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BILINGUALISM AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL PHENOMENON OF THE SOCIETY

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In the given article the author gives a detailed explanation of such a notion as bilingualism and reveals different approaches to its studying. Also she pays key attention to the processes of society development connected with bilingualism and its role in the society life. The article shows what role this phenomenon plays within the context of contemporary society.

Key words: bilingualism, society, nation, language, approach.

В данной статье автор подробно объясняет такое понятие как билингвизм и рассматривает различные подходы к изучению данного явления. Автор также обращает внимание на процессы развития общества, связанные с билингвизмом и его ролью в жизни общества, а также показывает, какую роль играет этот феномен в контексте существования современного социума.

Ключевые слова: билингвизм, социум, нация, язык, подход.

У цій статті авторка детально пояснює таке поняття як білінгвізм та розглядає різні підходи до вивчення цього феномену. Авторка також звертає увагу на процеси розвитку суспільства, пов'язані з білінгвізмом та його роллю в житті суспільства, а також показує, яку роль грає цей феномен в контексті існування сучасного соціуму.

Ключові слова: білінгвізм, соціум, нація, мова, підхід.

This study aims at describing the relations among language, culture and society. In this article the author examines descriptive typologies and structural functionalism in the development of studies of bilingualism in culture and society.

Bilingualism, i.e. competence in more than one language, can be thought at either an individual or social level. Some citizens in a society with more than one official language may be monolingual or some citizens in a society having one official language may be bilingual or even multilingual. An answer for the question who a bilingual is, has long been a matter of discussion. There are different arguments among linguists on what bilingualism is. Thus for Bloomfield [2, p. 56] 'native-like control of two languages' can be taken as the criterion for bilingualism. Kroskrity mentions that when he observes a speaker of one language producing complete meaningful utterances in the other language, he can call him a 'bilingual' [8, p. 7]. Diebold gives a minimal definition of bilingualism by using the term 'incipient bilingualism' to characterize the initial stages of contact between two languages [3]. And, according to Mackey, a person might have no productive control over a language, but be able to understand utterances in it. In such instances he uses the term 'semibilingualism', other linguists generally speak of 'passive' or 'receptive' types of bilingualism [9, p. 16].

Due to several factors like politics, natural disaster, religion, culture, economy, education and technology, or just because of their own preference, people speaking different languages come into contact in settings where they are treated as bilingual or multilingual. However, beside a number of factors such as age, sex, intelligence, memory, language attitude and motivation, the language use of a bilingual or multilingual involves different factors such as degree (the level of the languages that an individual uses), function (for what he uses his languages, what role his languages have played in his total pattern of behaviour), alternation (to what extent he alternates between his languages, how he changes from one language to the other, and under what conditions) and interference (how well the bilingual keeps his languages apart, to what extent he fuses them together, how one of his languages influences his use of the other) [11, p. 27]. These distinctions are mostly made depending on bilingual individuals and it is hard to measure bilingualism and determine the type of individual bilingualism when masses

of people are considered. However, there is another distinction on the social level as well: 'elitist bilingualism' (or elite bilingualism) [4, p. 83] and 'folk bilingualism' [10]. Elitist bilingualism has been described as "the privilege of middle-class, well-educated members of most societies", whereas folk bilingualism results from 'the conditions of ethnic groups within a single state who have to become bilingual involuntarily, in order to survive. The distinction is a crucial one, as it shows that whilst the first group uses the education system which they control to seek bilingualism, the second group has bilingualism foisted upon it by an education system which is controlled by others.

Depending on different definitions of bilingualism, a great number of sociolinguistic researches have been carried out focusing on diglossia, language choice [5], social mechanisms in bilinguals' interactions [6], code-switching patterns observed in the language use of bilinguals [1], language acquisition processes of bilingual children [9], mental processes of bilinguals in terms of psycholinguistics [7], processes used in bilinguals' speeches and attitudes towards languages used by bilinguals [12].

From an ethnolinguistic perspective, earlier ideas about the boundedness of cultures were accompanied by ideas about the boundedness of the languages that were supposed to go with them. Bilingualism was an obvious affront to this idea, and one that was going to require explanation. Initial explanations, as per the dominant explanatory frameworks of the time, were primarily *structural-functional*. The most influential approaches came on the one hand from Weinreich [12], Mackey [9], Ferguson [5], Fishman [6] and Gumperz [7]. The first set of authors approached bilingualism from the perspective of an analysis of the ways in which different languages, or language varieties, might correspond to different social functions. Weinreich was among the first to examine bilingualism in terms of a related set of forms and functions, in an attempt to describe the different linguistic manifestations of bilingualism as they might relate to different structural and functional distributions of linguistic varieties in a community [12]. Mackey's work on typologies of bilingualism followed in this vein [9]. Both were concerned with what might be termed a "languages in contact" approach, in which the focus remained on relations between or among linguistic systems, albeit in connection with their social distribution.

Ferguson's concept of diglossia famously pointed to the ways in which even different varieties of one language could be assigned different functions within a hierarchy of prestige and status, with the "high" language conventionally involving more institutionalized functions connected to the distribution and definition of valued resources, and the "low" language connected to everyday life and relations of solidarity among marginalized segments of the population [5]. The concept seemed applicable to situations where the linguistic varieties in question were conventionally thought of as different languages altogether. Fishman extended this concept to broader ways of conceptualizing functional differentiation across domains, with an understanding that domains were primarily connected to social activities (often institutionalized: religion, work, education, the family, and so on) which might or might not be equally prestigious or otherwise connected to power and status differences [6]. Fishman's work laid the foundations for much subsequent work concerned with the measurement, statistically or through other means, of the scope of functions associated with specific language varieties, understood as a reflection of the extent to which a language had a social basis for reproduction. Put differently, a structural-functional approach is based on the notion that the normative condition is one language, understood as a whole, bounded system, and which corresponds to a community, also understood as a whole, bounded system. This monolingual norm, associated with ideologies of the nation, and eventually of the nation-state, has been the dominant one influencing studies of bilingualism. Many of these over the past forty years or so have been devoted to measuring deviation from the norm as an index of assimilation, or of language loss or endangerment, whether seen from a linguistic, demographic, sociological or social psychological perspective [8].

There are more examples of such studies, so let's mention a few categories: (1) studies of the "linguistic vitality" of minority communities, designed to measure the extent to which the community is likely to be able to reproduce itself as a bounded community in which bilingualism is possible as long as it is kept in clear functional distribution with the minority language; (2) studies of assimilation based on census returns measuring shifts of numbers of minority language speakers over time; (3) survey based studies of functional distribution of languages by domain in specific communities, where the lack of a "full" range is understood as a deficit to be repaired (the concept of a "full range" of domains is associated with "normalization," that is, extending the range of uses of a minority language to cover the full range of functions existing in society; and (4) studies of the linguistic manifestations of language contact as associated with structural analyses of the social conditions of that contact, as a means of discovering what kinds of social structures are linked to what effects on linguistic structure. Within this range of types of study, particular attention has been paid to the role of legal institutions in providing an infrastructure for the production or reproduction of specific visions of bilingualism and bilingual communities and to the role of education in actually engaging in the process of production and reproduction of bilinguals. Some attention has been paid to language practices and socialization in bilingual families, to bilingualism in the workplace and to the link between bilingualism and income-earning (that is, to the value of bilingualism on the job market), but little to institutions such as religion or health.

The structural-functional paradigm has been extremely productive, allowing in particular the development of a discourse regarding the relative advantages or disadvantages of specific forms of bilingualism for specific groups. It has, however, remained resolutely committed to a paradigm in which languages are understood as whole, bounded systems, associated, moreover, with whole, bounded communities. The constant emergence of traces of different languages in the speech of individual bilinguals goes against the expectation that languages will neatly correspond to separate domains, and stay put where they are meant to stay put. Unlike structural-functional approaches which were concerned with large-scale social patterns, interactionists have been concerned with the manifestations of bilingualism in social interaction. Now, some of this work has been functionalist in inspiration, insofar as it gave rise to a long series of studies aimed at typologies of functions of bilingual practices, notably of 'code-switching', in interaction [7]. Blom and Gumperz formulated an initial, influential distinction, between situational and metaphorical code-switching, which attempted to capture not only the ways that domain analysis could account for distribution of languages, but also the messy ways in which bilinguals imported linguistic resources

across domain boundaries [1]. The assumption was that domain-based distribution was central to the attribution of meaning to linguistic varieties, and that conventional situational or domain distribution could then serve as a meaning-making resource for bilingual speakers across domains. Cultural meaning, in terms of the substantive understanding of identities and social relations (what it means to belong to specific groups, to engage in specific language practices), is understood to flow from political economic relations. While the distinction between situational and metaphorical code-switching proved to be inadequate as a full account, it did introduce into the debate some essential ideas, notably those concerned with looking at bilingual speakers as social actors engaged in the practice of making meaning, and those concerned with conversation, or discourse itself, as a site for meaning-making.

Interactionist approaches to bilingualism started exploring more directly the ways in which bilingual resources could be involved in the construction of social meaning, both in terms of the construction of social categories (primarily those connected to ethnolinguistic identity, but also those connected to local social roles, such as speaker and addressee), and in terms of the contextualization of talk [8]. Bilingual resources in interaction or performance are particularly rich sources for the exploration of voicing and footing, that is, ways in which speakers signal stances and perspectives on their own utterances as well as on those of others, and are available as windows onto interaction processes of learning. Beyond such general sociolinguistic concerns, though, such phenomena illustrate the permeability of boundaries, whether between languages or sociolinguistic domains. They also point to the impossibility of direct associations between language and identity, and rather to the complex, often ambiguous and multiple nature of all these concepts. They also raise the question of the creative use of linguistic resources for aesthetic purposes, or more broadly in the construction of cultural meanings which may lie far afield from the political economic bases of the distribution of linguistic resources [3].

Thus, in the course of our research we arrived at some conclusions. The concept of bilingualism is applied not only to characterize a person who can understand two languages. It is used to describe the linguistic conditions of the society. Taken into consideration the social aspect of bilingualism, the studying of this phenomenon is based on the exploration of functioning of two or several languages on the territory of one state, their relationship and distribution of public functions among languages. All this provides a means for reorienting studies of language, community and identity, and hence of bilingualism. What emerges now is a sense of bilingualism as only one perspective on a more complex set of practices which draw on linguistic resources which have been conventionally thought of as belonging to separate linguistic systems, because of our own dominant ideologies of language, but which may more fruitfully be understood as sets of resources called into play by social actors, under social and historical conditions which both constrain and make possible the social reproduction of existing conventions and relations, as well as the production of new ones.

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