

I don't feel a stranger any more - and I do enjoy speaking the language!"

An Introduction to
BILINGUALISM

Charlotte Hoffmann

"Jeg føler mig ikke så fremmed mere her i landet. Og børnene taler jo som andre engelske børn, selvom vi bruger vores egne sprog i hjemmet."

"I've been in this country for such a long time that I don't feel a stranger any more - and I do enjoy speaking the language!"

"Yo pienso que uno siempre se siente un poco distinto de los demás en un país extranjero, aunque esté muy a gusto; además, se me nota un cierto acento, ¿no?"

"Als Ausländer lebte ich gut hier, ich habe mich an Sprache, Temperament und Lebensweise gewöhnt. Aber der Kontakt mit der Muttersprache bleibt weiterhin ganz wichtig!"

"Jeg føler mig ikke så fremmed mere her i landet. Og børnene taler jo som andre engelske børn, selvom vi bruger vores egne sprog i hjemmet."

"Yo pienso que uno siempre se siente un poco distinto de los demás en un país extranjero, aunque esté muy a gusto; además, se me nota un cierto acento, ¿no?"

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Charlotte Hoffmann

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Preface

During the last decade or so researchers into bilingualism have been extraordinarily prolific, and considerable advances have been made in our understanding of the subject. To those who have either a professional or a personal interest (or both) in this area, it has indeed been exciting to observe the progress made. At the same time, the task of presenting an introductory study has been made more difficult, in that it has become necessary to make more decisions about what aspects to include in the discussion of each topic dealt with and which contributions by scholars to exclude.

As an introduction to bilingualism, my aim in writing this book has been to discuss the most important aspects and pertinent concepts of individual and societal bilingualism, endeavouring to give some idea of the complexity of some of the issues involved, as well as of the present state of the relevant research. The need to be selective has led to the decision to focus on the patterns of bilingual acquisition and use among bilingual children in Part I and to the adoption of a European bias in Part II, where examples are taken primarily from European multilingual settings – the discussion of which necessarily reflects the author's own acquaintance with certain aspects of European culture. Similarly, illustrations of linguistic points (e.g. of language use among bilinguals) often involve the European languages of which the author has either specialist knowledge or a degree of familiarity. This European orientation may have the advantage of enabling the reader to see how truly normal and widespread the phenomenon of bilingualism is, even on a continent where most component countries still like to perceive themselves as monolingual nation states.

The structure of the book was originally conceived on the basis of

courses on Bilingualism taught to final-year Modern Language students and to postgraduates who had undergone training in European languages. While no previous knowledge of the subject of bilingualism is assumed here, I have presupposed familiarity with basic linguistic concepts (e.g. 'semantics', 'loan words', 'phonological development'). Technical terms are given in inverted commas (e.g. 'blend', 'code-switching') or italics (*language shift*) where they may be first introduced, but thereafter they may be used without inverted commas or emphasis. In both Parts, the individual chapters have been organized so that the general discussion precedes the examination of specific aspects. It is possible, however, to read sections of the book on their own or out of sequence; in this case, the cross-references can serve as pointers to related issues.

In preparing the pages that follow, I have drawn widely on my own experience of bilingualism, which therefore needs to be explained briefly. I grew up speaking two languages (Danish and German) and was trained as a linguist; as a young adult, I moved from Germany to Britain, where I settled and married a Spaniard. I use different languages depending on whom I am speaking to or what I am talking about, and I feel a different kind of cultural and emotional attachment to the languages involved. In other words, I use and relate to language in the same way as many bi- or multilinguals, immigrants, migrants and children of linguistically mixed parentage. The initial impetus for pursuing the study of bilingualism was provided by my children, as the experience of seeing bi- and trilingual language development at first-hand brought the whole subject alive. The same has happened to many other linguist-parents, who have raised their children to use more than one language and have recorded their observations, thus providing data for the analysis of bilingual language acquisition. The study of child language requires a good deal of close observation, for which parents may be in a privileged position – one of which they are entitled to take advantage. This, I feel, explains the frequent mention of the language use of linguists' own children (the present author's included).

My experience of bilingual speakers of both sexes and all ages has led me to adopt a usage of personal pronouns which may seem odd. I employ 'he' or 'she', and also the less personal '(s)he', in reference to noun phrases such as 'the bilingual', 'the individual speaker' and 'the child', because I often, though not always, had particular people in mind.

A CAMPUS Scholarship awarded by my University enabled me to

undertake research in the context of linguistic minority settings. Many colleagues helped in the task of completing the book. My former Chairman of Department, Martin Harris, provided both the initial stimulus and subsequent patient support. Several members of staff in the Department of Modern Languages at Salford gave me cheerful encouragement, furnished me with examples, observations and anecdotes about their own bilingual experiences, and generally commented on parts of earlier drafts. I am particularly grateful to Andy Hollis for his meticulous and good-humoured scrutiny of several chapters and for his remarks on matters of content as well as style; without his suggestions this book would contain many more Teutonisms and bilingual speech markers than it does already (incidentally, I hope that he, too, now sees himself as one of Europe's bilinguals). Andrew Dobson, of Keele University, kindly advised me on several points in Chapter 10, which draws heavily on other disciplines. Alan Yates, of Sheffield University, and my colleague Eulàlia Torras, read Chapter 13 and made some useful comments. Suzanne Romaine read the final draft and made many detailed and valuable points, thus generously sharing with me her knowledge and understanding of bilingualism. To all these colleagues my sincere thanks. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for any shortcomings of content or infelicities of English style that remain.

Many friends and relatives in a number of European countries and beyond demonstrated their support for my project in different ways which I now gratefully acknowledge. My greatest debt is to my children and my husband. Cristina and Pascual unwittingly provided numerous instances of bilingual speech behaviour and, rather more consciously, endured a good deal of discussion on the subject at the family table. They rarely complained when my writing took preference over family life. I thank them for their help and tolerance. My husband was my ever-willing critic and sounding board; without his unfailing support and his enthusiasm for bilingualism this book could not have been written. I can only hope that it justifies the *ilusión* he imbued in me.

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NOTE: All references to the Federal Republic of Germany in this book are to West Germany prior to German reunification in 1990.

This book is for

Paco, mi bilingüe favorito;

meine Kinder Cristina und Pascual;

og min mor, som startede det hele.

Introduction

Bilingualism – a natural phenomenon

To what extent can we ever speak, within a European context, of communities or languages which have developed in isolation, without contact with other peoples, cultures and languages? One would have to look to the outer fringes of the continent. Iceland and perhaps Portugal are probably the only European states which are genuinely monoethnic – but their inhabitants are not necessarily monolingual. The usual state of affairs elsewhere in Europe, and in most of the rest of the world, is that over the years and the centuries, communities establish links with one another, whether friendly, commercial or belligerent. The experience gained from such associations can be either positive or negative for those concerned. One constant factor in such contacts, however, is that they always influence in some way the speech behaviour of the people involved – and therefore, eventually, their languages. Sometimes the result is bilingualism, sometimes the languages are affected by borrowing or change. With the passage of time, one community may undergo gradual language shift, replacing bilingualism with monolingualism, as is the case, for instance, in Brittany, where Breton is giving way to French. Or a sudden change in the conditions of life in a community may cause it to adopt a hitherto unused language on a widespread basis, as became common during colonial times in many parts of Africa and Asia.

Linguistic frontiers rarely coincide with political ones. The former, however, if they are marked by geographical features, such as wide waterways or high mountains, sometimes prove to be remarkably stable, whatever happens to the latter. In general, both political and linguistic demarcations are subject to change. Virtually everywhere

countries have, in the course of their history, seen their borders expand or retract according to political fortune. Yet historians seldom record the linguistic impact on people made by occupation, annexation or enforced change of allegiance as a result of war, political marriage or some other cause. I find such scant reflection on linguistic matters quite surprising considering the role language plays in our lives.

Centuries of political, economic and cultural interaction have made Europe a continent with widespread bilingualism. At a political level, most of the world's sovereign states consider themselves to be monolingual, an attitude held by dominant élites and no doubt influenced by the pervasiveness of political philosophies that promote the one-nation-one-language ideal. But this ideal does not reflect reality as, at the societal level, multilingualism exists, almost everywhere, as a result, on the one hand, of historical events bringing about major shifts in power and numerous border changes, and, on the other, of immigration and migration.

As far as western Europe is concerned, it is necessary to add that, whereas multilingualism at the level of society is common, bilingualism among individual speakers in some of the larger countries is less frequent. There are a dozen or so languages spoken by sizeable communities in France and Germany, and well over a hundred in Britain, but, in spite of this, the majority of Britons, Germans and French people are monolingual in the sense that they use only one language for their normal day-to-day communication.

Of the five languages spoken by 45 per cent of the world's population (English, Spanish, Russian, Hindi and Chinese), the first three are used in many countries as second or official languages, and Hindi serves as a religious language for many, as well as being the national language of India. There are an estimated 5000 tongues in the world (Wardhaugh 1987; Crystal 1987), but only some 190 states, so it follows that many countries must contain many different languages, i.e. be multilingual. Approximately 95 per cent of the world's population are speakers of the 100 most frequently used languages.

In Europe only six countries are *officially* bilingual or multilingual: Belgium, Finland, Greenland, Switzerland, the USSR and Yugoslavia, and a handful of others accord official status of some kind to one or more of the languages of their linguistic minorities, e.g. the Netherlands to Frisian, Italy to German and the Federal Republic of Germany to Danish. In western Europe people tend to live in monolingual environments where there are relatively few natural contact situations

requiring the use of more than one language, unless the speakers are members of linguistic minorities. Being born into a minority community or into a bilingual family are the most common ways for Europeans to become bilingual. There are, of course, other reasons – personal, social or cultural – why individuals become bilingual. At one time, for example, French was spoken by all members of the European aristocracy as the use of this language signalled membership of the élite. Prussia's Frederick the Great once expressed the belief that German was suitable only 'for horses and soldiers' and professed that he spoke German 'like a coachman'. Incidentally, he also left proof that he did not write it very well. Today, when Scandinavian, German and Dutch technologists, academics or business people meet, they are likely to discuss their work in English, because this is the language most widely used by such specialists for international communication. And Flemish-speaking Belgians embarking upon an administrative career in Brussels need to be fluent in French. For many Europeans adding another language to their repertoire has become desirable and often necessary. In other continents natural linguistic diversity is more prevalent, and for many communities bilingualism is a normal requirement for daily communication and not a sign of any particular achievement.

The role of attitudes

Bilingualism arises as a result of contact. Whether it spreads throughout the community and is maintained depends on whether the conditions for its development are right. These, in turn, are determined by individual and group attitudes towards (1) the two languages involved, and (2) bilingualism itself. In Europe there is considerable linguistic diversity, yet this fact is rarely reflected in the official policies adopted by most European countries. Few states encourage the learning of minority languages, for instance, as part of the school curriculum for both minority and majority children. Attitudes towards bilingualism range from officially promoting or accepting it, as is the case in the officially bilingual countries mentioned earlier, to granting some regions within a state the right to use the regional language in administration and education, as happens in Spain with regard to Catalan, Basque and Galician. Government acceptance of bilingualism, rather than active promotion, seems to be the attitude that underlies bilingual arrangements in Wales, where some schools offer Welsh-me-

dium instruction and others use both English and Welsh, while some public institutions (but not all) offer services in both languages. Whereas West Germans and Danes may regard individual bilingualism positively, especially if it involves languages which are considered 'useful' (e.g. English or French), they may express less admiration about bilingualism of their Turkish migrant communities. In Britain, the suggestion that the children of the majority might profit from learning the languages of some of the immigrant groups (such as Cantonese or Urdu) has been greeted by many people with indifference and by some with outright hostility.

As a result both of political developments and social pressure, attitudes towards bilingualism are changing for the better in many parts of the world. One of the landmarks in this process is what happened in the United States during the 1960s. At the same time as the position of minorities was being revised in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, the United States experienced large-scale immigration from Spanish-speaking people who neither assimilated Anglo-Saxon culture and values nor shed their mother tongue as readily as previous generations of immigrants had done. The debate that took place both in intellectual and political circles eventually led to legislation supporting bilingual education programmes.¹ At about the same time Canada declared itself a bilingual state and officially enshrined the language rights of its French-speaking minority in law, by means of a number of legislative measures. This came about after a series of political crises prompted by the social and economic grievances of French Canadians and the threat of secession by the province of Québec. However, little was done to promote the language needs of Canada's many other minorities, such as the indigenous Inuit and the immigrants from Poland, Ukraine and Hong Kong, to name but a few.

Bilingualism as a problem and as a resource

Individual bilingualism has, in the past, often been blamed for a bilingual child's underachievement at school and in intelligence tests; and it has been considered to lie at the root of minority members' lack of assimilation to mainstream society. Some of these claims are analysed in Chapters 6 and 7, where it is suggested that social causes, rather than bilingualism, are usually responsible for problems of this kind.

Societal multilingualism can also be seen as a problem, if one believes that language itself (not just people) can cause conflict. For

example, Fasold (1984: 4) suggests that 'multilingualism works against nationalism' in countries which are still undergoing a process of nation building and where there is no universally agreed language to unify a state's diverse ethnic groups. Wardhaugh's (1987) study of language spread and decline focuses on issues raised by the competition of languages within countries which have been linguistically invaded from outside the national borders. He argues that some kind of conflict between languages will ensue once the boundaries between them (territorial, ethnic, political or functional) come under pressure, and that this may result in a major change in a group's language patterns:

When such boundaries are weak, the languages will not only be in contact, they will also be in competition. As one gains territory, speakers, or functions, all others lose. Bilingualism may not be a real choice in such circumstances; it may be no more than a temporary expedient, a somewhat marginal phenomenon, because when one language encroaches on another, bilingualism may prove to be only a temporary waystage to unilingualism in the encroaching language as the latter assumes more and more functions and is acquired as the sole language by greater numbers of speakers.

(Wardhaugh 1987: 17)

Any such process is likely to lead to tension and resentment on the part of the group(s) involved. Speakers of the 'losing language(s)' may find themselves pushed to the political, social or cultural margin, and they may feel that their national or ethnic identity is under threat, along with the survival of their language.

Language contact usually results in an uneven distribution of language patterns among the groups involved. If distribution were identical, i.e. if the languages concerned were perceived as having equal prestige and they were each used to the same degree and in equivalent situations, then there would probably be no problem. But this is not often the case.

A preoccupation with the problems associated with bilingualism should not, however, obscure awareness of its likely benefits. In the first place, individual bilingualism is often experienced as an enriching attribute that facilitates a better understanding of the nature of language and provides an opportunity for gaining a deeper insight into two cultures. However, this favourable perception appears to depend on the socio-cultural context of bilingualism, as it is unlikely to be shared by those members of linguistic minorities who find themselves discriminated against by the dominant majority (which itself may have

negative attitudes towards bilingualism). A second possible advantage for members of multilingual groups is that they have at their disposal a wider range of linguistic resources than those who belong to monolingual communities. This may enable them to communicate with others in a more flexible and diverse way – a benefit which, in a world of increasing international communication, should be obvious. The study of bilingualism can provide greater awareness of the versatility of social organizations and the resourcefulness of human behaviour. In general, an appreciation of the issues involved in bilingualism may help to eliminate prejudice or fear.

The remit of the study of bilingualism

An examination of bilingualism involves looking at the many factors that contribute to its development, maintenance and loss, and at the different ways in which individuals or communities respond to the linguistic challenges they encounter. Bilingualism and multilingualism are not static conditions. In many immigrant groups the shift from the 'old' home language to that of the host country takes place over three generations; but the process is sometimes more rapid, leaving only the immigrant generation as bilingual. At other times, however, the shift takes much longer, or does not occur at all, leading to well-established bilingualism over many years. For the immigrant, learning to live in a new culture or to accommodate to a new language is a dynamic process. Individuals go through phases in their lives when one of their languages becomes weaker, or stronger, as the case may be; or they add new languages to their daily communicative repertoire, developing clearly defined situations in which each code will be used.

The field of study is multidisciplinary. We approach the study of bilingualism from at least three different perspectives, i.e. those of:

- (1) the individual;
- (2) the group;
- (3) the language systems.

A wide range of social sciences contribute towards our understanding of bilingualism: sociology, ethnology, anthropology, education, psychology and most branches of linguistics, including pragmatics. Each participating discipline brings with it its own methods and terminologies, and studies in bilingualism reflect the academic background of the researcher. Language behaviour is highly complex,

and no one academic subject alone can hope to explain it completely. Linguistic performance is influenced by emotional factors, by the speaker's linguistic knowledge, and by perceived social values and norms. The interplay of these (and other) determinants becomes even more intricate if the speech patterns of whole groups of people are under examination. Research into bilingualism must be multi- and interdisciplinary so that all the relevant phenomena can be described and accounted for. The ultimate aim, as in other social sciences, is to establish a valid theoretical construct.

One of the problems encountered by researchers into societal bilingualism relates to the reliability of data. When considering patterns of language use, one needs to handle such statistical information as is made available by official (or national) agencies. But many countries do not include questions on language use on their census questionnaires, or they may ask only one question, without specifying function or degree of competence, e.g. 'What language(s) do you speak?', which can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Nelde (1984) warns that language census data should always be approached critically, adding that in areas where there is conflict and minorities are disadvantaged results may not be at all meaningful. In such cases, he argues, the replies of minority members tend to be influenced by a number of extra-linguistic considerations which, in sociolinguistic analysis, it may be difficult to come to terms with. For instance, census returns may indicate a minority group's aspired rather than actual linguistic affiliations, and this may favour the dominant rather than the minority language. Socio-economic factors, too, may cause bias in answers to questionnaires, usually in the direction of the majority language.

The systematic description of bilingualism, particularly using a sociolinguistic approach, is of relatively recent origin. Einar Haugen's work on the Norwegian language in America (1953) and on bilingualism in the Americas (1965) constituted the first large-scale sociolinguistic analyses of bilingualism. Uriel Weinreich's book *Languages in Contact* (first published in 1953) quickly became a classic and was seminal in developing research methods combining both social, psychological and linguistic dimensions. Robert Lado's *Linguistics across Cultures* (1957) did much to arouse linguists' interest in cross-cultural and bilingual communication, and to open their eyes to the sociolinguistic reality of language use, thus weaning them away from an exclusive preoccupation with linguistic forms and norms.

Education plays a crucial role both in the personal and social devel-

opment of the bilingual individual and for the success of societal multilingualism. It has been attested (e.g. by Skutnabb-Kangas 1984a), for instance, that unless the educational system takes proper account of minority children's special language needs (in both languages), they will not become fully functional in the minority and the majority codes. On the other hand, a minority language that finds its way into the school curriculum will enjoy enhanced prestige and this can, in turn, positively affect public attitudes towards the language concerned and its speakers, who may then find it easier to maintain it. The issue of how best to educate minority children has become particularly urgent in many countries which have been affected by large-scale migration and emigration. Research in the area of bilingual education has often come as a response to such pressing needs.

Coverage and organization of this book

The organization of this book broadly reflects the two main strands in the study of bilingualism: in Part I individual bilinguals and their language use constitute the central focus, while in Part II a broader sociological and sociolinguistic approach is adopted for the discussion of multilingualism in society. Educational matters are raised in both parts, as they affect the development and maintenance of bilingualism in both the individual and society.

Part I seeks, from a microlinguistic point of view, to embrace both the psycholinguistic and the purely linguistic dimensions of bilingualism. Starting with the discussion of some definitions of bilingualism, Chapter 1 looks at individual bilingualism in a general way. Chapter 2 narrows the discussion to bilingual children, while Chapter 3 focuses specifically on the bilingual acquisition process. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the linguistic perspective, concentrating on bilingual competence and speech on their own terms, i.e. from the bilingual (rather than the monolingual) angle. In the last two chapters (6 and 7) of this part the discussion is broadened again to take in some of the major factors of a social, cultural, psychological and cognitive nature that are considered to be important in the acquisition and maintenance of bilingualism in the individual. In line with the general bias of this book, in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 certain aspects of bilingualism in children are given prominence; on the other hand, Chapters 5 and 7 deal with issues which apply to both bilingual children and adult users of two or more languages.

In the macrolinguistic approach adopted in Part II, the discussion ranges from the general to the more specific. Chapter 8 looks at the different patterns of multilingualism which can result from language contact and at some of the factors which are influential in the emergence of societal multilingualism. Questions such as 'By what criteria do bilingual communities organize their language behaviour?' and 'Why do some of them seem to be so much more successful than others in maintaining their language(s)?' are dealt with in Chapter 9. Decisions by the state on whether to promote or suppress particular languages can have a powerful effect on people's language behaviour, and the aims of Chapter 10 are to assess the possible role of language for social and national identification, and to look at how decisions on language matters are made by the state. Chapter 11 touches on a wide area, as the discussion of linguistic minorities must take into account many of the major issues in sociolinguistics: contact between dominant group and minority; the linguistic behaviour of both communities; attitudes towards the groups and languages involved; questions of identity, conflict and integration; and topics relating to language provision, maintenance and shift. In order to illustrate the complex issues raised in Chapter 11, three linguistic minorities that have little in common with each other, and that have perhaps been less accessible to English-language readers, have been chosen for more detailed consideration. The aim here is to show that language contact in Alsace, Catalonia and West Germany manifests various degrees of intensity and distinct dynamics, and that this results in different patterns of bilingualism.

The European dimension of this book has made it possible, on the one hand, to be selective in the choice of examples. On the other hand, choosing Europe as a general frame of reference has entailed the exclusion of certain important aspects of the study of bilingualism, pidgins and creoles, for instance. Neurolinguistic aspects of bilingualism, issues of language contact and language change and the question of attitudes towards bilingualism can be seen, perhaps, as less central for an initial introduction to the subject and have therefore not been included. The interested reader should turn to other introductory works (e.g. Appel and Muysken 1987, Hamers and Blanc 1989, and Romaine 1989).

In many books and articles the words *multilingualism* and, occasionally, *plurilingualism* are used almost interchangeably with *bilingualism*, the difference being quantitative rather than qualitative. The former two are favoured in some of the European linguistic tradi-

tions (e.g. in Belgium, and also in Germany and Switzerland, where the subject is more frequently referred to as *Mehrsprachigkeit* ('multilingualism'), than *Zweisprachigkeit* ('bilingualism')). The use of the term *multilingualism* allows one to take a broader view of language and dialect varieties. There are even scholars (e.g. Wandruszka 1979) who speak of 'intralingual multilingualism', referring to an ability to operate on a number of different levels of style, register and dialect in the mother tongue.

Hamers and Blanc (1989) use the terms 'bilinguality' and 'bilingualism' as reflecting a different level of analysis. The former, for them, refers to the 'psychological state of the individual who has access to more than one linguistic code as a means of social communication' (p. 265). Bilingualism, on the other hand, is defined in a more general way as 'the state of the individual or a community characterized by the simultaneous presence of two languages' (ibid.). This distinction may have its advantages for certain types of analysis, but it has not yet found wide acceptance and it is not adopted here. Normally, *bilingualism* is used in the literature for individuals and communities in which two languages are present; the term *multilingualism* can refer to societies where more than two languages are found. They are essentially the same phenomenon. Both terms are employed in this book in the description of language contact at the societal level, but only the former is made use of in the discussion of individual bilingualism. When speaking of a bilingual or multilingual community we are referring to the presence of two or more languages in that particular setting, without implying that all (or most) of the members of the group in question have competence in those languages. On the other hand, when adopting a linguistic or psycholinguistic approach in the study of the bilingual individual, the use of 'bilingualism' does imply the ability to use both codes.

Notes

1. It should be noted, however, that in the 1980s the commitment to bilingual education shifted notably. The issue was no longer felt to be one of national federal concern, and public funds were withdrawn from many schemes; it was left to individual states to decide the extent of official support for bilingualism.

PART I

PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF BILINGUALISM

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Chapter 1

Individual bilingualism

1.1 Societal and individual bilingualism

When looking through introductions to the study of bilingualism one sees that it is often mentioned that over half the population of the world is bilingual. Such general statements are open to different interpretations, in view of the fact that patterns of language use found in bilingual communities can be quite varied and that many are changing even as we observe them.

Statistics can mislead, particularly when they do not distinguish between societies and individuals, as there is a fundamental difference between societal and individual bilingualism. We may say that India, Switzerland and Belgium are multilingual countries, that Canada is officially bilingual, as is Finland, or that Paraguay is an example of bilingualism and diglossia, and Luxembourg one of triglossia. In such contexts the labels 'bilingual' and 'multilingual' reflect official policies towards some, or all, of the countries' minorities. On the whole, however, they say nothing about the degree or the extent of bilingualism among the inhabitants of these areas. It is only when language planning policies find their way into a nation's education system with the explicit aim of fostering bilingualism (rather than promoting the majority or the minority language) that bilingualism may be the norm in such parts of the world. Of the countries mentioned above, individual bilingualism may be widespread only in Luxembourg and Paraguay. Mackey (1970) claims that there are actually fewer bilingual people in bilingual countries than there are in so-called unilingual ones, and he points out that the main concern of multilingual states has often been the guaranteed maintenance and use of two or more languages in the

same nation, rather than the promotion of bilingualism among its citizens. This observation is particularly relevant in the non-European context, since in western Europe we find only three states which are officially multilingual, Belgium, Switzerland and Finland, and the first two pursue policies of territorial monolingualism (see Chapter 8).

In this part of the book attention focuses on the bilingual speaker as the 'locus of language contact' (Weinreich 1968: 1). Naturally, language interaction involves communication in a wider sociocultural setting. We therefore need to bear in mind certain aspects of the context in which the bilingual finds herself or himself, as this provides us with information about the ways in which the two or more languages form part of the person's everyday life. Equally, it may be relevant to take note of psychological factors that may influence, or affect in some way, the linguistic behaviour of the bilingual, just as one must also be aware that neurological, pathological and general cognitive factors can come into play.

1.2 Describing bilingualism

The most salient feature of bilingualism is that it is a multi-faceted phenomenon. Whether one is considering it at a societal or an individual level, one has to accept that there can be no clear cut-off points. As bilingualism defies delimitation, it is open to a variety of descriptions, interpretations and definitions. We can consider some examples. In Britain people do not usually think of Wales as a bilingual part of the state, yet one does happily use the label 'bilingual' when referring to certain types of schools found in the principality. Many people would readily call 'bilingual' the two-year-old child of a French-English couple, and the fact that the toddler's vocabulary may consist of some 200 French and English items in all does not seem to be of importance. Similarly, size of vocabulary may not carry much weight in the case of a graduate in French, who may have spent a considerable amount of time in France and studying the language, and whose total lexicon will be several hundred times larger than the child's. This person is not, however, often thought of as a 'bilingual', and would not normally claim the label for himself or herself. 'Multi-cultural' and 'multi-ethnic' are adjectives freely used by many people in the English-speaking world, and the children who start school in the UK with little knowledge of English may be referred to as 'minority children' or 'ESL

(English as a second language) pupils', but not as 'bilinguals'. Why should all this be so?

1.2.1 Some definitions of bilingualism

The notion of bilingualism is firmly established in the mind of the lay person. It may be tinged with bias, and it frequently carries either positive or negative connotations. In the specialist's mind the concept is also well established. However, the latter is expected to apply objective criteria and to aim for precise delineations. Yet some of the definitions of bilingualism that have been put forward are surprisingly vague, and even contradictory.

Uriel Weinreich, one of the founding fathers of bilingual studies and a bilingual himself, offers one of the shortest definitions in his well-known book *Languages in Contact*: 'The practice of alternately using two languages will be called bilingualism, and the person involved, bilingual.' (Weinreich 1968: 1).

An oft-quoted definition is found in one of the early books on modern linguistics, Leonard Bloomfield's *Language*, first published in the USA in 1933. When mentioning that foreign language learning among immigrants may result in language shift, Bloomfield pays special attention to users who become so proficient in the new language that they are indistinguishable from the native speakers around them. He says:

In the cases where this perfect foreign-language learning is not accompanied by loss of the native language, it results in 'bilingualism', native-like control of two languages. After early childhood few people have enough muscular and nervous freedom or enough opportunity and leisure to reach perfection in a foreign language; yet bilingualism of this kind is commoner than one might suppose, both in cases like those of our immigrants and as a result of travel, foreign study, or similar association. Of course, one cannot define a degree of perfection at which a good foreign speaker becomes a bilingual: the distinction is relative.

(Bloomfield 1933: 55–6)

No doubt Bloomfield had a clear notion of bilingualism, but his definition and subsequent qualifying remarks are not without some degree of contradiction: if one cannot define 'a degree of perfection' in bilingualism, how can we talk of 'perfect foreign-language learning'?

In his article 'The description of bilingualism', William Mackey offers a definition that incorporates Weinreich's alternate use of two languages and is preceded by Bloomfield's reservation with respect to the degree of proficiency:

It seems obvious that if we are to study the phenomenon of bilingualism we are forced to consider it as something entirely relative. We must moreover include the use not only of two languages, but of any number of languages. We shall therefore consider bilingualism as the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual.

(Mackey 1970: 555)

1.2.2 Some types of bilinguals

The three definitions mentioned so far say nothing about how well the languages need to be known, whether both have to be mastered in all sorts of skills, whether they must be used in similar or different situations, or about any particular requirements regarding the uses to which the languages are put. Yet such considerations would probably be relevant in deciding whether any, or all, of the following should be considered as bilinguals:

- (1) the two-year-old who is beginning to talk, speaking English to one parent and Welsh to the other;
- (2) the four-year-old whose home language is Bengali and who has been attending an English playgroup for some time;
- (3) the schoolchild from an Italian immigrant family living in the United States who increasingly uses English both at home and outside but whose older relatives address him in Italian only;
- (4) the Canadian child from Montréal who comes from an English-speaking background and attends an immersion programme which consists of virtually all school subjects being taught through the medium of French;
- (5) the young graduate who has studied French for eleven years;
- (6) the sixty-year-old scholar who has spent a considerable part of her life working with manuscripts and documents written in Latin;
- (7) the technical translator;
- (8) the personal interpreter of an important public figure;
- (9) the Portuguese chemist who can read specialist literature in his subject written in English;

- (10) the Japanese airline pilot who uses English for most of his professional communication;
- (11) the Turkish immigrant worker in the Federal Republic of Germany who speaks Turkish at home and with his friends and work colleagues, but who can communicate in German, in both the written and the oral forms, with his superiors and the authorities;
- (12) the wife of the latter, who is able to get by in spoken German but cannot read or write it;
- (13) the Danish immigrant in New Zealand who has had no contact with Danish for the last forty years;
- (14) the Belgian government employee who lives in bilingual Brussels, whose friends and relatives are mainly Flemish speakers but who works in an entirely French-speaking environment and whose colleagues in the office (whether they are Flemish or not) use French as well;
- (15) the fervent Catalanist who at home and at work uses Catalan only, but who is exposed to Castilian Spanish from the media and in the street and has no linguistic difficulty in the latter language.

So what *is* bilingualism? Many specialists would say that all the above individuals could be classed as bilinguals; but public opinion, and at least some of these people themselves, would probably disagree. It is possible to think of a number of explanations for the difficulties involved in arriving at a precise definition. The elusiveness of the phenomenon has already been referred to. Another factor is the nature of the subject itself. Language use is part of human behaviour, and as such not readily accessible to scientific investigation and experimental research. The study of bilingualism is hampered by a host of methodological problems and theoretical shortcomings. These difficulties stem from the complex interplay and variability of social, psychological and chance factors which determine individual conduct – and therefore often render generalizations invalid. Research into bilingualism is, consequently, interdisciplinary in character, as scholars from different academic fields, such as sociology, psychology, linguistics, anthropology and education (and others) bring different methods, criteria and assumptions to bear upon studies of bilingual situations.

'Bilingualism as a concept has open-ended semantics', Hugo Baetens Beardsmore (1982: 1) points out at the beginning of his comprehensive discussion of a number of different definitions of bilingualism. Ultimately, all definitions are arbitrary to a greater or lesser extent. It is not necessarily a problem, therefore, that there are so many of them, since in this way the researcher is able to choose the one that best suits her or his purpose.

1.2.3 Factors taken into account when describing bilingualism

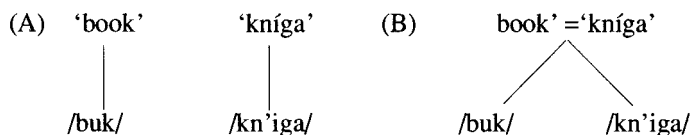
One of Baetens Beardsmore's contributions to the subject under discussion is his exposition of a series of descriptive labels, which have been chosen by various specialists so as to provide a frame of reference. There are many and different areas around which the study of bilingualism can be centred; some of them are fairly clear-cut, whereas others are not. The following list contains some selected examples (a fuller discussion of the issues involved can be found, for instance, in Baetens Beardsmore 1982 or in Skutnabb-Kangas 1984a).

(1) The *age* of the bilingual at the time of the acquisition may result in considerable differences, as suggested by the terms 'early bilingualism' and 'late bilingualism'. An early bilingual may be a case of 'infant bilingualism' (Haugen 1956: 72) or of 'child bilingualism'. The cut-off point is not firmly established, but it can be set arbitrarily (see, for example, McLaughlin 1984: 73) at the age of three – and between the child bilingual and the case of 'adult bilingualism' at the age of puberty. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas's (1984a: 80 ff.) analysis of definitions of bilingualism recognizes four main types. Her first type comes under the heading of 'origin', which at this stage can be taken to correspond with 'age'. This factor, however, is more useful for the description than for a definition of bilingualism.

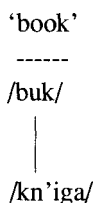
(2) We can widen the ambit of the discussion to include considerations of *context*. The infant/child who acquires two languages from the speakers around him/her in an unstructured way can be called a 'natural bilingual' or a 'primary bilingual' (Houston 1972). Adler (1977) refers to this specification with the expression 'ascribed bilingualism'. The two languages may have been presented to the infant/child bilingual either in a 'fused' context (both parents using both languages to the child; it can also mean that the context of acquisition is such that the two languages are spoken in the same locality where the young learner

is beginning to use them – as for example in a multilingual society) or in ‘separate’ contexts (the parents follow the one-parent-one-language principle, or one language is learnt in one country and the other in a different one). The person who becomes bilingual through systematic or structured instruction (that is, undergoing some kind of training) is also known as a ‘secondary bilingual’, and the result can be called ‘achieved bilingualism’ (Adler 1977). Skutnabb-Kangas (1984a: 95 ff.) establishes the dichotomy of ‘natural bilingualism’ and ‘school bilingualism/cultural bilingualism’. The distinction between these two is interesting. School bilingualism is, as its name implies, involved with formal language teaching at school, during which the learner (as the author points out) does not normally have much opportunity to practise the language outside the classroom environment. Cultural bilingualism coincides in many respects with school bilingualism, but it is more often the result of language learning by adults who wish to use a foreign language for purposes of travel, leisure or work; the assumed cultural value (that an educated person is one who knows one or more foreign languages) is reflected in the term.

(3) The *relationship between sign and meaning*, i.e. the mental organization of the speech of bilinguals, was first mentioned by Weinreich (1968), whose pioneering work was very much concerned with the phenomenon of interference, that is, the influence of the bilingual’s language systems upon each other. He distinguishes different types of bilinguals according to the relationship that exists between the linguistic sign and the semantic content. In Type A the individual combines a sign (‘signifier’ is the term used by Weinreich) from each language with a separate unit of content (or ‘signified’, or ‘semanteme’). In Type B the subject identifies the two signs (‘signifiers’) but regards them as a single compound, or composite, unit of meaning (‘signified’). His examples, using English and Russian, are:



Weinreich also considers a third possible interpretation of the sign. Type C relates to people who learn a new language with the help of another (Weinreich calls this process the 'indirect method'), i.e. by finding equivalent signs (signifiers, or words). For example, 'to an English learner of Russian, the signified [or referent, i.e. the object that the word refers to] of the form /kn'iga/ may at first be not the object [the thing itself, the book], but the English word *book*, with which he is already familiar':



(Weinreich 1968: 9-10)

Weinreich calls his Type C 'subordinative' bilingualism, as it describes the kind of bilingual whose second language or L2 is seen to be very much influenced by his/her first language or L1 (see also Paradis 1977b), whereas the expression he uses for Type A is 'coordinative'. In later research by Ervin and Osgood (1954) Type A is called 'coordinate' bilingualism and Types B and C considered together as 'compound bilingualism'. This latter notion, in particular, has been interpreted differently by a number of linguists, and a variety of hypotheses have been formulated, in relation with contexts, linguistic ability and age at the time of acquisition (see, for instance, Lambert et al. 1959; Macnamara 1967b; Jakobovits 1968; Lambert 1972; Baetens Beardsmore 1974 and Paradis 1977a; for a detailed discussion of the question, see Skutnabb-Kangas 1984a: 98 ff.). Others have cast some doubt on the validity of such an attempt at classification (Diller 1972) or claimed that there can be little significance in the distinction, even if all the types could be convincingly established (Albert and Obler 1978). Wölk (1984: 125) points out that the processes of mental transfer and linguistic behaviour tend to be affected significantly by a series of sociolinguistic factors, and that this interplay has largely been disregarded in previous research, thus fudging the basis for the description of bilingualism. He claims that distinguishing carefully among the various factors and processes at play will make it easier to describe

bilingualism on the basis of clear criteria: 'Vor allem die Unterscheidung zwischen soziolinguistischen Bestimmungsfaktoren und kognitiven Vermittlungs – oder sprachlichen Verhaltensprozessen kann bessere Ansätze und Kriterien für die Beschreibung und das Verständnis der Zweisprachigkeit liefern.'

(4) The *order and consequence* of bilingual language acquisition is reflected in such labels as 'incipient bilingualism' (Diebold 1961) and 'ascendant bilingualism' (Baetens Beardsmore 1982), which indicate an increase in the person's ability to use two languages, whereas 'recessive bilingualism' (Baetens Beardsmore 1982) points to a decrease. Qualitative, as well as quantitative, judgement is expressed by the terms 'additive bilingualism' and 'subtractive bilingualism' (Lambert 1974). The former implies that the addition of a second language to a person's first can result in enriched, or at least complementary, social, cognitive and linguistic abilities, whereas the latter suggests that the L2 is learnt at the expense of the L1. As a consequence of various social pressures, many minority groups in Europe find themselves undergoing a process of language shift, away from their ethnic tongue and towards the national language of the country they now live in. This means that, although they are becoming more proficient in the L2, they are losing skills in the L1; therefore, as the latter is not being maintained, it is actually being 'subtracted' from their bilingual proficiency.

(5) One of the most challenging aspects to address concerns the question of how proficient a person needs to be in both languages. There are a number of definitions based on this criterion of *competence*. Some authors, as was seen earlier, define bilingualism as 'near-native control of two or more languages' (Bloomfield 1933: 56), or 'complete mastery of two different languages without interference' (Oestreicher 1974: 9), or see the bilingual as 'a person who knows two languages with approximately the same degree of perfection as unilingual speakers of those languages' (Christopherson 1948: 4). Such definitions express a perfectionist or *maximalist* view. The labels used are, for example, 'perfect bilingualism', 'true bilingualism' and 'ambilingualism'. Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1970: 141) describe an 'ambilingual' as a speaker who has complete control of two languages and makes use of both in all uses to which he puts either. True ambilingual speakers are very rare creatures. Who ever has identical linguistic input and output in both languages? And who would habitually use both languages for the same purposes, in the same contexts?

At the other end of the pole we can place those definitions which express a *minimalist* stance. Haugen (1953: 7) sees 'the point where a speaker can first produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language' as the beginning of bilingualism. Others, such as John Macnamara, see a minimal degree of competence, in one of the four language skills (speaking, writing, reading and understanding speech) as sufficient: 'I shall consider as bilingual a person who, for example, is an educated native speaker of English and who can also read a little French. This means that bilingualism is being treated as a continuum, or rather a series of continua, which vary among individuals along a variety of dimensions' (Macnamara 1969: 82).

Where one view is obviously too narrow, the other is too broad to be of much help. However, somewhere in the middle of our continuum we can accommodate the notion of 'equilingualism' or 'balanced bilingualism'. We would expect a balanced bilingual to possess roughly equal proficiency of the two languages, but with no implication that the knowledge this bilingual has in either language is compared to monolingual standards. The term 'balanced bilingual', as used by Lambert, Havelka and Gardner (1959), is intended to refer to individuals who are fully competent in both codes. As in the case of the 'ambilingual', the 'balanced bilingual' is likely to be something of an ideal, since most bilinguals tend to be more fluent or generally proficient in one language, or at any rate in some uses of it, i.e. they will have a stronger or 'dominant' language and a weaker one. (There is, incidentally, a convention among scholars to list the dominant language first, so that a Spanish-German bilingual should not be confused with a German-Spanish one.)

The language a bilingual feels more at home in, the 'preferred language', may coincide with the dominant one, but this will not necessarily happen in every case. The experienced immigrant technician who has made good progress in her profession in her country of adoption, but who still has strong emotional ties with the people and the culture of her country of origin, could constitute a valid example. It is also possible for the dominant and the preferred language to change roles in the course of the bilingual's life.

The notion of relativism, as first expressed by Bloomfield (see his definition earlier), is a central one in the discussion of any type of bilingualism. Most bilingualism can be identified only in relative terms. If we accept that there are degrees of bilingual competence, this implies that bilingualism is measurable. The question of measurability