lan v. Fry

## A. INTRODUCTION

The nurbose of this maper is to examine the importance of symbolism in one facet of language:code switching. While some attention will be given to bi-registral and bi-dialectal code switching, the chief focus will be bi-limpual code switching. This does not imply that the former are any less immortant: switching among bi- and multilinguals is simply the most easily recognized since it represents the most extreme and clear-cut form of language switching. The findings concerning bilinguals would apply to all areas of switching.

Because of the varied use of terminology by different sociolinguists, some definitions are in order. "Bi-registral" refers to different registers within the same language, such as those popularly associated with the different social classes in England. "Bi-dislectal" refers to variations of the same language, such as Newfoundland English and Lowland Scots. "Bilingual" denotes a complete switch from one language to another.

# B. SYMBOLISM IN LANCHAGE

Most sociolinguists have, at one time or another, made passing references to the symbolic value of language, but very few have attempted to study the phenomenon of symbolism as a separate entity, a significant variable with important implications. This is strange, especially when most scholars have recognized its presence and influence, albeit tacitly. The problem is that, like many other sociolinguistic parameters, any assessment of symbolic value tends to be subjective, thus very difficult if not impossible to measure. At a time when sociolinguistics is striving to achieve scientific status by strict methodology, this neglect of symbolism is understandable.

Yet one cannot overlook symbolism in language. It exists. West Indian boys learning standard English would mimic, in girls' voices, the standard forms which the girls were acquiring more rapidly. For these boys, their motivation to learn standard English had to be weaker since they associated

twith femininity. India provides some excellent examples as well of language crying as a social symbol. Different castes speak different dislects or anguages. Urban dwellers will differentiate themselves by avoiding rural roughtalk' dislects. The mother tongue may be identified as a reflection of ocial consciousness, as when 100,000 claimed in a census that Sanskrit was their other tongue, even though Sanskrit is not spoken anywhere.

The 1961 census in India revealed that there had been a 55% loss of lindu speakers in one area since 1951. There had been no exodus of population, for had there been any rise of nationalism as in other areas. What had happened as a change of symbolism: some castes were starting to recognize Moslem rather than Hindu leaders because of local political events. In this equivalent to a protest vote, religion was used as a symbol.

Fishman has reported on language as a secular symbol of common feeling and group allepiance, so strong it can cut across religious differences. One expression of nationalism uses religion: Article 10 of the constitution of the Socialist Arab Resurrection Party defines an Arab as "a person whose mother tongue is Arabic, who has lived on or who looks forward to living on Arab soil, and who believes in being a member of the Arab nation'. In this powerful expression of symbolism, language is an essential component in the holy trinity of holy people, holy land and holy language. Language is also a 'prime and fitting group symbol' in serving as the link with authenticity in language planning. The Turkish peasant language was eulogized and idealized as a symbol of the pure, ancient, simple way of life, finding expression in the Sun Language theory. Turkish is "the mother of all existing tongues and therefore any foreign term may be readopted provided it be given a Turkish assonance." While these examples come from the field of language planning, similar instances could be cited from any area of specialization within sociolinguistics.

## C. SYMBOLISM IN BILINGUAL COMMUNITIES

### 1. HILPUS

Hindelcopen is a town of 901 people in the northern Netherlands where three languages are chiefly spoken: Dutch (the official language known by all); Friesian (a family dialect of some immigrants) and Hilpus (among the most archaic and deviant of the modern West Friesian speech varieties). All three languages share considerable lexicon, phonology, syntax and semantics. Why is Hilpus apoken when it has a small core vocabulary and is utterly redundant for communication

twactions?

NeCorrack concluded that the symbolic dimension was the most important. He was interested in how Milrus had been elevated to a "stereotype of uniqueness", and investigated the culture-history of Mindeloopen in an attempt to determine the origins of such language attitudes and values:

From this it emerged very forcibly that the 'language purism' over Hilpus has assimilated that language to something much bigger, namely something perceived both by outsiders and by Hindelconers as a total and unique configuration of a time-hallowed community volkcultuur.

Thus Hilpus symbolizes a romantic and honorable seafaring tradition, even though Hindeloopen is not cut off from the sea by a dyke. Outsiders encourage its study and use. School children fill in gaps with "productive invention". Sentiment provides the stimulus to preserve a limited number of unique language features. In this multilingual community, a shift from merely transmitting an assumed tradition to the creation of an assumed tradition which is symbolically associated with the past was observed.

## 2. TOK PISIN

Tok Pisin, so called by its speakers, is a descendant of the South Pacific pidgin known in the nineteenth century as Beach-la-mar. It now serves as a lingua franca among New Guineans having no language in common, and has spread and flourished so that now it is one of the country's three official languages. It is presently undergoing creolization.

Sankoff and Laberge hypothesize that native speakers in general tend to have little patience with or respect for a language with the simulfied form and structure which characterizes pidgins. However, Tok Pisin was best accepted by young people. The logical extension of their study, even though they do not state it explicitly, is that for these young people (who, once again, are engaged in a process of "productive invention") Tok Pisin is symbolic of their group identification roles in this new era of political independence. The title of their article implies a symbolic identification: "On The Acquisition of Native Speakers by a Language". Older folk resist. The young have chosen their symbol.

#### D. SYMBOLISH IN CODE SWITCHING

## 1. JAVANESE

In Javanese it is rearly impossible to say

anything without indicating the social relationship between the speaker and listener in terms of status and familiarity ... the choice of linguistic forms as well as speech style is in every case partly determined by the relative status (or familiarity) of the conversers. The difference is not minor ... Clearly, a peculiar obsession is at work here.

Geertz points out that Javanese speech follows the same pattern as the organization of social behavior generally. Several words and affixes carry a status commotation in addition to their usual meaning which reflects the status and familiarity between the speakers. Word selection is intentional; choice of dialect is unintentional, but reinforces the status commotation. Thus levels of speech are found within dialects (Geertz distinguishes three "stylemes" of status symbolization and two types of homerifics in the intra-dialect system) but the dialects are also ranked. This linguistic behavior, which Geertz sees as a part of their wider system of etiquette, is paradoxical, in that etiquette, while building a wall around one's inner feelings, is always a wall someone else builds, at least in part. Such a wall is built for two reasons: one can respond to an "equal" with an equal politeness, or defer to a superior without expecting appropriate reciprocity. 10

Geertz acknowledges the increasing popularity of Indonesian as a symbol of political nationality among certain groups, and predicts the important role of young people in expanding the language. 11

## 2. SANGO

Samarin studied the Sango language, spoken in the Central African Republic, in an attempt to assess Sengo's prestige value. 12 For thousands of people who do not speak French, the elite language, Sango represents the only means of upward social mobility. Residents of the capital city of Bangui consider themselves superior to 'bush people', which includes residents of the larger towns. Town dwellers, in turn, feel superior to village dwellers.

Some of Samaran's informants, not knowing some Sango words, would use words from opther dialects or languages. Samarin accounts for such borrowings in terms of the relative prestige of Sango:

My hypothesis is that when a speaker is aware of several different words for certain objects or concepts, he will reject those that are most like the ones in his own language, being guided by the feeling that they are inferior to Sango. In some instances a word from his language may have been completely naturalized in the Sango language and be in general use throughout the country, but its identification with his vernacular is reason enough for him to reject it. 13

Thus, prestige is a force leading to heterogeneity rather than uniformity in speech. People reject localisms, since proper Sango is whatever form will not betray their origin, i.e., people see it as a symbol of leaving their (inferior) village status behind them. Samarin has added, to the abundance of non-linguistic evidence that people want to lose their village identity, some specific linguistic evidence.

Any parallel case would have to have two major characteristics, according to Samarin: a prestige ideal, and speech diversity in response to the ideal. He cites two such cases. The first is seen in English dialects, where speakers are inconsistent in their pronunciation. The second is in "certain forms of extreme language urbanization", for example, the Town Bemba language of Rhodesia, which he says is a political symbol of conscious reaction against the old way of life. Samarin acknowledges that more research is necessary to validate his claim. 14

#### 3. JAPANESE-APERICAN

Japanese women who marry Americans and go to America to live (as distinct from American Japanese) have been found to switch between Japanese when visiting Japan, when working (for some) in Japanese restaurants, and when talking with bilingual friends, who were often war brides. The language of social interchange is Japanese; in contrast, English is used for a variety of functions, such as talking about goods and services, and speaking with family and neighbours (although less English is used if the husband is away a lot, say at sea). English is used when speaking of American objects, experiences and points of view, e.g., if they are talking about American food or clothing, or if they are talking about their husbands.

Ervin-Tripp hypothesizes that "as language shifts, content will shift."

Apart from the predictable code switching concerning certain

topics, it arrears from her study that there is a symbolic dimension to their switching as well. For instance, when a woman is speaking about her family, her use of English symbolizes her belief that she is an American. She is symbolically identifying her role in American society as a wife and mother by using English.

#### E. SYMBOLISM AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC THEORY

De Camp is one linguist whose work minimizes the role symbolism plays in bilingual code switching. One of his studies raises an important question: "Where do we find a language: in the min- of the individual speaker, or in the speech community?" He cites a post-creole speech community Jamaica, as an area in which it is difficult to distringuish between languages, dialects and styles, and that these three concepts "seem to merge as only relative terms within some larger system". He claims that nobody has ever found distinction between intra-personal and inter-personal variation, that is, a formal linguistic distinction; one must go outside linguistics to ethnology or to sociology in order to distinguish such variables. 16

As support for this claim, De Camp uses two examples. First, the use of iteratives in Jamaica is only empirically observable as a complete pattern if one considers the composite picture from all his informants. Second, the word <u>bragadam</u>, an ideorhome, meaning different things in different areas, means that the composite picture tells nothing about how Jamaicans organize linguistic behavior as groups or individuals. Thus, the safest theoretical assumption is that rules of idiolect and community belong to entirely different formal systems. To explain the intersection between the two, one turns to other disciplines. However, as De Camp points out:

It may be that certain conversion rules or switching operations between idiolects ... may be everywhere common between dialects, between the idiolect and the language, or between historical stages of a language and thus may be considered 'natural' processes which should be expressed in the grammar. But these would be empirical claims, which would require data to prove or disprove them. 17

In short then, De Camp is calling for a theoretical construct to account for speech acts within the context of a communication network, which has three dimensions that De Camp calls personal contact, register

and style. But such a "theory" must be subjected to empirical data.

At this stage, then, it would be appropriate to consider several theoretical foundations which are pertinent to bilingual code switching, and to see whether symbolism can be accommodated. John Pride has given an excellent summary of the major theoretical approaches which have been attempted up to this time. 18

Fishman (like De Camp) stresses domains which can be empirically investigated, so that these tend to be physically well defined settings rather than, for example, stylistic settings. It may well be, however, that methodological expedience has clouded what is a vital concern to the theorist. Cumperz has emphasized status in defining rule relationships, status in terms of positions occupied within the social system. So, in addition to considering the occasions when switching takes place, a theory should also account for the stylistic level, considering inter-personal and inter-group relationships. Cumperz considers that both social occasions and social relationships are finite in number.

Goodenough provides an example of the importance of finiteness. He distinguishes between the composite identities assumed by a person along with identity relationships, and component statuses which enter into and define these. A person will select particular identities appropriate to each occasion. How these co-occur comprises the system of social relations. Barth believes that this system or process is observable, that values are empirical facts which may be discovered since they are ultimately subject to observable transactional processes. If we accept Barth's view of social form as processual and subject to empirical study, then we move one step closer to reconciling a theoretical construct with an abstract like symbolism.

For language does symbolize values. At its most obvious application we could consider Bernstein's restricted and elaborated codes. And we know that the restricted code is more easily predictable. Gumperz has qualified Bernstein's position by his bokmål study. For Bernstein, a 'personal' sense means use of the elaborated code. For Gumperz, this sense attracts use of the more familiar and relaxed rural diet. Conversely, non-personal bokmål tends to be used as an educated code, but at times also a ritualized restricted code. Furthermore, a code switch can signal a status as being relevant or not, as in Blom and Gumperz' study of middle class university students who switched codes in immediate response to particular topics, or

as in Ervin-Tripp's study mentioned above. In a sense, then, symbolism can be measured, if switching of this kind cross-indexes social values and cultural entities.

Labov's famous study of centralizing diphthenes in Martha's Vineyand points to the problems of measurement and of definition. The tendency to centalize among permanent residents can be objectively measured. And nobody would dispute that this tendency symbolizes feelings of resentment against newcomers who may exploit the economy, and a social consciousness reflecting the prestigious desire for solidarity within a certain social group on the island. Tet how does one define formality or prestige or solidarity, let alone measure the symbolic connotations of such words?

Pride makes a very important distinction in approaching this problem. Bilingualism and biculturalism are often assumed to be synonymous, but each one may occur without the other. If the two can be isolated from each other, and if the social and personal values which determine code switching can be isolated, then symbolic choices can be talked about in specific terms, which brings us closer to measurement, since they can be observed. For instance, Pride says that when people deliberately mix languages, there seems to be an inverse relationship between the awareness of structural similarity or dissimilarity, and its symbolic importance. Yet the language aspects we are least consciously aware of may be very important.

Then, again, there are overt markers in speech, some linguistic, but others 'para-linguistic' or non-linguistic, which must be considered. In considering these, Pride says, "one can only be guided in the last resort by intuitive feeling for what is meaningful, and what is not meaningful".

To return to Bernstein's codes, we could consider the restricted code as serving as social symbols, and the elaborated code as "individuated" symbols. The social symbols are more predictable, fluent and repetitive; the individuated" are more planned, hesitant and complex. It is as if one is slowly but inexorably drawn to a first principle, whoever's framework one attempts to follow, i.e., to an intra-personal level. It also seems to follow from this that, if one cannot account for symbolism at this level, then ay study tends to become bogged down as one moves to the 'macrolevels' out and beyond.

Whatever else can be said, a lot has been achieved since the pioneering work of Weinreich, who in twelve short years is sadly out of date. He was

able to distinguish between non-structural factors, some of which are inherent in the bilingual person's relation to the languages he brings into
contact, such as the speaker's facility of verbal expression; on the other
hand, he stressed relationships between bilingual groups. He called for an
interdisciplinary approach, and for a psychological theory of bilingualism
to account for interference between languages. This last point is of
fundamental importance, and the concluding section of this paper will
attempt to show how a theoretical framework may be developed to account
for the intra-personal as a starting point.

Related to this approach is Pride's approach, which has been called 'taxononomic' (as opposed to interactional and binary approaches). Implicit in this approach is the notion of a 'lawful' transaction, lawful in that the consequences of a speech act must be considered. The analysis of a speech act must account for the complex nature of any choice from amongst thousands of available options in lexical items. Again, note that this theoretical notion is reducing to an almost simplistic principle of starting with the most fundamental items, so that we have a given catalogue of situations, which embodies the idea of precedent and the choice of register variety, at the intra-personal level first.

A most promising development has been put forward by M. A. K. Halliday. 20 His study is of one child's acquisition of language, so any conclusions from such a limited study must undergo further research. At first glance one might also wonder at drawing a parallel between language acquisition and code switching. Fundamental to any such parallel is the division of language acquisition into a 'pre-language' stage and an 'adult language' stage. When Nigel, the child Halliday studied, uses the 'personal' function of this pre-language stage, he is moving into adult language for the first time by using personal language (which means that he is expressing hirself, as if to say, 'Here I come.'). to symbolize his awareness that he will get more attention if he uses adult language. Also fundamental to any such parallel is that Halliday is using the intra-personal level as a starting point, although not in isolation, of course.

Halliday looks for support to the functionalist school of psychology and anthropology. He sees the functions of the pre-language stage as:

- 1. Instrumental (wanting something material)
- 2. Regulatory (a two-way process between parent and child)

- 3. Internersonal (interactional)
- 4. Intruder (personal -- expression of personality)
- 5. Heavistic (wh questions, imaginative play function)
- 6. Informative (two word utterances, important for organization of sentence structure).

He found nothing systematic for nine months; then he found no grammar, but rather sound meaning with two semantic classes, one rising (restricted) and one falling (elaborated), up till the age of two years. Thus, by classifying functions, Halliday is arriving at an understanding of semantics. For example, during the transitional stage (from 1 1/2 to 2 years), a falling internation is performative or mathetic in that a verbal response is wanted. while a rising intonation is pragmatic in that a non-verbal response is vanted. The mathetic function makes use of a symbolic system to learn about reality. Nigel asked for certain object in terms of salience, e.g., they moved, or in personal terms, i.e., the idea of a security blanket, as some extension of himself. Nigel used such objects to learn about or to cross-index the environment: when he spoke of a "bird", this word symbolized a "walk" and "yesterday", since he saw a bird on a walk the previous day. The mathetic function is lost at two years, since it does not exist in adult English, so the process involves unlearning as well. 21 So Halliday is a functionalist who, unlike the structuralists, does not distinguish between animal and human behavior, as Piaget and Chomsky would.

Halliday concludes by attempting to apply his theory to the broader social context. As mentioned before, a theory based on the study of one child needs much more examination, but it does seem a most promising approach. In contrast to Piaget, Halliday believes that "the child's construction of reality is achieved largely through the medium of language". He makes a clear distinction between learning a language and learning culture, although both are closely interdependent. He considers the social system to be a semiotic, i.e., a system of meanings realized through the linguistic system. The linguistic semiotic is just one of the symbolic systems through which the social semiotic is realized, but he believes that the developmental language process is the primary one. If he is correct, then there are important implications for all language processes:

In principle, a child is learning one seniotic system, the culture, and simultaneously he is learning the means of learning it — a second semiotic system, the language, which is the intermediary in which the first one is encoded. This is a very complex situation. In order to sort it out, let us first identify the various components which make up the total picture of language as social interaction, as 22 expression of the social semiotic.

This is the crux of the matter. If he is unable to untable the very commlex process, then he provides a theoretical framwork to which research can be applied.

Text is the language people produce and react to. Text is meanings, encoded in vordings, soundings and spellings which make up a semantic unit. Text is also choice, a selection from numerous options. The total set of such options is the meaning potential: text represents the actualization of this meaning potential. The meaning potential may be interpreted in two contexts, situation or culture. A situation is "the medium in which text lives and breathes", viewed as a semiotic structure derived from all meaning relations in the social system. Thus we can talk about the set of general features characterizing certain situation types. The third concept is register, "the semantic variety of which text is an instance", the particular configuration of meanings associated with a particular situation type. The fourth component is the linguistic system itself to which the preceding concepts must be related.

To do this, Halliday isolates three functional components of the adult semantic system: ideational, interpersonal and textual. He believes that types of activity, role relationships and symbolic channels are all realized through selection in these three areas of meaning potential. Ideational is the content function of language. Interpersonal is the marticipatory function. Textual is the relevance function, relating the other functions to the envoronment. All three components are found in any adult exchange.

The fifth element is the social structure. Whereas the social system

refers to the culture, social structure refers to the organization of society. Bernstein has shown how social structure is not peripheral, but an integral element in the deeper processes of social interaction. Structure has three dimensions: field (in terms of ongoing activity), tenor (role relationships involved) and mode (the symbolic or rhetorical channel). The field also includes symbolic action, as would the tenor. So text is environmentally determined by these three. Field relates to the ideational component, tenor to the interpersonal and mode to the textual.

If Halliday's theory is to be applied, then predictions can be made from it. In a very real sense, prediction is the proof of a theory. If we could predict when code switching will take place, but more, if we could predict when such switching is, say, symbolic, then we obviously have a sound theoretical base. Halliday believes we can, since the semantic system evolved as a form of symbolic interaction in social contexts. Thus the semantic system should reflect the structure of social contexts in its own internal organization.

Symbolism can be associated with several of the specific components Halliday has outlined. For example, he says that "meaning is at the same time both a component of social action and a symbolic representation of the structure of the social action". Although such symbolism would still be difficult to isolate and measure, Halliday's framework enables us to talk about symbolism in a more meaningful way. We can at least associate symbolism with relevant functions at all levels, thus explaining language motivations more explicitly. In any linguistic theory, the notion of explicitness is essential. Halliday's theory satisfies, at least in principle, the three compnents any theory must have in order to be explicit: observational adequacy, descriptive adequacy and explanatory adequacy.

Sociolinguistic studies have paid too much attention to actual usage, rather than trying to isolate those specific sociolinguistic warkers which are symbolically important to the speech act. Frequency of items is not as important as the timing of an item and its symbolic meaning, and how changes over time are related to these. Some attention is now being paid to these matters in recent studies. For instance, Cedergran is interested in hidden constraints and the rate of increase of rule application across time.

Ross, in reference to "squishes", calls for a research strategy which does not deal with just clear-cut cases, but can account for individual variation.

24

Smith has proposed an analytic framework to explain the source of variations contributing to language development. 25

Clearly, important work is being done to develop a methodology which will better be able to account for symbolism and the other subjective parameters which are so difficult to measure in code switching. The Labovian approach of isolating variables from another discipline and applying them to a specifically linguistic study is inadequate. 26 A cohort would seem to have a better chance of accounting for temporal variation, while providing the opportunity for considering, analysing and even perhaps measuring the phenomenon of symbolism in terms of individual variation.

Iniglossia would be included under the general heading of "bilingualism".

Peter Trudgill, Sociolinguistics: an Introduction. Aylesbury: Penguin, 1974, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, Language and Nationalism. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1973, p. 44.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>5&</sup>lt;sub>Ibid.,, p. 75.</sub>

William C. McCormack, "Language Identity of a Friesian Town; Symbol, Stereotype, or Social Communication. Paper read to the XIth International Congress of Linguists, Bologna, Italy, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> Tok Pisin is also called Neo-Malenesian and New Guinea Pidgin.

<sup>8</sup>G. Sankoff and S. Laberge, 'On the Acquisition of Native Speakers by a Language', in Daviv De Camp and Ian F. Hancock (eds.), Pidgings and Creoles: Current Trends and Prospects. Washington D.E.: Georgetown University Press,

<sup>9</sup>C. Geertz, The Religion of Java. Free Press, 1960, p. 248.

<sup>10</sup> Geertz has claimed that "in terms of language it is possible to state the exact nature of this pattern, the core of Javanese etiquette, in a rather more precise, abstract and formal manner". (p. 254). See his diagrams representing this symbolic switching, pp. 255-57, one of the few attempts to formalize symbolism in bi-dialectal code switching.

<sup>11</sup> Borne out by the study of Joshua A. Fishman, "The Comparative Dimensionality and Predictability of Attitudinal and Usage Responses to Selected

12 William J. Samarin, "Self-annuling Prestige Factors among Speakers of a Crecke Language", in William Bright (ed.), Sociolinguistics. The Hague: Nouton and Co., 1966, pp. 188-296.

13mid., n. 194.

In the discussion following his paper, Haugen suggested that perhaps Sango is not a language, since it only has 482 words. However, Samrin pointed out that this corpus was chiefly function words. See p. 208.

15 Susan Ervin-Tripp, "An Analysis of the Interaction of Language Topic and Listener", American Anthropologist, Dec. 1904, pp. 86-101.

David De Camp, "Neutralizations, Iteratives, and Ideophones: The Locus of Language in Jamaica", in De Camp and Hancock (eds.), on cit., pp. 46-60.

17Ibid., p. 60.

18j. B. Pride, The Social Meaning of Language. London: O.U.P., 1971, especially Chapters 2-7.
The authors mentioned below who are not individually acknowledged in these notes are cited by Pride.

Uriel Weinreich, Languages in Contact. The Hague: Nouton and Co., 1963.

20 M. A. K. Halliday, Learning How to Mean. London: Edward Arnold,

Here one could add several qualifications to Halliday's theory. For example, some social psychologists would say there is no self without interaction. And the fact that Nigel didn't play much, but was a serious, perhaps unimaginative child, might mean other children have a more important play function. It could be questioned whether a child has a personality at mine months anyway. Hymes used the term "social style" rather than "personality".

22 Halliday, on. cit., p. 122.

23 In Bailey and Shuy (eds.), op. cit., pp. 13-22.

24 Ibid., pp. 96-140.

25 Ibid., no. 287-96.

26 See Bicerton's article in Bailey and Shuy (eds.), op. cit., especially p. 40.

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