for "outsiders" (and this may well mean all those not born into the speech community, i.e., an emphasis on ascribed rather than on achieved status) role access and linguistic access are severely restricted. At the same time linguistic repertoires in one or both groups are limited due to role specialization.

Examples of such situations are not hard to find (see, e.g., the many instances listed by Kloss, 1966). Pre-World War I European elites often stood in this relationship with their countrymen, the elites speaking French or some other fashionable H tongue for their *intragroup* purposes (at various times and in various places: Danish, Salish, Provençal, Russian, etc.) and the masses speaking another, not necessarily linguistically related, language for their intragroup purposes. Since the majority of elites and the majority of the masses never interacted with one another *they did not form a single speech community* (i.e. their linguistic repertoires were discontinuous) and their intercommunications were via translators or interpreters (a certain sign of *intragroup* monolingualism). Since the majority of the elites and the majority of the masses led lives characterized by extremely narrow role repertoires their linguistic repertoires too were too narrow to permit widespread societal bilingualism to develop. Nevertheless, the body politic in all of its economic and national manifestations tied these two groups together into a "unity" that revealed an upper and a lower class, each with a language appropriate to its own restricted concerns.

Thus, the existence of national diglossia does *not* imply widespread bilingualism amongst rural or recently urbanized African groups (as distinguished from Westernized elites in those settings); nor amongst most lower caste Hindus, as distinguished from their more fortunate compatriots the Brahmins, nor amongst most lower class French-Canadians, as distinguished from their upper and upper middle class city cousins, etc. In general, this pattern is characteristic of polities that are economically underdeveloped and unmobilized, combining groups that are locked into opposite extremes of the social spectrum and, therefore, groups that operate within extremely restricted and discontinuous linguistic repertoires. Obviously, such polities are bound to experience language problems as their social patterns alter in the direction of industrialization, widespread literacy and education, democratization, and modernization more generally. Since such polities rarely developed out of initial socio-cultural consensus or unity, the educational, political and economic development of the lower classes is likely to lead to secessionism or to demands for equality for submerged language(s). The linguistic states of Eastern Europe and India, and the language problems of Wales, Canada and Belgium stem from origins such as these.[5] This is the pattern of development that may yet convulse modern African nations if their de-ethnicized Westernized elites and diglossic language policies continue to fail to create bilingual speech communities, incorporating the masses, within their ethnically arbitrary political boundaries.

4   Bilingualism Without Diglossia

We turn next to those situations in which bilingualism obtains whereas diglossia is generally absent (quadrant 2). Here we see even more clearly than before that bilingualism

is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic behavior whereas diglossia is a characterization of linguistic organization at the socio-cultural level. Under what circumstances do bilinguals of similar cultural extraction nevertheless function without the benefit of a well understood and widely accepted social consensus as to which language is to be used between which interlocutors, for communication concerning what topics or for what purposes? Under what circumstances do the varieties or languages involved lack well defined or protected separate functions? Briefly put, these are circumstances of rapid social change, of great social unrest, of widespread abandonment of prior norms before the consolidation of new ones.

Many studies of bilingualism and intelligence or of bilingualism and school achievement have been conducted within the context of bilingualism without diglossia, often without sufficient understanding on the part of investigators that this was but one of several possible contexts for the study of bilingualism. As a result many of the purported "disadvantages" of bilingualism have been falsely generalized to the phenomenon at large rather than related to the absence or presence of social patterns which reach substantially beyond bilingualism (Fishman, 1965b, 1966c).

The history of industrialization in the Western world (as well as in those parts of Africa and Asia which have experienced industrialization under Western "auspices") is such that the means (capital, plant, organization) of production were often derived from one speech community while the productive manpower was drawn from another. Initially both speech communities may have maintained their separate diglossia-with-bilingualism patterns or, alternatively, that of an overarching diglossia without bilingualism. In either case, the needs as well as the consequences of rapid and massive industrialization and urbanization were frequently such that members of the speech community providing productive manpower rapidly abandoned their traditional sociocultural patterns and learned (or were taught) the language of the means of production much earlier than their absorption into the sociocultural patterns and privileges to which that language pertained. In response to this imbalance some react(ed) by further stressing the advantages of the newly gained language of education and industry while others react(ed) by seeking to replace the latter by an elaborated version of their own largely pre-industrial, pre-urban, pre-mobilization tongue.

Under circumstances such as these no well established, socially recognized and protected functional differentiation of languages obtains in many speech communities of the lower and lower middle classes. Dislocated immigrants and their children (for whom a separate "political solution" is seldom possible) are particularly inclined to use their mother tongue and other tongue for intragroup communication in seemingly random fashion (Nahirny and Fishman, 1965; Fishman, 1965f). Since the formerly separate roles of the home domain, the school domain and the work domain are all disturbed by the massive dislocation of values and norms that result from simultaneous immigration and industrialization, the language of work (and of the school) comes to be used at home (just as in cases of more radical and better organized social change the language of the home comes to be established in school and at work). As role compartmentalization and value complementarity decrease under the impact of foreign models and massive change the linguistic repertoire also becomes less compartmentalized. Languages and varieties formerly kept apart come to influence each other phonetically, lexically, semantically and even grammatically much more than before. Instead of two

(or more) carefully separated languages each under the eye of caretaker groups of teachers, preachers and writers, several intervening varieties may obtain, differing in degree of interpenetration. Such fused varieties may, within time, become the mother tongue and only tongue of a new generation. Thus, bilingualism without diglossia tends to be transitional[6] both in terms of the linguistic repertoires of speech communities as well as in terms of the speech varieties involved per se. Without separate though complementary norms and values to establish and maintain functional separation of the speech varieties, that language or variety which is fortunate enough to be associated with the predominant drift of social forces tends to displace the other(s). Furthermore, pidginization is likely to set in when members of the "work force" are so dislocated as not to be able to maintain or develop significantly compartmentalized, limited access roles (in which they might be able to safeguard a stable mother tongue variety) and, furthermore, cannot interact sufficiently with those members of the "power class" who might serve as standard other-tongue models.

5   Neither Diglossia nor Bilingualism

Only very small, isolated and undifferentiated speech communities may be said to reveal neither diglossia nor bilingualism (Gumperz, 1962; Fishman, 1965d). Given little role differentiation or compartmentalization and frequent face to face interaction between all members of the speech community no fully differentiated registers or varieties may establish themselves. Given self-sufficiency no regular or significant contacts with other speech communities may be maintained. Nevertheless, such groups – be they bands or clans – are easier to hypothesize than to find. All communities seem to have certain ceremonies or pursuits to which access is limited, if only on an age basis. Thus, all linguistic repertoires contain certain terms that are unknown to certain members of the speech community, and certain terms that are used differently by different subsets of speakers. In addition, metaphorical switching (Blom and Gumperz, 1966) for purposes of emphasis, humor, satire or criticism must be available in some form even in relatively undifferentiated communities. Finally, such factors as exogamy, warfare, expansion of population, economic growth and contact with others all lead to internal diversification and, consequently, to repertoire diversification. Such diversification is the beginning of bilingualism. Its societal normification is the hallmark of diglossia. Quadrant four tends to be self liquidating.

Many efforts are now underway to bring to pass a rapprochement between psychological, linguistic and sociological work on bilingualism. The student of bilingualism, most particularly the student of bilingualism in the context of social issues and social change, may benefit from an awareness of the various possible relationships between individual bilingualism and societal diglossia illustrated in this paper. Since all bilingualism occurs in a social context, and since this context is likely to influence both the manifestations and the concomitants of bilingualism, it is incumbent on the student of bilingualism to differentiate accurately between the particular and the more general phenomena that pertain to his field of study.

Notes

1   Note that Guarani is not an official language (i.e., recognized and utilized for purposes of government, formal education, the courts, etc.) in Paraguay. It is not uncommon for the H variety alone to have such recognition in diglossic settings without this fact threatening the acceptance or the stability of the L variety within the speech community. However, the existence of a single "official" language should not divert the investigator from recognizing the fact of widespread and stable bilingualism at the levels of societal and interpersonal functioning.

2   This development differs significantly from the traditional Eastern European Jewish pattern in which males whose occupational activities brought them into regular contact with various strata of the non-Jewish coterritorial population utilized one or more coterritorial languages (usually involving H and L varieties of their own, such as Russian, German or Polish on the one hand, and Ukrainian, Byelorussian or "Baltic" varieties, on the other), but did so for *intergroup* purposes almost exclusively.

3   The compartmentalization of roles (and of domains and situations as well) requires the redefinition of roles, domains and situations in any encounter in which a seemingly inappropriate topic must be discussed between individuals who normally stand in a given role-relationship to each other. Under such circumstances one or other factor is altered (the roles are redefined, the topic is redefined) so as to preserve the cultural norms for appropriateness (grammaticality) of behavior between interlocutors.

4   A theory which tends to minimize the distinction between languages and varieties is desirable for several reasons. It implies that *social* consensus (rather than inherently linguistic desiderata) differentiates between the two and that separate varieties can become (and have become) separate languages given certain social encouragement to do so, just as purportedly separate languages have been fused into one, on the ground that they were merely different varieties of the same language.

5   Switzerland as a whole is not a case in point since it is *not* an example of discontinuous and hierarchically stratified speech communities under a common political regime. Switzerland consists of geographically stratified speech communities under a common regime. Except for the Swiss-German case there is hardly any societally patterned bilingualism in Switzerland. Only the Jura region, the Romansch area and a very few other small areas have (had) a recent history of diglossia without bilingualism.

6   At an individual level this need not be the case since translation bilingualism can be maintained for intragroup communication purposes and for individual vocational purposes without the formation of natural bilingual speech communities.

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