

## Towards an epistemological renewal optimizing the study of complex sociolinguistic situations

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**ABSTRACT:** The technological advances of the third-millennium society, that of information and knowledge, in addition to the political, military, social and economic upheavals ushering in a new era whose slogans are an unprecedented brewing, mixture, and intertwining of populations in of the mankind history. This brewing and its corollary «languages contact» lead to so moving and dynamic contexts at which sociolinguists must take a fresh look at the complex multilingualism phenomena that result. While it is obvious that the concepts of "bilingualism" and «diglossia» are fundamental in the analysis of situations bringing together several languages, it is none the less true that they are struck by a certain epistemological inertia and do no longer allow more effective analysis of such contexts becoming more complex.

Claiming that the two concepts («bilingualism» and «diglossia») are obsolete, we think we can revisit them in the hope of stimulating a new scientific, human and realistic debate that is more respectful of social and linguistic complexity. The results of this research should be conducive to highlight a common language contributing to the construction of unifying theories of translators, sociolinguists and many other researchers interested in transdisciplinarity.

In conclusion, we tried to remove the ambiguity surrounding «bilingualism» and «diglossia», leading coin a new term («biglossia») while proposing new definitions of the three concepts which are now subject to the appreciation of our peers.

**KEYWORDS:** Bilingualism, biglossia, diglossia, complexity pedagogy, sociolinguistic fractures.

### INTRODUCTION

The "Postindustrial" Third Millennium Society, that of "Information and Knowledge", is constantly progressing and opening up to the point that History is evolving at an exponential rate. Also, the mixing of populations throughout the world is increasingly favoured and complex; this has as a corollary contact at the level of imaginaries, languages and worldviews. But, on the research level, everything remains to be done and redone because of a certain epistemological inertia that will continue to manifest itself as long as we have not reviewed certain fundamental and essential concepts to approach, study and analyze these situations of contacts in all directions.

Like the researchers, gathered in the framework of this symposium<sup>1</sup> organized by ERIIC, we hope to stimulate a new scientific, human, realistic and more respectful debate on social and linguistic complexity, the results of which should have consequences conducive to the highlighting of a common language and, consequently, to the construction of a unified theory involving translators, (socio-)linguists, anthropologists, psychologists and other researchers able to deal with the major themes offered and proposed by this fine scientific event.

Achieving the objective just outlined requires answering the following research questions:

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<sup>1</sup> International Symposium under the theme: Imaginations, Languages and Visions of the World : Faculty of letters and human sciences in Beni Mellal, on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2018, organized by the Interdisciplinary Research Team on Interculture and Communication.

- What about the theoretical arsenal used to study language contact situations?
- What is this epistemological effort that would facilitate the relationship between sociolinguistics, translation and other related disciplines?

We cannot provide answers to these two questions without confirming or disproving certain hypotheses, the most salient of which is as follows: the basic concepts of sociolinguistics from which the protagonists of situations of language contact (in this case), which are none other than "Bilingualism" and "Diglossia", should draw, are outdated, obsolete and struck with a characterized epistemological inertia.

Our research will draw its main theoretical foundations from variational (Labove, 1975) and interactive sociolinguistics (Gumperz (1974, 1976), Messaoudi (2003, 2010)) as well as from socio-didactics (Bahmad, 2017) and the Pedagogy of complexity (Amime, 2016) from which we will borrow from the pedagogy of complexity, a new disciplinary field that allows us to study complex contexts in a transdisciplinary and systemic way, in this case the Moroccan one.

#### **A FEW DETAILS**

We would like to point out that the rapid evolution of history requires that everyone, and the scientific researcher in particular, constantly update their previous knowledge and achievements, which are ultimately the result of their adaptation to their constantly changing environment.

Also, like researchers wishing to give more acuity to their research, knowledge and experience, we would like, through this article, to revisit certain concepts of sociolinguistics that are far from immutable, if only because they continue to become more complex and to feed debates and polemics without ever enjoying real descriptive power or deserving the qualification of generalizable. These concepts are all the more important to study as they concern a diversity of disciplinary fields, many of which were discussed at the above-mentioned symposium.

The two concepts discussed here are "bilingualism" and "diglossia", which have been addressed by many researchers, including Pernot<sup>2</sup> (1897), Psichari (1928), Marçais (1930), Fergusson (1959, 1971), Fishman (1967, 1971), Boukous (1985, 1995), Messaoudi (2003), etc.

We have decided to revisit these concepts in the hope of stimulating a new scientific, human and more realistic debate.

#### **ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTS OF "BILINGUALISM" AND "DIGLOSSIA"**

While the universality of phenomena such as "bilingualism", as the simplest form of "plurilingualism"<sup>3</sup>, and "diglossia" is no longer to be demonstrated, the definitions given of the two concepts continue to fuel controversy and controversy; something that seriously undermines all processes, studies, approaches and approaches based on these concepts, particularly in terms of language policy and planning and their educational and didactic implications.

It would not be pointless to point out that this controversy has as a corollary a negative impact on the normal functioning of human societies.

#### **"BILINGUALISM", A VAGUE AND FLUCTUATING CONCEPT**

As the simplest form of plurilingualism, bilingualism refers, from a theoretical point of view, to the power of an individual/member of a given human community to think and express themselves in two language systems, in an undifferentiated way (as to the uses and functions of the language systems in contact).

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<sup>2</sup> Hubert Pernot, *Grammaire grecque moderne*, Garnier frères, 1897, Myriam Abouzaïd, *Politique linguistique éducative à l'égard de l'amazighe (berbère) au Maroc : des choix sociolinguistiques et didactiques à leur mise en pratique*, Thèse de Doctorat nouveau régime, Grenoble, Université de Grenoble, pp. 52-56, 5 décembre 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Here, it is important to note the distinction to be made (in French) between the concepts of plurilingualism and multilingualism; the first is relevant to the ability of an individual to express himself in several languages, the other relevant to the coexistence of two or more languages in a given territory.

So far, there has been nothing inconvenient, except for these adjectives that have been used to describe the term "bilingualism"; this is reflected in the plethora of expressions such as individual, community, family, social, territorial, state, etc.

Even if the term is too vague, confusing and does not allow us to grasp the ever more complex societal realities, specialists in the field maintain the status quo while occasionally giving the term "individual" a slightly higher degree of frequency than the other adjectives mentioned above.

### **"DIGLOSSIA", AN ESSENTIAL BUT EQUALLY IMPRECISE CONCEPT**

#### **THE POINT OF VIEW OF SOME "PIONEERS"**

To overcome the vagueness surrounding the concept of "bilingualism", which is said to be a matter for psychology and psycholinguistics, several researchers, including William Marçais, Charles Ferguson and Joshua Fishman- to name but a few (initially) linguists who were interested in the issue in a fundamental way- have had the merit of proposing the concept of "diglossia", this time perceived and approached in the context of sociology and sociolinguistics.

Unlike "bilingualism", "diglossia" is considered a social phenomenon characterizing a situation where two language systems are in use in different and complex ways. We then move from a "simple" complementary distribution of their uses and functions to a situation that can become conflictive, a logical and unavoidable consequence of the predominance of one language system over the other.

While Ferguson has the merit of participating in the development of the term "diglossia" and its lexicalization, through his descriptions of four linguistic situations, well known to sociolinguists - the "Arab world", German-speaking Switzerland, Haiti and Greece - his approach suffers from a glaring lack of descriptive power and generalization because it applies only to a very limited number of cases, even within the contexts that he has proposed to describe, which are very complex in nature.

Fishman took over with descriptions that encompassed more linguistic situations, but his approach definitely blurred the lines and highlighted, in a very clear manner, the limits of the concepts of "bilingualism" and "diglossia" as defined by the above-mentioned researchers and many others following them.

It should also be noted that while "bilingualism" is a phenomenon that has been known for a very long time, to describe an individual (most of the time) or a society (sometimes) using two language systems in an undifferentiated way, the term "diglossia" has come to be used at a time when it was necessary to change approach and distinguish between them (these are the two terms) because they do not have the same status in most human communities.

Since then, definitions and opinions have grown to the point that the only consensus among sociolinguists - according to Jean Michel Charpentier (1982), around the two terms "bilingualism" and "diglossia" - is:

"... the unequal aspect of the two languages in a diglossic situation..... »<sup>4</sup>

André Martinet refused to allow the term "bilingualism" to be reserved for situations where the linguistic systems in contact would have the same status and the concept of "diglossia" to be retained for all others where the languages would be of different status. He even goes so far as to say that the dichotomy is simplistic (because it causes confusion, which will undoubtedly mask complex and dynamic social realities) and that it would be useless to keep both terms.

According to him, he exists:

"...] so many different possibilities for symbiosis between two idioms that one may prefer to keep a term such as "bilingualism" that covers them all, rather than attempting a classification on the basis of a simplistic dichotomy. »<sup>5</sup>

#### **THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES WITH SOME MORE RECENT POSITIONS**

The controversy has not failed to interest other researchers whose most striking positions (which are also relatively recent) underline that the given definition of "diglossia" seems more open :

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Michel Charpentier, « Quand et où parler de bilinguisme et de diglossie ? Le problème des pidgins et des patois quasi assimilés dans le cas du bichelamar de Vanuatu (ex-Nouvelles-Hébrides) et du patois francisé du Poitou », La Linguistique, N°18, Paris, PUF, pp. 65-84, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> André Martinet, Langue et fonction, Paris, Gauthier, p. 148, 1970.

"(.....) situation of a social group (family, ethnic group, city, region, etc.) that uses two or more varieties (languages, idioms, dialects, etc.) for communication purposes, functionally differentiated, for any reason whatsoever. »<sup>6</sup>

However, by the very admission of George Lüdi, Bernard Py and many other researchers, " (.....) the notion of diglossia is however not very flexible, its field of use not very wide. Without a decisive enlargement, it can only be applied to a relatively small number of contact situations. »<sup>7</sup>

The use of the term "diglossia" is certainly interesting, but it has not allowed us to overcome the shortcomings of "bilingualism" since, like it, it is sometimes "social", sometimes "individual": "At the limit, an individual can be diglossic. »<sup>8</sup>

Fishman's reflections in this area focused on the relationship between "bilingualism" and "diglossia", which he illustrated in a table that resulted in four potential scenarios, in the hope of covering as many sociolinguistic situations as possible.

The table proposed by Fishman: " (.....) is not without its problems. It is the "diglossia and bilingualism" box that raises the fewest questions. »<sup>9</sup>

*Relations between bilingualism and diglossia<sup>10</sup>*

	Diglossia	
	+	-
BILINGUALISM	Bilingualism and diglossia	Bilingualism without diglossia
	Diaglossia without bilingualism	neither diglossia nor bilingualism

To illustrate this case, George Lüdi and Bernard Py put forward examples that were not very relevant because they could not be generalized and had vague and uncertain outlines: thus, more than half of the Paraguayan population would speak "both Spanish and Guarani"; standard Arabic and dialectal Arabic would be the work of "middle and upper classes in the Arab countries".

As for the other possibilities offered by Fishman's painting: the case of "bilingualism without diglossia" would refer only to the case of "individual migration", "diglossia without bilingualism" would correspond to exceptional cases and limits of societies whose overwhelming majority of the population would be monolingual while bilingualism would concern an almost negligible proportion, the last box "neither diglossia nor bilingualism" would have no correspondence in reality or would be the fact of a "homogeneous" community isolated from the rest of the world (extremely rare case).

**OUR POSITION**

Nowadays, the notions of "bilingualism" and "diglossia", as defined by our peers around the world, are very problematic.

We conclude that the conceptions of our predecessors, Ferguson and Fishman, in this case, regarding diglossia and bilingualism remain too theoretical to describe the reality that is complex and very fluid.

Although other researchers have made interesting proposals dealing with "triglossic" or even "quadriglossic" situations, we have focused our attention on the precursors and some other researchers among contemporaries because the main concepts of "bilingualism" and "diglossia" are still relevant and have not moved a single iota in decades (indeed since their "creation"); this despite the limitations and confusion that we have tried to highlight.

**OUR PROPOSAL**

In order to analyse the above-mentioned concepts, the subject of our research, in a dynamic way while avoiding repetitions, we believe that the "contact" of languages gives rise to a continuum ranging from "monolingualism" to "plurilingualism" and from "monoglossy" to "polyglossy", in accordance with the following diagram which we will comment on below :

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<sup>6</sup> Georges Lüdi et Bernard Py *Etre bilingue*, Bern, Peter Lang SA, 2003, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Georges Lüdi et Bernard Py, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Joshua Aaron Fishman, *Sociolinguistique*, Paris, Nathan, p. 89, 1971.



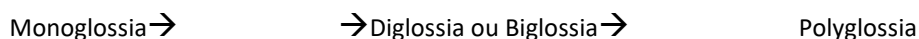
*Level 1: Underlying abstract system(s), capacity, competence*

**Social Phenomenon, Genotype (linguistic or verbal)**

**We are in the side of the Language (Langue)**

**We are in the side of the Speech (Parole)**

.....Continuum.....



*(Extremely rare case)*

*Level 2: Update of the « Monolingualism »/« Plurilingualism », shaping the system, utilization, use, performance*

**Individual phenomenon, Phenotype (linguistic or verbal)**

The relationship between the 2 systems is : "intralectal", in the case of "Diglossia" and "interlectal", in the case of "Biglossia".

## BILINGUALISM

Bilingualism, as the simplest form of plurilingualism, would most likely be a purely social phenomenon that refers to the theoretical ability of a speaker/human being/member of a given human community to use, express and think in two language systems, in an undifferentiated way.

## DIGLOSSIA

Diglossia refers to the situation in which, at the level of a given territory, two language systems are concretised, updated and used by an individual/member of a given human community; these (the 2 language systems) coexist according to a socially codified distribution of status, uses and functions. We claim that diglossia is a matter for the individual sphere alone. It should be noted that most human communities are in some way familiar with diglossic situations.

**NOTE : Monolingualism** would correspond to the case of a society using a single language system (very rare case).

## A FEW DETAILS

We believe that "bilingualism" is to "diglossia" what "language" is to "speech". Here, we follow in the footsteps of William Labov (1972, 1976) and the "variationist" sociolinguists whose proposals constitute the starting point for an epistemic reflection that considers language as an abstract phenomenon that we can grasp through the different uses made of it by speakers in real communication situations. The latter give rise to various language productions (different varieties of language), falling within the essential field of speech, which sociolinguistics will analyse and relate to their social foundations.

When we speak of "**bilingualism**", we are on the side of the abstract system underlying all diglossik/biglossik situations. Like "language", "bilingualism" is about society. Diglossia", seen from this angle, is a concrete use, an actualization of "bilingualism"; just like "speech", it is the work of an individual during a communicative act.

In other words, "**bilingualism**" is a kind of "genotype" (language / verbal), a set of "genetic" / sociolinguistic characteristics of the language repertoire of a given society, which may or may not be expressed in / through its "phenotype" / "diglossia". This is none other than the updating and concretization of this same language repertoire by an individual/speaker with respect to a given communicative act/sociolinguistic context.

According to what we have just stated, the double entry table showing the relationship between bilingualism and diglossia drawn up by Fishman would give rise to misunderstandings, so as not to say incompatibilities/ incompatible communication act/a given sociolinguistic context.

Joshua Fishman's chart reprinted and criticized by Ali Ouassou

	<b>Diglossia = Speech (Parole)</b>	
	+	-
+ <b>Bilingualism = Langue</b>	Language and Speech	Language without Speech
<b>Bilingualism = Langue</b> -	Speech without Language	Neither Speech nor Language

Indeed, this would be like crossing two concepts on two very distinct levels: bilingualism referring to abstract language and diglossia assimilable to speech which is concrete.

In addition, the four possibilities resulting from Fishman's table, namely "Bilingualism and diglossia", "Bilingualism without diglossia", "Diglossia without bilingualism" and "Neither diglossia nor bilingualism" would respectively be equivalent to "language and speech", "language without speech", "speech without speech" and "neither speech nor language".

To cross "language" and "speech" is ultimately to confuse two very distinct levels: a genotype and its phenotype, the abstract/virtual system and its concretization which is real.

If we assume with Charles Ferguson that "diglossia" refers to a situation where two varieties of the same language are in complementary distribution with regard to their status, fields of use and functions, we have reservations, as does Leïla Messaoudi<sup>11</sup> in her constructive criticism of the metaphor of the "linguistic market" supported by Boukous Ahmed<sup>12</sup>, with regard to the qualifiers "High "/(High)"/" Basse "/(Low); "Dominant "/" Dominé "; "Fort "/ " Weak", etc.

Indeed, these terms are simplistic in our eyes, all the more so since they reflect reducing dichotomies that take no account of the dynamics of societies, which speak, nor of the status of systems that are never stable, nor of the social, economic, cultural, political and other contexts that are increasingly changing (all the more so as the society of the third millennium is constantly opening up and becoming more complex).

**ANOTHER CONFUSION TO CLARIFY**

At the end of this analysis, we still have to resolve the situation where the two "in contact" systems are not genetically related.

Here, in respect of the above, we propose the name "biglossia"<sup>13</sup> referring to an "inter-electoral" relationship between two "readings" of different origins; something that is symbolized by the union between the Latin element "bi-", a prefix that indicates the action of doubling, which is added to the Greek element gloss-, of the ancient Greek γλῶσσα (glōssa) ("language").

As for the term "diglossia", the relationship is "intralegal"; it is symbolized by two Greek elements: di-, from the ancient Greek δι-, from δίς (dis) ("twice"), and from gloss-, ("language").

Here, Pierre Achard's and Leïla Messaoudi's positions deserve to be mentioned and explored. Both researchers agree that the term "diglossia" should refer to two genetically related systems. Leïla Messaoudi points out that:

" (.....) the linguistic matching is observable in synchrony, and not only in diachrony. It would thus constitute an important feature that would make it possible to distinguish bilingualism from diglossia. »<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Leïla Messaoudi, Etudes sociolinguistiques, Faculté des Lettres et des sciences humaines- Université Ibn Tofaïl, Kénitra, Impression Editions Okad, pp. 29-32, Décembre 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmed Boukous, Société, langues et culture au Maroc. Enjeux symboliques, Casablanca, Najah Al Jadida, p. 40, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> the word 'Hybrid' that some linguistic purists might reject and that we use, here in quotation marks, to denote the state of a speaker making use of two linguistic systems that are not genetically related.

<sup>14</sup> Messaoudi, Leïla, Ibid., p. 136.

Pierre Achard (1993), quoted in Messaoudi (2003, p. 136), will certainly stress the importance of taking into consideration the genetic matching of the language systems in contact.

Leïla Messaoudi's position is all the more interesting because it insists on a continuous and sustained return to the field and to the practices of speakers, which remain the sine qua non without which the concepts used cannot be validated. The examples she gives on this subject are more than eloquent, in this case, the "compensatory strategies" used by the speaker (conditioned by his representations of his speech or first language) in a diglossic<sup>15</sup> situation.

### SOME CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS OF OUR PROPOSAL

After this brief distinction between "diglossia" (bringing two varieties of the same linguistic system/family into contact) and "biglossia" (referring to two distinct linguistic systems in contact), it would be useful to note that :

Diglossia "/" biglossia " would generally be accepted by social actors, within a given human community, when the differentiation is the result of historical, political, economic, "ordinary" reasons (as happens in most countries of the world).

This is the case, for example, of an Amazighophone<sup>16</sup> speaker, from Morocco today, who would use both his first language, Amazigh, and dialectal Arabic in a souk (for commercial transactions), at coffee (between friends), for incantations, etc. or Amazigh and standard Arabic in private prayer.

But when, in relation to "diglossia"/" biglossia", the mastery/non-mastery of a linguistic system gives rise to a "linguistic insecurity"<sup>17</sup> and that this, by maintaining itself, is transformed into a means of social segregation and thus "excluding" (in the words of L.-J. Calvet<sup>18</sup> himself), then said "diglossia"/" biglossia " would become problematic and it is precisely this that causes, among others, the "Fracture linguistic"<sup>19</sup> which is, in the end, a symptomatic manifestation of deeper "sociolinguistic fractures"<sup>20</sup> (in fact, embedded or polyglossies "diglossies "/" "biglossies") from which the majority of students at the higher scientific education level (in many African and Maghreb countries, in this case) suffer, in the first place, to mention only the field of education and training.

### CONCLUSION

Through this research, we have tried to revisit the universal concepts of "bilingualism" and "diglossia" by drawing inspiration from several researchers in the field. Having noted that these concepts are only partially and superficially applicable and adaptable to a rather limited number of sociolinguistic situations, we have proposed a new definition, which we submit to the appreciation of our peers, as a prelude to much more complex studies and considerations that reflect the Moroccan and African reality (our preferred fields).

We believe that this attempt to redefine the notion of "bilingualism" referring to the language system, i.e. the structures underlying the exercise of speech and communication in relation to the concept of "diglossia"/"biglossia", is an epistemological approach that will certainly contribute to advancing sociolinguistic theories.

If these propositions were to be legitimized, the theories of various fields and scientific fields as well as those of sociolinguistics would mutually reinforce each other insofar as the revisited concepts are not only central (in the said disciplinary fields) but would also function as real catalysts because by being placed on both ends of the continuum, they will allow a useful coming and going between the linguistic system (and linguistic systems in interference) and its (their)

<sup>15</sup> Messaoudi, Leïla (2003), op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> Ali Ouassou, Etude de la variation linguistique dans un milieu plurilingue : l'exemple d'El Ksiba N'Moha Ou Saïd, Maroc : étude sociolinguistique, Thèse de Doctorat nouveau régime, Toulouse, Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, pp. 94-99, 6 décembre 2002.

<sup>17</sup> This is actually a "sociolinguistic insecurity" that we deal with in another article.

<sup>18</sup> Louis.-Jean Calvet, Les voix de la ville. Introduction à la sociolinguistique urbaine, Paris, Payot, p. 269, 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Leïla Messaoudi, « La Fracture linguistique dans l'enseignement scientifique au Maroc. Pour un bilinguisme intégré », Les Technolectes au Maghreb : éléments de contextualisation. Coordination Messaoudi, Leïla et Benramdane, Farid, Kénitra, Publications du Laboratoire Langage et société CNRST-URAC 56, pp.111-129, Décembre 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Ali Ouassou, La « fracture linguistique », un continuum allant des langues « autochtones » à celles étrangères : approche sociolinguistique complexe », Revue des Etudes Amazighes, 2, pp.77-94, 2018.

actualization in speech. "For, let us repeat, there is no speech without a linguistic system as there's no linguistic system without speech. The constitution and functioning of speech are incomprehensible without reference to the nature of the system." <sup>21</sup>

Finally, our contribution to this epistemological renewal, claiming and hoping to optimize the study of complex sociolinguistic situations, such as that of Morocco, would be greatly enhanced by being approached within the framework of the "Pedagogy of Complexity" <sup>22</sup>, referring to a new scientific transdisciplinary field advocating a globalizing approach that respects the specificities of each communication situation.

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<sup>21</sup> Maurice Pergnier, *Théorie linguistique et théorie de la traduction*. Les Presses de l'université de Montréal, Meta, Volume 26, numéro 3, p. 261, septembre 1981.

<sup>22</sup> AbdelJalil Amime, *Madħal ilā libīdāgūjyā 'w 'ulūm attarbiyya ru'ya tarbawiyya muğāyir, fī tta'sīs libīdāgūjyā ssiyāqāti Imāgribiyati Imurakkaba*. Première partie, Préf. Ouassou, Ali, Marrakech, Publication Laboratoire LCP, 2016.