DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 044 691 AI 002 666

AUTHOR Spilka, Irene V.
TITLE For a Study of Diglossia in French Canada.
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.80
DESCRIPTORS *Diglossia, *French, Language Styles, *Language Usage, *Multilingualism, Regional Dialects, Social Background, Social Dialects, *Sociolinguistics
IDENTIFIERS *Canada

ABSTRACT

This paper defines diglossia as "a situation in which two closely related language systems enjoy differing social status, one being the 'high' and the other the 'low' language," and then attempts to show how a study of diglossia in Canada, where such a diglossic situation is seen to exist among varieties of French, might be carried out. The following information is considered necessary for a complete description of diglossia: (1) a description of the two language systems involved; (2) an account of the type and degree of contact between them; (3) a description of the social organization of the community as it affects language use. Two approaches to dealing with such situations are then discussed: William A. Stewart's "language types" and "language functions" (1966), and Roman Jakobson's six basic language functions (1963); the author attempts to show how these two differing approaches might be combined for the purpose of studying the diglossic situation in French Canada. (FWB)

Irène V. Spilka

FOR A STUDY OF DIGLOSSIA IN FRENCH CANADA

Stating the Problem

No comprehensive description of the French spoken in Canada exists. Yet, on the basis of empirical observation, statements can be made concerning:

1) regional varieties, e.g. Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New-Brunswick French, cf. Léon (1968), Ellis (1965), La Folette (1962) and many others;

2) social varieties: the creation of an "Office de la langue française" by the Quebec Government, and the existence for many years of "La Société du bon parler français", two bodies devoted to the "improvement" of the language spoken throughout Quebec, indicate an awareness of linguistic social stratification. This stratification is both exo- and endonational since efforts are aimed at bringing the French of Quebec closer to the French of France, and to "improving" the language of the underpriviledged classes at home.

This evidence suggests the need for a study of diglossia in French Canada. The object of the present paper is to outline the shape such a study could take.

Diglossia has been defined by Ferguson (1959) as a situation in which two closely related language systems enjoy differing social status, one being the high, and the other the low language.

A complete description of diglossia should include:

1) a description of the two language systems involved;

2) an account of the type and degree of contact between them;

3) a description of the social organization of the community as it affects language use.

Linguistic Analysis

For purposes of linguistic analysis, a dialect (a subset of the national language) is the preferred unit. Whatever one's methodological affiliation, three basic levels are recognized: 1) sounds, 2) meanings, 3) forms(= meaningful sound sequences). The latter can be subdivided into two subgroups: a) a large subgroup with a small number of classes i.e. "words"; b) a smaller subgroup with a large number of small closed classes i.e. "morphemes"; these together with a body of rules make up the dictionary and the grammar of a language.

Sounds can be divided into contrastive units, "phonemes", and variations of phonemes, "allophones"; they can also be considered as short units; i.e. segmental phonemes, or long components; i.e. suprasegmental or prosodic features; segmental phonemes and suprasegmental features are further analysable into traits. Sounds can be given visual representation known as writing, this may be alphabetical, syllabic, idiographic and pictographic. Where writing is alphabetical the shape of the signs and the rules governing sound-sign correspondence (spelling) constitute distinct systems.

Meanings have not been so readily amenable to classification and organization as sounds and forms, but some tentative classes may be suggested such as referential (what a word designates), associative (what it suggests in addition). Common vs private meaning, and lexical, grammatical and situational meaning are other possible classifications.

The first step in a study of diglossia shall therefore cover three main areas in each language system:

1) sounds: phonemes, allophones, prosodic features;
2) forms : a) words and word groups, b) morphemes and their arrangements;
3) meanings: a) names of objects, events, and properties of objects and events; b) relationships between members of a); c) values attached to members of a) and b)

The result should be a contrastive analysis focusing on relevant differences.

Language contacts

Multilingualism can take many forms. Given three mutually unintelligible languages, A, B and C, each of which has n dialectal varieties (e.g. subsets a_1, $a_k \ldots a_n$), communication between A and B becomes possible when a speaker can command any of the following:

1) both A and B, or a subset of each (bilingualism);
2) a third language C which is understood by speakers of A and B (lingua franca);
3) a language made up in parts of A and B (pidginized language);
4) a language which encompasses A and B (diasystem).

Examples of diasystems were recorded by Sick (in Fishman, 1968) for animal languages and by Wienreich (1954) in human languages. An example of pidginization is Melanesian Pidgin. Swahili is a lingua franca in parts of Africa, and bilingualism is a widespread phenomenon.

Multilingualism generally designates contact between unrelated languages, or between geographical dialects that have achieved the status of national languages. However, dialectal varieties which function as social class indicators may exhibit considerable differences and contact between them may present the speakers with problems that require solutions similar to the ones outlined above. We can thus have:

1) diglossia, in which speakers command both high and low languages;
2) a lingua franca, that is a third language used to bridge the gap between the high and low groups of speakers;
3) a pidgin or an intermediate variety with features of both high and low languages;
4) a diasystem: a versatile individual might command all or most of the dialects that form the national language.

Language varieties

Stewart's "language types" S C A U D K P which characterize linguistic systems (Fishman 1968) can be mapped out on the subsets defined above. Thus French has varieties:

F_a: "le bon usage", S_{234}, i.e. Standard, autonomous, with historicity and vitality; defined by l'Académie française, and a plethora of grammarians (e.g. Le Bidois, Grevisse, etc.) and lexicographers (e.g. Dubois in Dictionnaire du français contemporain, Robert, Quemada, etc.), implemented by a state controlled examination system for civil servants, maintained by a state controlled educational system, widely disseminated by a prestigious body of literary works, and to a lesser extent by the cinema industry. (Radio and television cannot be said to play a capital rôle in the dissemination of French.)

F_b: Classical French, C_{23}, that is an autonomous language with historicity. Beginning with the Serment de Strasbourg in 842 A.D., and ending, according to Marcel Cohen (1947), with the passing of the first third of the XVIIth century, it comprises an important body of literary works.

F_c: Provençal, V_{234}, that is a vernacular located in Provence in the South of France, with a history going back to the Gallo-Romans and stretching through the langue d'oc period; its vitality has been attested in modern times by the félibrige of whom Mistral is probably the better known and still most widely read poet.

F_d: the dialects, D_{34}; these have been outlined in Gilliéron's Atlas linguistique de la France but much work remains to be done before all dialects of French in Europe and abroad can be accounted for.

F_e: the group of Creoles (e.g. in Haïti, Martinique, Louisiana) K_4, which have been studied by Hall (1965) amongst others.

F_f: The Pidgins, P. A recent account of a nascent Pidgin is to be found in "La motivation des emprunts. Un exemple pris sur le vif de l'apparition d'un sabir", by Andrée Tabouret-Keller, in La linguistique 1969, 1 (p. 25-60)

We are now in a position to characterize speakers with respect to kinds of linguistic contacts and varieties of language systems. Thus a speaker of F_{ac} might be a bilingual who is equally at home with standard French and Provençal; the educated man who has studied French literature extensively and who has travelled widely through Africa and the Caribbeans might come out as a speaker of Fabef, etc.

In this classification, only F_a would be considered a high language by speakers of other varieties. This consensus is the result of: a) early (and successful) efforts at language standarization on the part of the State, b) the considerable prestige enjoyed by France and French "culture" throughout the world; c) the absence of serious political and economical challenge to France's superior position by other French speaking nations. While Belgium and Switzerland may be enjoying greater prosperity than France, their political spheres of influence cannot be considered equivalent; French colonies and former colonies have always remained in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the mother country; in Canada, particularly, the French speaking community has traditionally been ascribed an inferior stetus.

The question arises as to whether the variety (or varieties) of French spoken in Canada could be classified as D,K. or P. Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that as a linguistic system, Canadian French constitutes a low

dialect from the point of view of social function. We can therefore limit ourselves to a comparison of two linguistic systems, high (Standard French) and low (Canadian French), a dichotomy which does not preclude the possibility of intermediate social dialects nor, a fortiori, the existence of regional dialects.

Language functions

Jakobson (1957) ascribes six basic functions to language: 1) referential, 2) expressive, and 3) conative (borrowed from Bühler), 4) poetic, 5) phatic, (borrowed from Malinowski), and 6) metalinguistic, to which he adds a seventh, in passing, magic. Stewart lists ten functions performed by linguistic systems within speech communities: 1) official, 2) provincial, 3) wider communication, 4) international, 5) capital, 6) group, 7) educational, 8) school subject, 9) literary, and 10) religious.

These two sets of functions are the result of two different approaches. Jakobson is concerned with language as a human activity, namely the act of communication, and focuses on the shifting objects of communication, while Stewart refers to the use of specific languages, (i.e. codes) in particular settings and situations. Since diglossia involves social stratification, and since sociological analysis operates along a three level hierarchy, consisting of the individual, the group and the larger society, we attempt a reordering of language functions into a framework more appropriate to a survey of diglossia. While all the functions listed by Jakobson can be said to affect the individual primarily, some involve group membership to a greater extent than others. On the other hand, all of Stewart's functions involve groups primarily, while some extend to society at large. Rearranging both sets into a three level grid, we would place the "expressive" function at the "individual" level, as the most personal aspect of language. What a person reveals about himself as he speaks

generally escapes conscious and voluntary control. Pittenger (1957 and 1960) has suggested a number of parameters which permit a systematic description of this area of language. They are the vocal modifiers, comprising qualifiers (intensity, pitch range, pitch interval, tension, word tempo, context tempo), differentiators (laughing, crying, breaking), identifiers (smooth transition, glottal stop), voice quality and voice set, to which must be added the gestures and motions accompanying vocal output; these were studied principally by Ray Birdwhistell (1952), under the label of kinesics. These dimensions do not exceed the scope of our study since an individual's ability to shift his personal style as he shifts code accounts for a large proportion of his success in being "accepted" by speakers of various dialects. Just as a Frenchman cannot be said to have a nativelike command of English until he has learned to reduce the intensity of his output (loudness), and to stop "using his hands" as he speaks, similarly a low-language user must learn to laugh at the right moment in a high-language situation, or run the risk of appearing incongruous. From the strict linguistic point of view allophones, nonsense words, idiosyncratic sentence patterns and the like will play an important part in defining an individual's personal use of language.

The "conative" function necessarily involves dialogue since it defines the rôle ascribed by the speaker to his interlocutor. Jakobson has shrewdly noted that commands escape verification. Psychiatrists have become aware of the influence of parental commands in shaping a child's image of himself (Watzlawick), 1967), an influence that draws its strength precisely from the fact that one can only accept or reject an order, but one cannot require a proof or a truth assertion about it.

This places conative utterances outside the control of group and society inasmuch as linguistic consensus merely involves the acceptability of sounds, words and sentences. Thus, while we may disapprove of a person shouting to another "Stop that, you idiot!", and even succeed in discouraging such behaviour, we can do nothing about its meaning once it has been uttered. It means what it means simply because it has been said. For this reason, we feel the conative function of language belongs on the individual level. The way in which commands are given, questions asked and promises made in high vs. low language are relevant to the study of diglossia since rôle ascription is an essential part of social organization.

Groups are formed on the basic of affiliation, "Belonging" is indicated, among other things by certain speech devices such as secret codes, passwords, slang and vocal rituals. The language of magic (Jakobson) and religion (Stewart) should be placed here where they constitute subclasses of Stewart's group function. It should be noted that in French Canada, religious ceremonies employ not only the high language but a foreign language, Latin, with a sprinkling of Hebrew and Greek words (e.g. Hosanna, Kyrie eleison).

The "poetic" function, as described by Jakobson, has a wider scope than the study of poetry and applies to all linguistic activity that focuses on the message as a source of pleasure. "Literary" as used by Stewart, on the other hand, covers both literary works (by which he probably means official literature) and scholarly works (which can comprise texts of a scientific and highly technical nature). We feel this is an ambiguous class and that a distinction should be made between texts and utterances which appeal primarily to the listener's taste, such as songs, poems, tales, plays, advertising copy, etc.,

and texts that seek to inform, such as treatises, textbooks, manuals, circulars giving directions for use, etc. The latter appeal either to the public at large, or to groups (of scholars, for example) whose basis for affiliation lies outside the bounds of ethnic identity. For this reason scholarly works (a better term would be formal expository prose) belong to the referential function, while literary works (perhaps literature would be more appropriate since it sounds less formidable and permits expressions such as popular literature and formal literature) come under the heading "poetic" function. Like magic and religion, we feel literature pertains to the life of the group long before it becomes the concern of society as a whole. Tastes like values, are not randomly distributed throughout the human species, rather they are binding forces that tend to unite individuals into clusters of varying sizes which are clearly defined and often quite antagonistic.

Another function operating mainly at group level is the "phatic" use of language. One seeks to establish and maintain contact with members, or potential members, of one's family and circle of friends, with co-workers and the like. A number of well-worn phrases are usually employed for this purpose. When contact with strangers is sought, these are likely to be dropped in favor of more formal expressions, which may be equally stereotyped (e.g. talking about the weather) but are likely to belong to the language of wider communication, since one cannot guess with certainty what the stranger's dialect is likely to be. It therefore seems advisable to consider phatic communication as a group function, although it is clear that there will be some overlapping, as is true of all other types of communication.

Jakobson's "referential" function supplies the link between utterances and the context or situation in which these are produced; it is the dominant function of language considered as a communicative activity. It will therefore be found operating at the levels of group and social intercourse, where it is likely to become differentiated according to situational variables. Stewart's categories can be useful in organizing these; however they can be integrated into a more systematic arrangement than the one he suggests.

The main areas of organized human activity are government, religion, work, leisure, health and education. The main levels of social organization are local (village, town and city), provincial, national and international. The local level is further differentiated according to the size of the community into smaller units such as parishes, villages and small towns, and larger units such as cities, with the capital city and the metropolis enjoying special status. By combining these two sets of dimensions (areas of organized human activity and levels of social organization) we obtain a 36 cell matrix which covers the larger-society level of linguistic functioning. Some of these, such as religion, will necessarily overlap with group level functions.

One more function mentioned by Jakobson is "metalinguistics" or the use of language to talk about language. While this may be a perfectly legitimate distinction from a logical standpoint, it does not seem relevant from a psycho-social point of view. Its main distinction lies with the choice of a referrent and not with the process, which remains denotative or cognitive as in other cases of referential communication. For this reason we do not propose to consider it separately. Items of metalinguistic interest will appear naturally under the headings of Education and Poetics and will thus not go unnoticed.

Each of the areas of linguistic activity mentioned above can be further subdivided to yield a more detailed picture of language functioning in various social settings. Magic, for example, is made up of beliefs, incantations, and rituals. Religion comprises a mythology, a body of rules governing moral conduct, prayers and ceremonies. Poetics concerns songs, poems, tales and dramatic productions; any of these may be disseminated by word of mouth, the press, radio, television and the cinema; they may be put in the service of some specific interest such as religion or commerce. Phatic communication includes greetings and salutations, leave taking formulae, pivot constructions for changing the subject of conversation, and small talk. In a comprehensive survey, subheadings for areas appearing under referential functioning at the larger society level will be extremely numerous; a pilot study however should select some priviledged areas in order to remain manageable. Under Government, we would begin with political, administrative and legal terminology. Since defense is a function of Government, questions pertaining to the military should also be included. Under education we should make a distinction between the language of instruction in the classroom and the language of textbooks, and consider elementary, secondary and university levels separately. In a complex society the area of work will be extremely differentiated. One method for eliciting classifiable responses could consist in listing names of tools and instruments, designations for operations, processes and activities, and names of trades and professions. Leisure encompasses a wide variety of activities amongst which sports, the arts, hobbies and pastimes, occupy a major place. Health comprises maintenance activities, such as eating, keeping clean, rest and

sleep, exercise, and restorative measures in case of breakdown, that is, the whole field of medecine. In this area, it will be particularly instructive to focus separately on the language of the doctor and that of the patient.

The Survey

In order to bring together the social and the linguistic dimensions of our survey, it is necessary, to consider the various levels of linguistic analysis for each area under study. Thus it is not sufficient to ask an informant "What do you call this?" but one must find out what particular sounds he uses in any one setting; whether he would write what he says, or choose some other form; what constructions he favors in connection with any given topic; his gestures and mimics as he uses them to emphasize or even supplement what he is attempting to convey.

Since the purpose of our inquiry is to uncover the extent of diglossia, it is important to find out what each informant can command, that is, the extent of his multilingualism, if any, and what is said in the community by different speakers. It is not inconceivable that a peasant, let us say, will be aware that his brand of French differs from that of his parish priest, but that he will be unable to describe the latter's except in very general terms, while the priest, one the other hand, will command both dialects. One might also discover that there exists a third kind of language, an intermediate dialect used only by agents acting as go-betweens when members of the high and the low language groups are brought in contact in specific situations. Or again, that the language as a whole is relatively undifferentiated so that the high and low forms are easily understood variants requiring only the application of a few correspondence rules at any given linguistic level. Finally, the possibility cannot be ruled out that an

altogether different language, perhaps English, is used to establish contact between high and low speakers when differences are felt to constitute an insurmountable barrier to communication, or when members of one group feel they do not wish to demean themselves by resorting to the other's dialect.

Since diglossia is a social phenomenon, its description must go beyond the field of linguistics proper and borrow from social anthropology and its techniques. One question which arises in this connection is the perennial one of the relationship between language and thought. Is it not legitimate to ask, amongst other things, which language the diglossic individual chooses to encode his private thoughts? Social psychologists concerned with the effect of biligualism at the intrapersonal level have devised methods for getting at this information. However, these are highly specialized, and, because of the unreliability of introspective statements, must employ indirect techniques which could be described as oblique in contrast to the straightforward approach of descriptive socio-linguistics. For this reason, we feel that the study of the individual speaker should be left to the psychologist, and we must be content with an account of interpersonal linguistic events.

TABLE I

Language system

Sounds	segmental	phonemes, allophones
	suprasegmental	"liaison", "élision", "accent tonique", "assimilation"; intonation: pitch, volume, intensity.
Grammar	classes	gender, number, person, modes, tenses, etc.
	sequences	contractions, word order, tense sequences, etc.
	transformations	negative, interrogative, imbedding, etc.
Dictionary	nouns, verbs, modifiers, qualifiers, quantifiers, etc.	
Meanings	denotational	kinship system, colours, time, space, etc.
	connotational	good words, bad words, slanted words, etc.

TABLE II

Language contacts

Diglossia	high, low
Lingua franca	intermediary
Pidginization	intermediate language
Diasystem	all encompassing language

TABLE III

Linguistic functions

Level:	Function:	
individual	expressive	vocal modifiers, differentiators, identifiers, voice quality, voice set; mimics, gestures
	conative	commands, requests, oaths, promises, imprecations
group	magic	beliefs, incantations, rituals
	religion	mythology, rules of conduct, prayers, ceremonies
	poetics	songs, poems, tales, drama
	phatic	greetings, leave taking, pivots, small talk
society	government	politics, administration, law, defense
	education	classroom, textbooks, elementary, secondary, university
	work	tools, operations, occupations
	leisure	sports, arts, hobbies
	health	eating, sleeping, cleanliness, exercise, sickness, accidents, mental states, medical practices.

References

ELLIS, Patricia M. (1965) "Les phonèmes du français Maillardvillois (sic)", CJL/RCL, 13, 2: 94-98.

FERGUSON, Charles A. (1959) "Diglossia", Word 15,2 : 325-340

HALL, Robert A. (1965) Pidgin and Creole Languages, Cornell Univ. Press

JAKOBSON, Roman, (1963) Essais de linguistique générale, (Trad de l'anglais), Paris, Minuit.

LA FOLETTE, James E. et Roch VALIN. (1962) "Un curieux emploi de la négation en français canadien", JCL/RCL, 7,1 : 15-25.

LÉON, Pierre, Eric F. JAMES, Georges SÉVIGNY. (1968) "Observations sur une forme progressive en canadien-français", JCL/RCL, 13,2 : 94-98.

PITTENGER, Robert. (1957) "A Basis for Some Contributions of Linguistics to Psychiatry", Psychiatry, 20, 1 : 61-78.

PITTENGER, Robert, Charles F. Hockett, and John J. DANEHY. (1960) The First Five Minutes, Ithaca (N.Y.), Paul Martineau.

SICK, H. (1939) "Über die Dialektbildung beim 'Regenruf' des Buchfinken", J. Orn., 87. Quoted by Fishman, J.A. in Readings in the Sociology of Language, 1968.

STEWART, W.A. "Sociolinguistic Typology for Describing National Multilingualism," in J.H. Fishman, Readings in the Sociology Of Language, Mouton, The Hague, 1968.

WATZLAWICK, Paul, Janet HELMICK BEAVIN, and Don JACKSON.(1967) Pragmatics of Human Communication, New York, Norton.

WEINREICH, Uriel. (1954) "Is a Structural Dialectology Possible?" Word, 14 : 388-400.