Practical and Theoretical Issues of the Bilingualism and Romanian-Ukrainian Linguistic Contact

Angela ROBU
"Ştefan cel Mare" University of Suceava
angelyk2009@yahoo.com

Abstract: Our approach presents in its first part some theoretical fundaments of the concepts of *bilingualism* and *linguistic contact*. Its second part, with practical features, follows the problematics of the Romanian-Ukrainian linguistic contact in Călineşti, Suceava District (Romanian side of Bukovina).

Keywords: Bilingualism, linguistic contact, diglossia, linguistic interference.

1. Bilingualism "has played along centuries and millenia and continues to play an otstanding role in the existence of human language in general and in the actual life of languages. We can maintain without exaggerating that all languages in the world, no matter where and when used, are the total or the partial product of bilingualism", wrote Iorgu Iordan in a study[1].

The linguistic interference represents a "deviation from the norms of one of the languages in contact by introducing some particularities from the other language"[2]. Because of the interference "the introduction of foreign elements into the system of a language results into a local rearran-

[1] Iorgu Iordan (1973), *"Bilingvism în domeniul romanic"*, in *Studii şi Cercetări de Lingvistică*, nr. 2, p.129.

[2] V. art. *Interferenţă*, signet Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu in Angela Bidu -Vrănceanu et alii, *Dicţionar general de ştiinţe – Ştiinţe ale limbii* (DŞL), Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti, 1997, p. 270.

BDD-A17700 © 2014 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:39:05 UTC)

gement of the system (for instance, lexical loans, or sounds)"[3]. The situation we are going to deal with ia one of *bilingualism*, fact that makes the influences of the two languages be mutual. It is generally considered that the concept of *interference* is synonymous to that of *negative transfer*[4], phenomenon that "affects units and unequal structures from the two languages, establishing a source of errors. The existence of some acknowldged similarities between languages determines the manifestation of a tendecncy of extension of the sphere of equivalence by establishing of erroneous correspondences between the units and structures of the languages in contact. [...] The individual modifies the language he/she learns according to the structural patterns of his/her mother language. In bilinguism, the introduction of features of the other used language in the community is also possible."[5]. The is the Romanian-Ukrainian bilingualism instance we are going to mostly refer to, which is to be met on site of Călineşti, Suceava County.

In a more recent theoretical article, Gh. Moldoveanu tries to establish some dissociations he consideres useful for the analysis of the languages in contact.[6] Thus, he thinks that the realities defined by the terms of *bilingualism, diglossia and linguistic conflict* are different, even if in most of the studies the terms are deemed to be sinonimous. Here are his definitions:

"*Bilingualism* is a type of behaviour of the *individual* that uses alternately, within the linguistic community, out of effective communication necessities, two different idioms. From the bilinguism point of view, the commutation from one code to another does not bear necessarily a social-contextual significance. Most of the code commutations (from one language to another) may be considered as functioning in free variation. Under the incidence of the bilingualism come also the commutations that relate to strictly psychological reasons and/or personal reasons: the wish of the speaker to enhance the expressivity of the sentence, particular emotional states and so on. In this sense, biligualism constitutes the object of study of linguistic and pedagogy.

Diglossia is a *social* phenomenon based on the inequality of social standing of the idioms in contact. It involves some contradictions bet-

[3] *Ibidem*.

[4] The transfer is a "type of phenomenon charcteristic to the situation of language contact, representing the result of the attempt of individuals to establish corelations between the linguistic systems involved (*op. cit.*, p. 548).

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 519.

[6] *Cf.* art. *"Bilingvism, diglosie, conflict lingvistic"*, in rev. *Limba Română*, Chişinău, nr. 11, 2005, pp. 6-17.

BDD-A17700 © 2014 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:39:05 UTC)

ween languages, fact which generates *linguistic conflict. Diglossia* as source of conflict may have as result two possible solutions: substitution or normalisation. Identification and analysis of *diglosiei* is linked to the examination of the social phenomenon of *domination-subordination*. The social dimension of the concept of *diglossia* has contributed to the rooting in sociolinguistics of this concept which so becomes more and more operational.

Diglossia and *linguistic conflict* are similar concepts. The advantage of the concept of *linguistic conflict* in comparison with that of *diglossia* consists of the fact the notions of *dominating language – dominated language* become central elements for analysis."[7]

The General Dictionary of Linguisic Sciences considers the linguistic contact to be that "situation which determines the alternate usage of two different languages by certain groups or individuals. That contact is thus the source of the group or individual bilingualism"[8]. The linguistic contact, as Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu considers, is dependant on the action of some extralinguistic factors, amongst which the geographical area, nature of the population (indigen or immigrant, rural or urban), cultural and ethnic particularity of the group, religion, race, sex, age, social status and occupation of the speakers. The linguistic contact leads to the apparition of interference phenomena. The terms *bilingualism* and *diglossia* have different significance in the European and American linguistics: in the European area, the term *diglossia* is totally or partially sinonimous with the term *bilingualism*, indicating "either the practice of usage of two different languages in communication, or a special case of bilinguism, supposing the inequality od standing of those two used languages (one being the national language and the other the regional language)"[9]. In the American linguistics, *diglossia* means the usage within a linguistic community of two varieties of the same language. Bilingualism, in the article from *The General Dictionary of Linguistic Sciences* is defines in two ways: "in narrow sense, the alternate usage of two languages; in broad sense, the alternate usage of two linguistic systems, no matter their status: different languages, dialects of the same language or even variesties of the same idiom"[10]. Hereinafter, we shal adopt the norrow sense definition and we shall see the Romanian-Ukrainian bilingualism as a consequence of linguistic contact. We shall follow the classifications of bilingualism from the General Dictionary trying to identify the type of bilingualism specific

[7] Gh. Moldoveanu, *art. cit*., pp.16-17.
[8] DŞL, p.137.
[9] *Ibidem*, p.179.
[10] *Ibidem,* p. 87.

BDD-A17700 © 2014 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:39:05 UTC)

to the community of Călineşti, as well as to other Romanian-Ukrainian linguistic communities from northern Romania.

a) According to the social extent of the bilingualism we can speak of *social bilingualism (collective)* when the whole community is involved, this being the situation in Călineşti, of *group bilingualism* and of *individual bilingualism.*

b) Accoring to the origin:

– *Simultaneous bilingualism*: Romanian and Ukrainian are learned at the same time; this is the case of children originating from bilingual families.

– *Succesive bilingualism (sequential)*: the second language is learned after the first one is fixed, that means 3-4 years later. In the case of Călineşti one may speak of a late bilingualism, the second language being learned at the age of 6-7 years old. The linguistic community of Călineşti is divided into an area where children learn Romanian first and then Ukrainean, and another area where the first learned language is Ukrainian.

c) According to the relationship between languages reflected by usage, one may speak of a compound biliguaalism only when children from Romanian families choose to learn Ukrainian in school as a foreign langauge.

– *Coordinated bilingualism*: when the two languages are functionally separated, one language beind used officially and the other within the family. It is not the case of our community where situations interfere.

d) According the level of knowldge of the two languages

– *Symmetric bilingualism*: both languages are known to the same extent, mostly by elderly speaker.

– *Asymmetric bilingualism*: there are different levels of proficiency of Romanian and Ukrainian; the younger speakers are more profiecient in Romanian, save an isoled area of the village in which children learn Ukrainian as a mother tongue, while Romanian is being taught is school.

– *Receptive biligualism (passive)*: one of the languages is understood but not spoken: this is not the case in Călineşti, the two languages being used alternately, according to the practical context.

– *Written bilinguism*: one of the language can be read but not written. There is a special category of speakers of Ukrainian that can speak and understand Ukrainian but are incapable of reading or writing it.

We shall try to demonstrate that the study of bilingualism "allows the identification and description of the mechanism and of structural consequences of the contact between languages"[11]. The biligualism we described determines, as we shall see, the apparition of some interferenece phenomena at the phonetic, morphologic, lexical and syntactic levels, in

[11] DŞL, p. 87.

BDD-A17700 © 2014 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:39:05 UTC)

the structure of Romanian and Ukrainian languages that are in contact, fact that result sin the reorganisation of the structural patterns and of the system[12], even of the *linguistic type* from Eugeniu Coşeriu's theory[13].

The linguistic contact is defined by the *General Dictionary of Lingustic Science*s (author of the article: Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu) as that "situation that determines the alternate usage by certain groups or individuals of two different languages. The contact is thus the source of the group or individual bilingualism.". Franck Neveu (*Dictionnaire des sciences du langage*)[14] defines the contact between languages as that "situation in which, out of geographical or social reasons, two or more languages are being spoken by an individual or a community. The science of language is interested in the effects of thsi encounter of languages and cultures, especially in problems related to the interference between the linguistic systems prone to manifest at the lexical and grammatical levels." U. Weinreich asserts that the degree of the linguistic contact is dependant on the action of extralinguistic factors: "indigen or immigrant, rural or urban), cultural and ethnic particularity of the group, religion, race, sex, age, social status and occupation of the speakers"[15]. The phenomenon of interference is dependant on the phenomenon of linguistic contact.

Interference is not seen as an mutual influence of two languages in contact, but as "deviation from the norms of one of the languages in contact by introducing some particularities from the other language"[16]. There are different degrees of interference: on a small scale, the introduction of foreign elements in the system of a language leads to loans at the phonetical and lexical levels; on a larger scale, changes of the whole linguistic system are produced. In the case of bilingualism, the interferences between mother language and learned language are mutual, their degree depending on the type of bilingualism and the on the stage of biligualism[17].

As we said before, in some of the liguistic works the term *interference* and that *of negative transfer* overlap.

[12] The system contains Coşeriu believes – only "that which in the *norm* is the essential form, a functional position". V. Eugeniu Coşeriu, *Teoria limbajului şi lingvistica generală*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 2004, p. 98.

[13] In Eugeniu Coşeriu's linguistical concept, *the linguistic type* contains the functional principles and the technical categories of a language: procedure types and functions, distinctions categories, oppositions and structures that charaterize it, *cf. Lecţii de lingvistică generală*, Editura ARC, Chişinău, 2000, p. 284.

[14] Franck Neveu, *Dictionnaire des sciences du langage*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2004, p. 80.

[15] *Apud* DŞL, pp.137-138.

[16] DŞL, p. 270.

[17] *Cf.* DŞL, p. 270.

BDD-A17700 © 2014 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:39:05 UTC)

By contrast analysis of two languages in contact, by determining the divergent structural aspects, the future evolutions of the phenomenon of interference can be predicted. These updates are not compulosry though, as there may intervene not only factors that relate to the structure of the language, but also extralingustic fators, dependant on social-cultural context, but also on the political context of the linguistic contact. In our case, after the 1989 Revolution, the social-cultural and political conditions altered, producing major chances in the phenomenon of Romanian-Ukrainian interference.

André Martinet thinks that the "idea that bilingualism implies two languages with identical status is so wide-spread and established that linguists have proposed the term of *diglossia* in order to name a situation in which a community uses, according to the circumstances, a more familiar and less prestigious idiom or a more savant and pretisgious one. There would be no bilingualism except the individual one, while diglossia would characterize whole communities. Nevertheless, there are so many possibilities for symbiosis between 2 idioms, that we would prefer to keep a term as *bilingualism* that covers them all instead of trying a classification based on a simple dichotomy: French and English are two national languages of high prestige, but in Canada one cannot say that they are equal; in this circumstance, should we speak of diglossia in the province of Quebec?"[18]

Referring to the linguistic practice encountered in real life liguistic situations, the French linguist reminds of some specific facts related to the phenomenon under discussion:

"1) no linguistic community can be considered as being made up of individuals speaking a language simmilar in all details; 2) there are millions of human beings belonging to two or more linguistic communities, that, depending on the collocutor, use a language ore other; 3) not rarely, a person that speaks only a language, understands more languages by listening or reading; 4) most of the people are capable of using, depending on the circumstances, rhater different forms of the same language; 5) those who do not use actively different forms of this type, usually understand without any difficulty the forms they have the opportunity to hear frequently."[19]

In the actual linguistic situation of Călineşti, most of the speakers are bilingual. The exception is made up of some persons belonging to other ethnic groups (Romanian, Roma) that have recently entered the community. Romanian and Ukrainian interfere without any competition bet-

[18] André Martinet, *Elemente de lingvistică generală*, Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti, 1970, pp.192-193.

[19] *Ibidem*, p.193.

BDD-A17700 © 2014 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:39:05 UTC)

ween the two languages. Within families and in the usual conversation Ukrainian prevails. The language of administration appeals to the Romanian terms, the Ukrainian ones being unknown to the speakers that broke contact with the evolution of the Ukrainian language. The village has two main areas: one in which the children speak from a very young age Ukrainian, and the other, in the center of the village where the first learned language is Romanian.

The children alternate the codes more frequently as they learn both languages in school.

There are many families in which the elderly people use for conversation between them the Ukrainian language while in their conversation with the children they use Romanian. Being bilingual, they are "more or less capable of changing the code completely from one message to another, to use a different phonology and another syntax"[20].

Bibliography

Bidu-Vrănceanu, Angela; Călăraşu, Cristina; Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Liliana; Mancaş, Mihaela; Pană Dindelegan, Gabriela (1997), *Dicţionar general de ştiinţe. Ştiinţe ale limbii* (DŞL), Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti.

Coşeriu, Eugeniu (2000), *Lecţii de lingvistică generală*, Editura Arc, Chişinău.

Coşeriu, Eugeniu (2004), *Teoria limbajului şi lingvistică generală*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti.

Iordan, Iorgu (1973), *Bilingvism în domeniul romanic*, in *Studii şi Cercetări de Lingvistică*, nr. 2.

Lobiuc, Ioan (2004), *Contacte lingvistice ucraino-române* (basend on *Atlasul lingvistic român* all other documentary sources), Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iaşi.

Lobiuc, Ioan (1997), *Lingvistică generală* (partea a III-a – *Contactele dintre limbii*), Institutul European, Iaşi, pp.119-294).

Martinet, André (1970), *Elemente de lingvistică generală*, Editura Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti.

Moldoveanu, Gheorghe (2005), *"Bilingvism, diglosie, conflict lingvistic"*, in rev. *Limba Română*, Chişinău, nr.11, pp. 6-17.

Neveu, Franck (2004), *Dictionnaire des sciences du langage*, Armand Colin, Paris.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 218.

BDD-A17700 © 2014 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-31 09:39:05 UTC)