

2

Language choice in multilingual communities

Choosing your variety or code

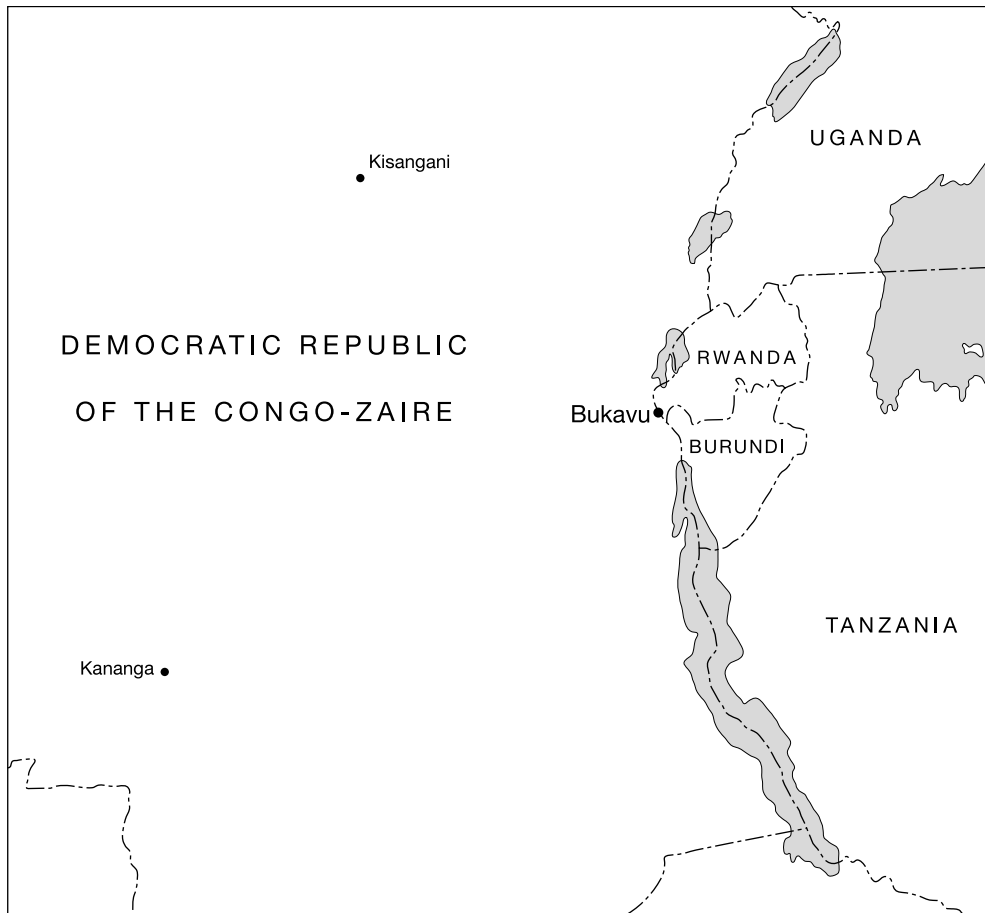
What is your linguistic repertoire?

Example 1

Kalala is 16 years old. He lives in Bukavu, an African city in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Zaire with a population of about 240,000. It is a multicultural, multilingual city with more people coming and going for work and business reasons than people who live there permanently. Over 40 groups speaking different languages can be found in the city. Kalala, like many of his friends, is unemployed. He spends his days roaming the streets, stopping off periodically at regular meeting places in the market-place, in the park, or at a friend's place. During a normal day he uses at least three different varieties or codes, and sometimes more.

Kalala speaks an informal style of Shi, his tribal language, at home with his family, and he is familiar with the formal Shi used for weddings and funerals. He uses informal Shi in the market-place when he deals with vendors from his own ethnic group. When he wants to communicate with people from a different tribal group, he uses the lingua franca of the area, Swahili. He learned standard (Zairean) Swahili at school, but the local market-place variety is a little different. It has its own distinct linguistic features and even its own name – Kingwana. He uses Kingwana to younger children and to adults he meets in the streets, as well as to people in the market-place. He listens to pop music in Lingala, although he doesn't speak it or understand it.

Standard Swahili, one of the national languages, is the language used in Bukavu for most official transactions, despite the fact that French is the official language of the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Zaire. Kalala knows almost no French and, like most other people in Bukavu, he uses standard Swahili with officials in government offices when he has to fill in a form or pay a bill. He uses it when he tries for a job in a shop or an office, but in fact there are very few jobs around. He spends most of his time with his friends, and with them he uses another variety or code called Indoubil. This is a variety which is used among the young people in Bukavu, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds or tribal affiliations. It is used like in-group slang between young people in monolingual communities. Indoubil is based



Map 2.1 Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo-Zaire

on Swahili, but it has developed into a distinct variety or code by drawing on languages like French, English and Italian – all languages which can be read or heard in the multilingual city of Bukavu.

If we list the varieties or codes he uses regularly, we find that Kalala's linguistic repertoire includes three varieties of Swahili (standard Zairean, local Swahili or Kingwana, and Indoubil) and two varieties of his tribal language, Shi (a formal and an informal or casual style). The factors that lead Kalala to use one code rather than another are the kinds of social factors identified in the previous chapter as relevant to language choice in speech communities throughout the world. Characteristics of the users or participants are relevant. Kalala's own linguistic repertoire and the repertoire of the person he is talking to are basic limiting factors, for instance.

[Table 2.1](#) illustrates the possibilities for communication when Kalala wanted to talk to a soldier who had recently arrived in Bukavu with his unit. Since he and his addressee share only one code or variety, standard Swahili, there is not much choice if he wants to communicate referential content (as opposed to, say, insult, abuse or admiration, where any variety could convey the affective message).

Table 2.1 Two linguistic repertoires in the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Zaire

<i>Kalala's linguistic repertoire</i>	<i>Addressee's linguistic repertoire</i>
Shi: informal style formal style	Rega: informal style formal style
Indoubil	Lingala
Kingwana	
Standard Zairean Swahili	Standard Zairean Swahili

Source: Based on Goyvaerts *et al.* 1983, Goyvaerts 1988, 1996.

Exercise 1

- (a) There are many degrees of 'knowing' a language. Table 2.1 is a simplification since it does not take account of how well Kalala and his addressee know any particular variety. Consider how well you know a language other than your mother tongue. How would you rate your knowledge? What factors are relevant to your assessment? Do these include social factors?
- (b) Using the information provided in the section above, which varieties do you think Kalala will use to
- talk to his younger brother at home?
 - plan the morning's activities with his best friend?
 - greet a stranger from a different tribe whom he met in the street?

Answers at end of chapter

Domains of language use

Example 2

'Anahina is a bilingual Tongan New Zealander living in Auckland. At home with her family she uses Tongan almost exclusively for a wide range of topics. She often talks to her grandmother about Tongan customs, for instance. With her mother she exchanges gossip about Tongan friends and relatives. Tongan is the language the family uses at meal-times. They discuss what they have been doing, plan family outings and share information about Tongan social events. It is only with her older sisters that she uses some English words when they are talking about school or doing their homework.

Certain social factors – who you are talking to, the social context of the talk, the function and topic of the discussion – turn out to be important in accounting for language choice in many different kinds of speech community. It has proved very useful, particularly when describing code choice in large speech communities, to look at 'typical' interactions which involve these factors. We can imagine, for instance, a 'typical' family interaction. It would be located in the setting of the home; the typical participants will obviously be family members; and typical topics would be family activities. 'Anahina's family's meal-time conversations, described

in example 2, illustrate this pattern well. A number of such typical interactions have been identified as relevant in describing patterns of code choice in many speech communities. They are known as *domains* of language use, a term popularised by Joshua Fishman, an American sociolinguist. A domain involves typical interactions between typical participants in typical settings.

Table 2.2 describes five domains which can be identified in many communities.

Table 2.2 Domains of language use

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Addressee</i>	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Variety/Code</i>
Family	Parent	Home	Planning a family party	_____
Friendship	Friend	Beach	How to play beach tennis	_____
Religion	Priest	Church	Choosing the Sunday liturgy	_____
Education	Teacher	School	Solving a maths problem	_____
Employment	Employer	Workplace	Applying for a promotion	_____

Source: Based on Fishman 1972: 22.

Exercise 2

- (a) Fill in the column labelled variety/code for your speech community. If your community is monolingual, remember that the term variety includes different dialects and styles of language.
- (b) Ask a bilingual friend or neighbour which languages they would use in the different domains. It is useful to guess in advance how they will answer and then check your predictions against their responses. When you are wrong see if you can identify the reason for your error.

If you do not know anyone who is bilingual, think of where you might meet people who are bilingual. In Wellington, New Zealand, students have found that bilingual people in local shops and takeaway bars are very interested in this topic, and are pleased to talk about their language use. You could consider asking a bilingual worker in a takeaway shop, a delicatessen or corner shop about their patterns of language use. But don't ask when they are busy!

Example 3

In Paraguay, a small South American country, two languages are used – Spanish, the language of the colonisers, and Guaraní, the American Indian indigenous language. People in Paraguay are proud that they have their own language which distinguishes them from the rest of South America. Many rural Paraguayans are monolingual in Guaraní, but those who live in the cities are usually bilingual. They read Spanish literature, but they gossip in both Spanish and Guaraní.

A study by Joan Rubin in the 1960s identified complementary patterns of language use in different domains. Urban bilingual Paraguayans selected different codes in different situations, and their use of Spanish and Guaraní fell into a pattern for different domains

(see Table 2.3). This was useful though it still leaves considerable areas of language use unspecified. Faced, for example, in the countryside by a woman in a long black skirt smoking a cigar what language should you use? (The answer will be based on your predictions about her linguistic repertoire.)

Table 2.3 Domains of language use in Paraguay

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Addressee</i>	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Language</i>
Family	Parent	Home	Planning a family party	<i>Guarani</i>
Friendship	Friend	Café	Funny anecdote	<i>Guarani</i>
Religion	Priest	Church	Choosing the Sunday liturgy	<i>Spanish</i>
Education	Teacher	Primary school	Telling a story	<i>Guarani</i>
Education	Lecturer	University	Solving a maths problem	<i>Spanish</i>
Administration	Official	Office	Getting an import licence	<i>Spanish</i>

Source: This table was constructed from data provided in Rubin 1968.

This table describes the situation 40 years ago, but patterns of language use have steadily changed in Paraguay, especially in the urban areas. The complementary patterns of language use identified by Joan Rubin in the 1960s have given way to much greater bilingualism in most domains in 21st century Paraguay. City dwellers use both Spanish and Guarani in the home as well as in school, and some fear that Guarani may eventually be displaced in urban areas.

Modelling variety or code choice

Example 4

Maria is a teenager whose Portuguese parents came to London in the 1960s. She uses mainly Portuguese at home and to older people at the Portuguese Catholic church and community centre, but English is the appropriate variety or code for her to use at school. She uses mostly English in her after-school job serving in a local café, though occasionally older customers greet her in Portuguese.

Domain is clearly a very general concept which draws on three important social factors in code choice – participants, setting and topic. It is useful for capturing broad generalisations about any speech community. Using information about the domains of use in a community, it is possible to draw a very simple model summarising the norms of language use for the community. This is often particularly useful for bilingual and multilingual speech communities.

The information provided in example 4, for instance, identifies four domains and describes the variety or code appropriate to each.

Domain	Variety/code
Home/family	Portuguese
Church/religion	Portuguese
Work/employment	English
School/education	English

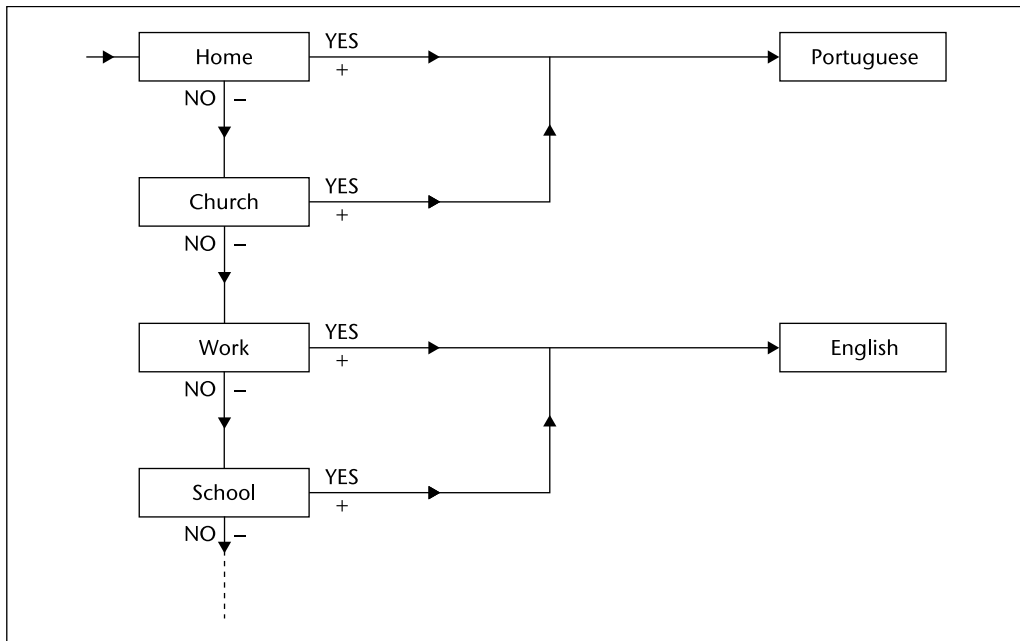


Figure 2.1 Appropriate code choice in different domains among the Portuguese community in London

This information can also be summarised in a diagram or model, as [figure 2.1](#) illustrates. While it obviously oversimplifies the complexity of bilingual interaction, nevertheless a model like this is useful in a number of ways. First it forces us to be very clear about which domains and varieties are relevant to language choice. The model summarises what we know about the patterns of language use in the community. It is not an account of the choices a person *must* make or of the process they go through in selecting a code. It is simply a description of the community's norms which can be altered or added to if we discover more information. It would be possible, for instance, to add other domains after 'school', for instance, such as 'the pub' or 'the law court'.

A second reason why an explicit model is useful is that it provides a clear basis for comparing patterns of code choice in different speech communities. Models make it easy to compare the varieties appropriate in similar domains in different speech communities. And a model is also useful to a newcomer in a community as a summary of the appropriate patterns of code use in the community. A model describes which code or codes are usually selected for use in different situations. A model for Sauris, the Italian mountain community described in [example 7](#) in [chapter 1](#), would show that Friulian is normally used to order a beer in the local bar. And in Bukavu, if you want to be able to buy vegetables in the local market-place at a reasonable price, a model would inform you that you need to know how to use Kingwana.

Exercise 3(a)

Consider [example 2](#) above. What does it suggest about the limitations of a domain-based approach to language choice?

Answer at end of chapter

Example 5

Oi Lin Tan, a 20-year-old Chinese Singaporean, uses three languages regularly. At home she uses Cantonese to her mother and to her grandfather who lives with them. With her friends she generally uses Singapore English. She learned to understand Hokkien, another Chinese language, in the smaller shops and market-place, but in large department stores she again uses Singapore English. At primary school she was taught for just over half the time in Mandarin Chinese, and so she often watches Channel 8, the Mandarin television station, and she regularly reads a Chinese newspaper *Liánhé Zǎobào*, which is written in Mandarin Chinese. During the other part of the time at primary school she was taught in a formal variety of Singapore English. This is the code she uses when she has to deal with government officials, or when she applies for an office job during the university holidays. She went to an English-medium secondary school and she is now studying geography and economics at an English-medium university. Her text books are all in English.

Exercise 3(b)

Although Oi Lin Tan uses Cantonese to her mother, she uses Singapore English to her sisters. On the other hand, she uses Cantonese at the market to elderly Cantonese vegetable sellers. What factors might account for these code choices?

Answer at end of chapter

Other social factors affecting code choice

Though I have used domains as useful summaries of relevant social factors in the model provided above, it is often necessary to examine more specific social factors if a model is to be a useful description of code choices in a community. The components of a domain do not always fit with each other. They are not always ‘congruent’. In other words, within any domain, individual interactions may not be ‘typical’ in the sense in which ‘typical’ is used in the domain concept. They may, nevertheless, be perfectly normal, and occur regularly. This is illustrated by Oi Lin Tan’s use of Singapore English to her sisters as described in example 5. People may select a particular variety or code because it makes it easier to discuss a particular topic, regardless of where they are speaking. At home, people often discuss work or school, for instance, using the language associated with those domains, rather than the language of the family domain. Some describe this as ‘leakage’, suggesting it is in some way irregular – the code associated with one domain is ‘leaking’ into another. In fact, it is quite normal and very common. Particular topics may regularly be discussed in one code rather than another, regardless of the setting or addressee.

The dimensions introduced in [Chapter 1](#) illustrate this point nicely. Any or all of them may be relevant in accounting for the choice of variety or code in a particular situation. When both participants share more than one variety, then other factors will contribute to the appropriate choice. The **social distance** dimension is relevant, for instance. How well do they know each other, i.e. what is the social distance between the participants? Are they strangers, friends, brothers? Kalala, for example, would use a different code to each.

The **status** relationship between people may be relevant in selecting the appropriate code. A high-status official in Bukavu will be addressed in standard Swahili in many contexts. In Singapore, English is the most frequently selected code for official transactions, regardless of the speaker's ethnicity. Social role may also be important and is often a factor contributing to status differences between people. Typical role relationships are teacher–pupil, doctor–patient, soldier–civilian, priest–parishioner, official–citizen. The first-named role is often the more statusful. You can no doubt think of many more examples of role pairs like these. The same person may be spoken to in a different code depending on whether they are acting as a teacher, as a parent or as a customer in the market-place. In Bukavu, for instance, Mr Mukala, a teacher, insists on standard Swahili from his pupils, his wife uses Kongo, their tribal language, to talk to him, while in the market-place he is addressed in Kingwana, the local variety of Swahili.

Features of the setting and the dimension of **formality** may also be important in selecting an appropriate variety or code. In church, at a formal ceremony, the appropriate variety will be different from that used afterwards in the church porch. The variety used for a formal radio lecture differs from that used for the adverts. In Paraguay, whether the interaction takes place in a rural as opposed to an urban setting is crucial to appropriate language choice. Other relevant factors relate to the social dimensions of formality and status: Spanish is the appropriate language for formal interactions.

Another important factor is the **function** or goal of the interaction. What is the language being used for? Is the speaker asking a favour or giving orders to someone? When Kalala applies for an office job he uses his 'best' standard written Swahili on the application form, and his most formal style of standard Swahili at the interview. When he abuses his younger brother he uses Indoubil, the code in which his vocabulary of 'insult' is most extensive. The function is exclusively affective, and Kalala transmits his feelings effectively, despite the fact that his brother doesn't understand much Indoubil yet.

So in describing the patterns of code use of particular communities, the relevant social factors may not fit neatly into institutionalised domains. As we have seen, more specific social factors often need to be included, and a range of social dimensions may need to be considered too. The aim of any description is to represent the language patterns of the community accurately. If the model does not do that, it needs to be modified. The only limitation is one of usefulness. If a model gets too complicated and includes too many specific points, it loses its value as a method of capturing generalisations.

Exercise 4

Using the information provided in example 1, draw a diagram like that in [Figure 2.1](#) summarising the factors relevant to code choice for Kalala in Bukavu.

Answer at end of chapter

Models can usefully go beyond the social factors summarised in the domain concept to take account of social dimensions such as social distance (stranger vs friend), relative status or role (doctor–patient), degrees of formality (formal wedding ceremony vs lunchtime chat) and the function or goal of the interaction (getting a bargain). Nevertheless, because they are concerned to capture broad generalisations, there are obvious limits to the usefulness of such models in describing the complexities of language choice. Interactions where people switch

between codes within a domain cannot always be captured even by diagrams which consider the relevance of topic or social dimensions such as formality and social distance. This kind of linguistic behaviour is better described by a more detailed analysis of particular interactions. This point will be developed further in the section on code-switching and mixing below.

Before considering code-switching, however, it is useful to relate the patterns described so far to the important sociolinguistic concept of *diglossia*.

Diglossia

A linguistic division of labour

Example 6

In Eggenwil, a town in the Aargau canton of Switzerland, Silvia, a bank-teller, knows two very distinct varieties of German. One is the local Swiss German dialect of her canton which she uses in her everyday interactions. The other is standard German which she learnt at school, and though she understands it very well indeed, she rarely uses it in speech. Newspapers are written in standard German, and when she occasionally goes to hear a lecture at the university it may be in standard German. The national TV news is broadcast in standard German, but weather broadcasts now use dialect. The sermons her mother listens to in church are generally in standard German too, though more radical clerics use Swiss German dialect. The novels Silvia reads also use standard German.

The pattern of code or variety choice in Eggenwil is one which has been described with the term *diglossia*. This term has been used both in a narrow sense and in a much broader sense and I will describe both. In the narrow and original sense of the term, diglossia has three crucial features:

1. Two distinct varieties of the same language are used in the community, with one regarded as a high (or H) variety and the other a low (or L) variety.
2. Each variety is used for quite distinct functions; H and L complement each other.
3. No one uses the H variety in everyday conversation.

The situation in Eggenwil fits these three criteria for narrow or 'classic' diglossia perfectly. There are a number of other communities which fit this narrow definition too. Arabic-speaking countries use classical Arabic as their H variety and regional colloquial varieties as L varieties. In Greece, there still exists an H variety Katharévoussa, alongside an L variety, Dhimotiki, which is steadily displacing it (as described below). At one time, Latin was the H variety alongside daughter languages, such as Italian, French and Spanish, which had developed from its more colloquial form. These communities all satisfy the three criteria.

In these communities, while the two varieties are (or were) linguistically related, the relationship is closer in some cases than others. The degree of difference in the pronunciation of H and L varies from place to place, for example. The sounds of Swiss German are quite different from those of standard German, while Greek Katharévoussa is much closer to Dhimotiki in its pronunciation. The grammar of the two linguistically related varieties differs too. Often

the grammar of H is morphologically more complicated. So standard German, for instance, uses more case markers on nouns and tense inflections on verbs than Swiss German; and standard French, the H variety in Haiti, uses more markers of number and gender on nouns than Haitian Creole, the L variety.

Most of the vocabulary of H and L is the same. But, not surprisingly since it is used in more formal domains, the H vocabulary includes many more formal and technical terms such as *conservation* and *psychometric*, while the L variety has words for everyday objects such as *saucepan* and *shoe*. There are also some interesting paired items for frequently referred to concepts. Where standard German uses *Kartoffel* for 'potato', and *Dachboden* for 'attic', Swiss German uses *Härdöpfel* and *Estrich*. Where Katharévousa uses *ikías* for 'house', Dhimotiki uses *spiti*.

We have some choices in English which give the flavour of these differences. Choosing between words like *perused* and *read*, or *affluent* and *rich*, for instance, or between expressions such as *having finally despatched the missive* and *when I had posted the letter at last* captures the kind of differences involved. But while either would be perfectly possible in written or spoken English, in most diglossia situations the H form would not occur in everyday conversation, and the L form would generally seem odd in writing.

Exercise 5

Fill in the following table on the basis of your predictions about when H will be used and when L will be used in diglossic communities.

	H(igh) Variety	L(ow) Variety
Religion (sermon, prayers)		
Literature (novels, non-fiction)		
Newspaper (editorial)		
Broadcasting: TV news		
Education (written material, lectures)		
Education (lesson discussion)		
Broadcasting: radio		
Shopping		
Gossiping		

Answer at end of chapter

No one uses H for everyday interaction. In Arabic-speaking countries, for instance, classical Arabic is revered as the language of the Koran. It is taught in school and used for very formal interactions and in writing. But for most everyday conversations in Arabic-speaking countries people use the everyday colloquial variety. A friend of mine went to Morocco having learned classical Arabic at university in England. When he arrived and used his classical variety some people were very impressed. People generally respect and admire those who have mastered classical Arabic. But most of them couldn't understand what he was saying. His colleagues warned him that he would be laughed at or regarded as sacrilegious if he went about trying to buy food in classical Arabic. It would be a bit like asking for steaks at the butcher's using Shakespearian English.

Attitudes to H vs L in a diglossia situation

Example 7

A century and a half ago a Swiss traveller in Haiti expressed his annoyance at the fond complacency with which the white creoles regarded their patois. He was sharply answered by a creole, who declared: 'There are a thousand things one dares not say in French, a thousand voluptuous images which one can hardly render successfully, which the Créole expresses or renders with infinite grace.'

Haiti has been described as another diglossic situation by some linguists, with French as the H variety and Haitian Creole as the L variety. As the quotation in example 7 suggests, attitudes towards the two codes in a diglossia situation are complicated. People generally admire the H variety even when they can't understand it. Attitudes to it are usually very respectful. It has prestige in the sense of high status. These attitudes are reinforced by the fact that the H variety is the one which is described and 'fixed', or standardised, in grammar books and dictionaries. People generally do not think of the L variety as worth describing. However, attitudes to the L variety are varied and often ambivalent. In many parts of Switzerland, people are quite comfortable with their L variety and use it all the time – even to strangers. In other countries, where the H variety is a language used in another country as a normal means of communication, and the L variety is used only locally, people may rate the L variety very low indeed. In Haiti, although both French and the Creole were declared national languages in the 1983 constitution, many people still regard French, the H variety, as the only real language of the country. They ignore the existence of Haitian Creole, which in fact everyone uses at home and with friends for all their everyday interactions. On the other hand, the quotation in example 7 suggests that even here the L variety is highly valued by some speakers. So while its very existence is denied by some, others may regard the L variety as the best way of expressing their real feelings.

Exercise 6

- (a) Using the information provided above, summarise what you now know about the differences between H and L in diglossic communities.
- (i) How are they linguistically related? Are they distinct languages or varieties of the same language?
 - (ii) How are they used in the community?
 - (iii) Which is used for conversation with family and friends?
 - (iv) How is each variety learned?
 - (v) Which has most prestige?
 - (vi) Which is codified in grammar books and dictionaries?
 - (vii) In which variety is literature usually written?
- (b) Judged by these seven features would you say that Hemnesberget described in example 6 in [chapter 1](#) qualified as a diglossic community? Why (not)?

Answers at end of chapter

Diglossia with and without bilingualism

Diglossia is a characteristic of speech communities rather than individuals. Individuals may be bilingual. Societies or communities are diglossic. In other words, the term diglossia describes societal or institutionalised bilingualism, where two varieties are required to cover all the community's domains. There are some diglossic communities where there is very limited individual bilingualism; e.g. in Haiti more than 90 per cent of the population is monolingual in Haitian Creole. Consequently, they cannot actively contribute in more formal domains.

Table 2.4 is one way of considering the range of potential relationships between diglossia and bilingualism. It is an idealised model, but it usefully identifies the extreme positions that are possible. If we restrict the terms diglossia and bilingualism to refer to different languages (rather than dialects or styles), then box 1 refers to a situation where the society is diglossic, two languages are required to cover the full range of domains, and (most) individuals are bilingual. Those communities in Vanuatu where individuals speak the local village language (e.g. Erromangan, Aulua), as well as Bislama, the lingua franca of Vanuatu, would illustrate this box. Box 2 describes situations where individuals are bilingual, but there is no community-wide functional differentiation in the use of their languages. Many English-speaking countries fit this description. Individuals may be bilingual in Australia, the USA, England and New Zealand, but their two languages are not used by the whole community in different domains.

Table 2.4 Relationship between diglossia and bilingualism

		DIGLOSSIA	
		+	–
BILINGUALISM	+	1. Both diglossia and bilingualism	2. Bilingualism without diglossia
	–	3. Diglossia without bilingualism	4. Neither diglossia nor bilingualism

Source: Fishman (2003: 360).

Box 3 describes the situation of politically united groups where two languages are used for different functions, but by largely different speech communities. This is true for Haiti, since most people are monolingual in Haitian Creole. This situation tends to characterise colonised countries with clear-cut social class divisions: i.e. the elite speak one language and the lower classes use another: e.g. the French-speaking elite in 19th century Russia and in 11th century Norman England. There will, of course, always be some bilingual individuals who act as go-betweens, but the overall pattern is one of diglossia without bilingualism. Box 4 describes the situation of monolingual groups, and Fishman suggests this is typical of isolated ethnic communities where there is little contact with other linguistic groups. Iceland, especially before the 20th century, serves as an example of such a community, but there are also communities like this in places such as Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Amazon basin.

The criteria which identify diglossic communities were initially interpreted very stringently, so that few communities qualified as diglossic. Soon, however, it became clear that some sociolinguists felt that the term could usefully be extended.

Extending the scope of 'diglossia'

As [table 2.4](#) suggests, the way H and L varieties of German function in places like Eggenwil is very similar to the ways in which distinct languages operate in other communities, such as Sauris in the Italian Alps. Each code or language is used in different situations from the other. In earlier decades in Paraguay, the domains where Guaraní was used were quite distinct from those where Spanish was appropriate. Because of this similarity, it was suggested that bilingual communities like Sauris and Paraguay should also be considered as examples of diglossia. 'Diglossia' is here being used in a broader sense which gives most weight to feature or criterion (ii) – the complementary functions of two varieties or codes in a community. Features (i) and (iii) are dispensed with and the term diglossia is generalised to cover any situation where two languages are used for different functions in a speech community, especially where one language is used for H functions and the other for L functions. There is a division of labour between the languages.

Other features of the 'classic' diglossia situations are also often relevant, but they are not regarded as crucial to the definition. So the H variety is generally the prestige variety, but people may also be attached to and admire the L variety, as in Paraguay where people are typically proud of Guaraní. L is learned at home and the H variety in school, but some people may use H in the home too, as in Sauris where parents used Italian to children in order to prepare them for school. Literature is generally written in H rather than L, but there may be a rich oral literature in L. Though H has generally been standardised and codified in grammar books and dictionaries for centuries, L languages are also increasingly being codified and standardised.

Exercise 7

- (a) Fill in the following table using the description of 20th century Paraguayan patterns of language use outlined in [example 3](#) and [table 2.3](#) above as a basis for predicting which language is likely to be the main one associated with a particular domain.

	Spanish	Guaraní
Religion		
Literature		
Schooling		
Broadcasting		
Shopping		
Gossiping		

- (b) Does 20th century Paraguay qualify as a diglossic society if criterion (ii) is regarded as the only important one?

Answers at end of chapter

Polyglossia

Diglossic situations involve two contrasting varieties, H and L. Sometimes, however, a more sophisticated concept is needed to describe the functional distribution of different varieties in a community. People like Kalala in Bukavu use a number of different codes for different purposes. The term polyglossia has been used for situations like this where a community regularly uses more than three languages. Kalala's linguistic repertoire described above in [table 2.1](#) provides a nice example of polyglossic relationships.

Oi Lin Tan's Cantonese-speaking community in Singapore, described in [example 5](#), can similarly be described as polyglossic, but the relationships between the various codes or varieties are not at all straightforward. [Table 2.5](#) represents one way of describing them.

Table 2.5 Polyglossia in Singapore

H	Mandarin	Singapore English formal variety
L	Cantonese Hokkien	Singapore English informal variety

Both Mandarin and formal Singapore English can be considered H varieties alongside different L varieties. Mandarin functions as an H variety in relation to at least two L varieties, Hokkien and Cantonese. Informal Singapore English is an L variety alongside the more formal H variety. So for this speech community there are two H varieties and a number of L varieties in a complex relationship.

Polyglossia is thus a useful term for describing situations where a number of distinct codes or varieties are used for clearly distinct purposes or in clearly distinguishable situations.

Changes in a diglossia situation

Diglossia has been described as a stable situation. It is possible for two varieties to continue to exist side by side for centuries, as they have in Arabic-speaking countries and in Haiti for example. Alternatively, one variety may gradually displace the other. Latin was ousted from its position as the H language in Europe, for example, as the L varieties gradually expanded or leaked up into more formal domains. England was diglossic (in the broad sense) after 1066 when the Normans were in control. French was the language of the court, administration, the legal system and high society in general. English was the language of the peasants in the fields and the streets. The following words provide a nice illustration of this relationship:

English	French		English
ox	boeuf	→	beef
sheep	mouton	→	mutton
calf	veau	→	veal
pig	porc	→	pork

The English *calf* becomes French *veau* as it moves from the farm to the dinner table. However, by the end of the fourteenth century, English had displaced French (while absorbing huge numbers of French words such as *beef*, *mutton*, *veal* and *pork*) so there were no longer domains in which French was the appropriate language to use.

In Greece, the relationship between Dhimotiki (L) and Katharévoussa (H) changed in the twentieth century. At the turn of the century, the relative roles of the two varieties were still quite distinct. Katharévoussa was regarded very highly and was the appropriate variety for serious speeches or writing. Dhimotiki was used for informal conversation. There was a language riot in Athens in 1901 when the New Testament was published in Dhimotiki. Many people felt it was totally unsuited for such a serious purpose. More recently, however, the choice of Katharévoussa or Dhimotiki has taken on political significance. Katharévoussa was the only official language of Greece during the period from 1967 to 1974 when the right-wing military government was in power. Since then the Athenian variety of Dhimotiki, labelled 'the people's language', has been adopted as the official standard language by the democratic government. As mentioned above, attitudes to the H variety in a typical diglossia situation are usually respectful and admiring. The following quotation indicates that things in Greece have changed. Katharévoussa was denounced in the 1980s by a student leader as 'the old-fashioned medium of an educated elite . . . archaic and tediously demanding', with 'freakish diction . . . antiquated rhetorical devices and . . . insufferable verbosity'. By the 1990s, Katharévoussa was no longer used in schools or even in school textbooks, and though traces of its influence are evident in formal styles of Dhimotiki, it has now largely disappeared.

DENNIS THE MENACE



*GINA IS *BY LINGAL*... THAT MEANS SHE CAN SAY THE SAME THING *TWICE*, BUT YOU CAN ONLY UNDERSTAND IT *ONCE*.*

Source: DENNIS THE MENACE® used by permission of Hank Ketcham Enterprises and © North America Syndicate.

Finally, it is worth considering whether the term diglossia or perhaps polyglossia should be used to describe complementary code use in *all* communities. In all speech communities, people use different varieties or codes in formal contexts, such as religious and legal ceremonies, as opposed to relaxed casual situations. In multilingual situations, the codes selected are generally distinct languages, e.g. French or Swahili for formal situations vs a vernacular tribal language such as Shi for casual interactions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Zaire. In predominantly monolingual speech communities, such as those of many English-speaking people in Britain or New Zealand, the contrasting codes are different styles of one language. As we shall see in later chapters, there are clearly identifiable linguistic differences between the more formal and the more colloquial styles of a language. But they are often a matter of degree. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the variety at the formal end of the scale could be regarded as an H variety, while the most casual variety could be labelled L. Adopting this approach, the colloquial Maori used to talk to friends and family and in local shops in Maori townships in the early 20th century could be described as the L variety. In addition, these communities made use of two H varieties. They used a formal variety of Maori for ceremonial purposes and for formal interaction on the marae (the formal meeting area). English was the other H variety. It was the language of the school, the government, the courts and for all official transactions with the Pakeha (non-Maori New Zealanders). So, if we expand the concept of diglossia to encompass different contextual varieties as well as distinct languages, the situation in these townships could be described as triglossic rather than diglossic.

Exercise 8

How can the following three dimensions be used to distinguish between H and L varieties in a diglossic speech community?

- (i) Formality
- (ii) Social distance
- (iii) Social status

Answer at end of chapter

Code-switching or code-mixing

Participants, solidarity and status

Example 8

[*The Maori is in italics.* THE TRANSLATION IS IN SMALL CAPITALS.]

Sarah: I think everyone's here except Mere.

John: She said she might be a bit late but actually I think that's her arriving now.

Sarah: You're right. *Kia ora Mere. Haere mai. Kei te pehea koe?*

[HI MERE. COME IN. HOW ARE YOU?]

Mere: *Kia ora e hoa. Kei te pai.* Have you started yet?

[HELLO MY FRIEND. I'M FINE]

People sometimes switch code within a domain or social situation. When there is some obvious change in the situation, such as the arrival of a new person, it is easy to explain the switch. In example 8, Mere is Maori and although the rest of the meeting will be conducted in English, Sarah switches to Maori to greet her. The Maori greeting is an expression of solidarity. So a code-switch may be related to a particular participant or addressee. In a Polish family living in Lancashire in the 1950s, the family used Polish in the home. When the local English-speaking priest called, however, everyone switched to English. In both of these cases the switch indicates a change in the social situation and takes positive account of the presence of a new participant.

A speaker may similarly switch to another language as a signal of group membership and shared ethnicity with an addressee. Even speakers who are not very proficient in a second language may use brief phrases and words for this purpose. Scottish Highlanders who are not proficient speakers of Gaelic nevertheless express their identification with the local Gaelic speech community by using Gaelic tags and phrases interspersed with their English. Maori people often use Maori words and phrases in this way too, whether their knowledge of Maori is extensive or not. Such switches are often very short and they are made primarily for social reasons – to signal and actively construct the speaker’s ethnic identity and solidarity with the addressee. Here are some examples.

Example 9

- (a) Tamati: *Engari* [SO] now we turn to more important matters.
(Switch between Maori and English)
- (b) Ming: Confiscated by Customs, *dà gài* [PROBABLY]
(Switch between English and Mandarin Chinese)
- (c) A: Well I’m glad I met you. OK?
M: *ándale* pues [OK SWELL], and do come again. Mm?
(Switch between Spanish and English)

In (a), Tamati uses a Maori tag at the beginning of his utterance while the Mandarin speaker in (b) uses a final tag. This kind of switching is sometimes called emblematic switching or tag switching. The switch is simply an interjection or a linguistic tag in the other language which serves as an ethnic identity marker. The exchange in (c), for instance, occurred between two Mexican Americans or Chicanos in the USA. By using the Spanish tag, M signalled to A that she recognised the relevance of their shared ethnic background to their future relationship. The tag served as a solidarity marker between two minority ethnic group members whose previous conversation has been entirely in English.

Switches motivated by the identity and relationship between participants often express a move along the solidarity/social distance dimension introduced in [chapter 1](#). While example 9(c) illustrates a tag contributing to the construction of solidarity, switches can also distance a speaker from those they are talking to. In Pamaka, a village in Suriname, young people switch between their local community language, Pamaka, and Sranan Tongo, the language of Suriname urban centres. Pamaka is the usual language of interaction in the community, but young people often switch to Sranan Tongo to signal their sophistication and identification with modernity. In one conversation, two young women and a young man are discussing local music. While the women use Pamaka, their community language, the young man deliberately

switches to Sranan Tongo and avoids Pamaka. His language switch distances him from the other participants, while also signalling his alignment with the urban western world.

A switch may also indicate a change in the other dimensions mentioned in the first chapter, such as the status relations between people or the formality of their interaction. The examples above have illustrated that different kinds of relationships are often expressed or actively constructed through the use of different varieties or codes. More formal relationships, which sometimes involve status differences too, such as doctor–patient or administrator–client, often involve the H variety or code: e.g. Bokmål in Hemnesberget, Spanish in Paraguay, standard Swahili in Bukavu. Friendly relationships involving minimal social distance, such as neighbour or friend, generally involve an L code: e.g. Ranamål in Hemnesberget, Guaraní in Paraguay, Indoubil, Kingwana or a tribal language such as Shi in Bukavu.

In the little village of Hemnesberget (described in example 6 in [chapter 1](#)), Bokmål or standard Norwegian is the variety to use when you go to the tax office to sort out your tax forms. But the person you will deal with there may also be your neighbour. The conversation might look like this.

Example 10

[BOKMÅL IS IN SMALL CAPITALS. Ranamål in lower case.]

Jan: Hello Petter. How is your wife now?

Petter: Oh she's much better thank you Jan. She's out of hospital and convalescing well.

Jan: That's good I'm pleased to hear it. DO YOU THINK YOU COULD HELP ME WITH THIS PESKY FORM? I AM HAVING A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFICULTY WITH IT.

Petter: OF COURSE. GIVE IT HERE . . .

Nothing appears to change except the topic of discussion and with it the code. In fact the change of topic here symbolises a change in the relationship between the men. They switch from their roles as neighbours to their roles as bureaucrat and member of the public. In other words, they switch from a personal interaction to a more formal transaction. This kind of role switch is commonly associated with a code-switch in multilingual communities. Exactly the same kind of switching occurs in Beijing when a government administrator deals with a query from someone who comes from her home town in Guangzhou. They begin sorting out their business in Mandarin, but when they realise they went to the same school they switch to Cantonese to exchange stories about the school and their teachers. And in shops in bilingual communities, salespeople often switch to the language of their customers. In Strasbourg, for instance, a city in Eastern France, where French is the official language and Alsatian (a Germanic dialect) is the local variety which marks Alsatian identity, salespeople switch between the two varieties according to the preferred language of the shoppers they are serving.

Exercise 9

When people switch from one code to another for reasons which can be clearly identified, it is sometimes called *situational switching*. If we knew the relevant situational or social factors in advance in such cases, we could usually predict the switches. Which code would you predict

the speaker will switch from and which code will they switch to in the following situations and why?

- (a) A Hemnesberget resident chatting to a friend in the queue at the community administration office gets to the counter and speaks to the clerk.
- (b) Three students from the Chinese province of Guangdong are sharing a flat together in London. They are discussing the ingredients of the stir-fry vegetable dish they are cooking. One of them starts to discuss the chemical composition of the different ingredients.

Answers at end of chapter

Topic

Example 10 illustrated that people may switch code within a speech event to discuss a particular topic. Bilinguals often find it easier to discuss particular topics in one code rather than another. In Hemnesberget, Bokmål is the more appropriate variety for discussing a business matter. Topic relates to the function dimension introduced in [chapter 1](#). For many bilinguals, certain kinds of referential content are more appropriately or more easily expressed in one language than the other. Japanese war brides in the USA, for instance, found it easier to use Japanese for topics they associated with Japan such as ‘fish’ and ‘New Year’s Day’. Chinese students from Guangzhou who are flatting together in an English-speaking country tend to use Cantonese with each other, except to discuss their studies when they switch to English. This is partly because they have learned the vocabulary of economics or linguistics or physics in English, so they do not always know the words for ‘capital formation’ or ‘morpheme’ or ‘electron’ in Cantonese. But it goes further than simply borrowing words from English. They often switch to English for considerable stretches of speech. The technical topics are firmly associated with a particular code and the topic itself can trigger a switch to the appropriate code.

Another example of a referentially oriented code-switch is when a speaker switches code to quote a person.

Example 11

[*The Maori is in italics.* THE TRANSLATION IS IN SMALL CAPITALS.]

A Maori person is recalling the visit of a respected elder to a nearby town.

‘That’s what he said in Blenheim. *Ki a mātou Ngāti Porou, te Māoritanga i papi ake i te whenua.* [WE OF THE NGĀTI POROU TRIBE BELIEVE THE ORIGINS OF MĀORITANGA ARE IN THE EARTH.] And those Blenheim people listened carefully to him too.’

The switch involves just the words that the speaker is claiming the quoted person said. So the switch acts like a set of quotation marks. The speaker gives the impression – which may or may not be accurate – that these are the exact words the speaker used. A related reason for switching is to quote a proverb or a well-known saying in another language, as illustrated in the following example.

Example 12

[*The Mandarin Chinese is in italics.* THE TRANSLATION IS IN SMALL CAPITALS.]

A group of Chinese students from Beijing are discussing Chinese customs.

Li: People here get divorced too easily. Like exchanging faulty goods. In China it's not the same. *Jià goǔ sūi goǔ, jià jī sūi jī.* [IF YOU HAVE MARRIED A DOG, YOU FOLLOW A DOG, IF YOU'VE MARRIED A CHICKEN, YOU FOLLOW A CHICKEN.]

The code-switch corresponds exactly to the proverb being recited from Chinese. The similarity of quotation and proverb recitation is very clear. Both are referentially motivated switches in that the speaker wishes to be accurate – the exact words are important. But switches often serve several functions at once. In these examples, the switches not only emphasise the precise message content, they also signal ethnic identity. In other words, they have an affective as well as a referential function.

Switching for affective functions

In the twentieth century, the use of Jamaican Creole or Patois alongside standard English by those who belong to the African-Caribbean or West Indian Black communities in Britain followed similar patterns to those described above for a range of multilingual and bilingual communities. At school, for instance, Black British children used Patois to their friends and standard English to their teachers. (In the twenty-first century, the varieties are less clearly distinguishable as we shall see in [chapter 8](#), though the distinct functions remain the same.)

Example 13

Polly is a young British Black woman. She speaks standard English with a West Midlands accent, as well as Patois, a variety of Jamaican Creole, learned from her parents. On one occasion, a schoolteacher annoyed her intensely by criticising a story Polly had written about British West Indians. In particular, he corrected the use of Patois by one of her characters – something he knew nothing about. Her response was to abuse him in Patois, swearing at him only just below her breath. The effect was electrifying. He seemed terrified. He threatened to send her to the headmaster but in fact he didn't, and she noted with satisfaction that he left her alone after that.

Polly's switch to Patois was here used to express affective rather than referential meaning. The teacher didn't need to understand the words – he simply needed to get the affective message. In other contexts too, switching between Patois and standard English can achieve a range of interesting rhetorical effects. Just as the use of ethnic tags signalled ethnic group membership for speakers in the utterances in [example 9](#) above, a switch from Patois to standard English with the local British regional pronunciation can signal a person's identity as a West Midlander in a conversation where local regional values are relevant. In an argument with a West Indian from another area over the best soccer team, for instance, the use of the localised English accent can serve just this kind of function.

Example 14 demonstrates not only Polly's code-switching ability – it also illustrates her rhetorical skills.

Example 14

[Patois is written in italics.]

With Melanie right you have to say she speaks *tri different sort of language when she wants to. Cos she speak half Patois, half English and when im ready im will come out wid, 'I day and I bay and I ay this and I ay that. I day have it and I day know where it is' . . . And then she goes 'Lord God, I so hot'*. Now she'll be sitting there right and she'll go. 'It's hot isn't it?', you know, and you think which one is she going to grow up speaking?

This is not simply code-switching for the purposes of accurate quotation. The Patois is being used here for amusement and dramatic effect. Melanie is being parodied and sent up. Polly is again using her ability in the two codes for affective purposes.

Many bilinguals and multilinguals are adept at exploiting the rhetorical possibilities of their linguistic repertoires. Standard Norwegian is the language of the school, for instance, but while they are in class children may make rude remarks or jokes about the teacher in their local dialect. In Paraguay too, Guaraní, the L variety, is considered more appropriate for joking and humorous anecdotes. So while discussing a serious political issue in Spanish a Paraguayan might switch to Guaraní with a humorous example or a witty aside. Fijian people switch from Fijian to Hindi for joking, and because Hindi is not normally used for communication between Fijians, just the switch itself is often considered to be amusing.

A language switch in the opposite direction, from the L to the H variety, is often used to express disapproval. So a person may code-switch because they are angry.



Map 2.2 Oberwart, Austria

Source: Gal, S. (1979).

Example 15

[*The German is in italics.* THE TRANSLATION IS IN SMALL CAPITALS.]

In the town of Oberwart two little Hungarian-speaking children were playing in the woodshed and knocked over a carefully stacked pile of firewood. Their grandfather walked in and said in Hungarian, the language he usually used to them:

'Szo! ide dzüni! jeszt jerámunyi mind e kettüötök, no hát akkor!'

[WELL COME HERE! PUT ALL THIS AWAY, BOTH OF YOU, WELL NOW.]

When they did not respond quickly enough he switched to (dialectal) German:

'*Kum her!*'

[COME HERE!]

Exactly the same content is expressed first in Hungarian and then in German. The children in fact know only Hungarian so the reason for the switch is clearly not to convey referential content. In Oberwart, German is the language of the school and officialdom. So in families where Hungarian is the usual language of the home, a switch to German is significant. In these homes Hungarian expresses friendship and solidarity, and a switch to German puts the addressee at a distance. German symbolises authority, and so by using German the grandfather emphasises his anger and disapproval of the children's behaviour.

In a Chinese immigrant family in the north-east of England, Chinese is the usual language of the home. When a mother switched to English to ask her son why he had not finished his homework, he recognized he was being indirectly told that he had better finish his homework before starting to play on the computer. Example 16 illustrates a similar code-switch between two different styles of English. Its purpose is similarly to reprimand a child and the switch involves a move from an intimate and friendly style to a formal style which distances the speaker from the addressee.



Map 2.3 Papua New Guinea

Example 16

Father: Tea's ready Robbie.

(*Robbie ignores him and carries on skate-boarding.*)

Father: Mr Robert Harris if you do not come in immediately there will be consequences which you will regret.

Exercise 10

Identify the linguistic features in example 16 which signal that Robbie's father has switched code between his first and second utterance.

Answer at end of chapter

Metaphorical switching

Example 17

At a village meeting among the Buang people in PNG, Mr Rupa, the main village entrepreneur and 'bigman', is trying to persuade people who have put money into a village store to leave it there. This is a section from his skilful speech.

[*Tok Pisin is in italics.* Buang is not italicised.]

Ikamap trowel o wonem, mi ken stretim olgeta toktok. Orait. Pasin ke ken be, meni ti ken nyep la, su lok lam memba re, olo ba miting autim olgeta tok . . . moni ti ken nyep ega, rek mu su rek ogoko nam be, one moni rek, . . . moni ti ken bak stua lam vu Mambump re, m nzom agon. Orait, bihain, bihainim bilong wok long bisnis, orait, moni bilong stua bai ibekim olgeta ples.

English translation

If any problem comes up, I will be able to settle all the arguments. OK. This is the way – the money that is there can't go back to the shareholders, and the meeting brought up all these arguments . . . the money that's there you won't take back, your money will . . . this money from the bulk store will come back to Mambump, and we'll hold on to it. Now later, if we continue these business activities, then the store money will be repaid to everyone.

In many of the examples discussed so far, the specific reason for a switch can be identified with reasonable confidence. Though it would not be possible to predict when a switch will occur without knowing what a speaker intended to say next, it is often possible to account for switches after they have occurred (i.e. post hoc). Example 17, however, moves switching into a different dimension. It is an example of what can be achieved by a really skilled bilingual. In this situation, there are no obvious explanatory factors accounting for the specific switches between Buang and Tok Pisin. No new person joined the audience at any point. There was no change in the setting or in the topic – 'bisnis'. There are no quotations or even angry or humorous utterances. What is the social meaning of these rapid switches?

By switching between codes with such rapidity the village bigman effectively draws on the different associations of the two codes. Buang is the local tribal language. By using it Mr Rupa is emphasising his membership of the Buang community – he belongs here and everyone knows him. He is using Buang to construct his local identity. But he is also a skilled businessman with contacts in the outside world of money and marketing. Mr Rupa’s use of Tok Pisin (‘talk pidgin’), a creole which is a valuable lingua franca and an official language in PNG, emphasises this role of entrepreneur, as well as his superior knowledge and experience as a man of the wider world. His use of Tok Pisin constructs his professional identity as a businessman. Buang symbolises high solidarity, equal status and friendly feelings. Tok Pisin represents social distance, status and the referential information of the business world. Mr Rupa is getting the best of both worlds. He is code-switching for rhetorical reasons, drawing on the associations of both codes. This type of switching has sometimes been called *metaphorical switching*. Each of the codes represents or symbolises a set of social meanings, and the speaker draws on the associations of each, just as people use metaphors to represent complex meanings. The term also reflects the fact that this kind of switching involves rhetorical skill. Skilful code-switching operates like metaphor to enrich the communication.

Example 18

[THE WORDS ORIGINALLY SPOKEN IN SAMOAN ARE IN SMALL CAPITALS.]

Alf is 55 and overweight. He is talking to a fellow Samoan at work about his attempt to go on a diet.

My doctor told me to go on a diet. She said I was overweight. So I tried. BUT IT WAS SO HARD. I’D KEEP THINKING ABOUT FOOD ALL THE TIME. Even when I was at work. And in bed at night I’D GET DESPERATE. I COULDN’T GET TO SLEEP. So I’d get up and RAID THE FRIDGE. THEN I’D FEEL GUILTY AND SICK AND WHEN I WOKE UP NEXT DAY I WOULD BE SO DEPRESSED because I had to start the diet all over again. The doctor wasn’t sympathetic. She just shrugged and said ‘well it’s your funeral!’

In this example, the speaker draws on his two languages to express his ambivalent feelings about the topic he is discussing. Though there is no exact and one-to-one correspondence, it is possible to see that in general personal feelings are expressed in Samoan while English provides some distance and objectivity about the topic. English is used for referential content such as ‘My doctor told me to go on a diet’, while Samoan expresses his shame and embarrassment (‘I’d get desperate’, ‘I would be so depressed’). Similarly, in Swiss Germany, people in internet chat rooms switch between Swiss German dialects and Standard German to indicate their attitudes to chat messages. The switches serve as a subtle means of conveying their approval or disagreement or ambivalence about previous messages.

Some people call the kind of rapid switching illustrated in the last few examples ‘code-mixing’, but I prefer the term *metaphorical switching*. Code-mixing suggests the speaker is mixing up codes indiscriminately or perhaps because of incompetence, whereas the switches are very well motivated in relation to the symbolic or social meanings of the two codes. This kind of rapid switching is itself a specific sociolinguistic variety; it has been labeled a *fused lect*. It is a distinctive conversational style used among bilinguals and multilinguals – a rich additional linguistic resource available to them. By switching between two or more codes, the speakers convey affective meaning as well as information.

We have to recognize, then, that sometimes we simply can't account for switches. Luxembourg is a multilingual nation where language switching is very common. Where people are equally fluent in three or more languages, it is often difficult to explain why they use one rather than another, even in writing.

Example 19

An agenda from a meeting in Luxembourg

	<i>Translations</i>
■ Procès-verbal	[Minutes: French]
■ Budget Anschaffungsetat	[Acquisition budget: German]
■ Plan trimestriel	[Quarterly plan: French]
■ Internet Präsenz	[Internet presence: German]

Luxembourg has traditionally been regarded as triglossic, with German and French as H varieties and Lëtzebuergesch or Luxembourgish as the L variety. German and French are mostly used for written material in domains such as the media (e.g. newspapers), education (e.g. for acquiring literacy and in textbooks) and administration (e.g. official forms), and Luxembourgish is mostly used in speech contexts. But the boundaries are very permeable. In example 19, the agenda uses the two H varieties, while the discussion during the meeting was entirely in Luxembourgish. The participants were not able to explain the reasons for choosing French vs German for particular items. Perhaps it was just a matter of the first word which came to mind for the fluent multilingual who drew up the agenda. Or perhaps the specific topics were associated with particular languages. Though sociolinguists like to try, it is not always possible to account for choices among languages in situations where the participants are all multilingual.

Lexical borrowing

It is obviously important to distinguish this kind of switching from switches which can be accounted for by lack of vocabulary in a language. When speaking a second language, for instance, people will often use a term from their mother tongue or first language because they don't know the appropriate word in their second language. These 'switches' are triggered by lack of vocabulary. People may also borrow words from another language to express a concept or describe an object for which there is no obvious word available in the language they are using. Borrowing of this kind generally involves single words – mainly nouns – and it is motivated by lexical need. It is very different from switching where speakers have a genuine choice about which words or phrases they will use in which language.

Borrowings often differ from code-switches in form too. Borrowed words are usually adapted to the speaker's first language. They are pronounced and used grammatically as if they were part of the speaker's first language. New Zealand English has borrowed the word *mana* from Maori, for instance. There is no exact equivalent to its meaning in English, although it is sometimes translated as meaning 'prestige' or 'high status'. It is pronounced [ma:nə] by most New Zealanders.¹ The Maori pronunciation is quite different with a short *a* in both syllables. The word *Māori* is similarly adapted by most English speakers. They use an English diphthong

[au] rather than a longer [a:o] sound, and they pluralise the word by adding the English plural inflection *s* and talk of the *Maoris*. In the Maori language, the plural is not marked by an inflection on the noun. By contrast, people who are rapidly code-switching – as opposed to borrowing the odd word – tend to switch completely between two linguistic systems – sounds, grammar and vocabulary.

Exercise 11

Where possible insert in the appropriate column an example number from this chapter which illustrates the relevant reason for switching

Reasons for code-switching	Quote an example number from this chapter
Change in a feature of the domain or social situation	
Setting	_____
Participant features	
Addressee specification	_____
Ethnic identity marker	_____
Express solidarity	_____
Express social distance	_____
Assert social status	_____
Topic	
Quoting someone	_____
Proverb	_____
Aspect of the function or purpose of interaction	
Add emphasis	_____
Add authority	_____
Express feelings (vs describing facts)	_____
Can you add any further reasons for code-switching?	

Because there are several possible acceptable answers to this exercise I have not supplied any one answer. You may find it interesting to discuss your answers with fellow students.

Linguistic constraints

Sociolinguists who study the kind of rapid code-switching described in the previous section have been interested in identifying not only the functions or meaning of switches, and the stylistic motivations for switches, but also the points at which switches occur in utterances. Some believe there are very general rules for switching which apply to all switching behaviour regardless of the codes or varieties involved. They are searching for universal linguistic constraints on switching. It has been suggested for example that switches only occur within sentences (*intra-sentential switching*) at points where the grammars of both languages match

each other. This is called ‘the equivalence constraint’. So you may only switch between an adjective and a noun if both languages use the same order for that adjective and noun, as illustrated in the following example.

Example 20

English	French	Possible switch point?
red boat	bateau rouge	NO
big house	grande maison	YES: i.e. ‘big maison’ or ‘grande house’

Another suggestion is that there is always a ‘matrix language frame’ (MLF) which imposes structural constraints on code-switched utterances. So, for example, system morphemes (such as tense and aspect inflections) will always come from the *matrix language*; and the order in which morphemes may occur in code-switched utterances will be determined by the MLF. The other language is called the *embedded language*. In example 21, the content words (the verb and the noun in capitals) are from English, the embedded language, but the system morphemes, the prefixes signalling negation, subject, person, number and gender, are from Swahili, the matrix language; and they occur in the order which is normal in Swahili.

Example 21

Leo si-ku-COME na-BOOK z-angu
 ‘Today I didn’t come with my books’

Other sociolinguists argue that it is unlikely that there are universal and absolute rules of this kind. It is more likely that these rules simply indicate the limited amount of data which has been examined so far. They also criticise the extreme complexity of some of the rules, and point to the large numbers of exceptions. These sociolinguists argue for greater attention to social, stylistic and contextual factors. The points at which people switch codes are likely to vary according to many different factors, such as which codes are involved, the functions of the particular switch and the level of proficiency in each code of the people switching. So, it is suggested, only very proficient bilinguals such as Mr Rupa will switch within sentences, intra-sententially, whereas people who are less proficient will tend to switch at sentence boundaries (*inter-sentential switching*), or use only short fixed phrases or tags in one language on the end of sentences in the other language, as illustrated in the utterances in example 9.

It is easy to see how these issues generate more questions. Is all code-switching rule-governed? How do social and linguistic factors interact? What kind of grammar or grammars are involved when people code-switch? When people switch rapidly from phrase to phrase for instance, are they switching between the two different grammars of the codes they are using, or do they develop a distinct code-switching grammar which has its own rules? There are still no generally accepted answers to these questions.

Attitudes to code-switching

Example 22

- (a) In Hemnesberget, two linguists recorded university students home on vacation. The students unconsciously switched between the local dialect and standard Norwegian according to the topic. When they later heard the tapes some were appalled and promised they would not switch in this way in the future.
- (b) 'When I switch (inadvertently), I usually realise soon afterwards and correct myself, but it is still embarrassing.'
- (c) 'Code-switching is not very pure.'
- (d) 'My attitude towards code-switching is a very relaxed one.'

People are often unaware of the fact that they code-switch. When their attention is drawn to this behaviour, however, many tend to apologise for it, condemn it and generally indicate disapproval of mixing languages. Among Mexican Americans the derogatory term *Tex Mex* is used to describe rapid code-switching between Spanish and English. In parts of French-speaking Canada, *joual* is a similar put-down label for switching between French and English, and in Britain [tuʃi fuʃi] ('broken up') Panjabi refers to a style which switches between Panjabi and English. In Hemnesberget, the speech of young students who were switching between the local dialect and the standard was condemned as *knot* or 'artificial speech'. Reactions to code-switching styles are negative in many communities, despite the fact that proficiency in intra-sentential code-switching requires good control of both codes. This may reflect the attitudes of the majority monolingual groups in places like North America and Britain. In places such as PNG and East Africa, where multilingualism is the norm, attitudes to proficient code-switching are much more positive. The PNG bigman's status is undoubtedly enhanced by his ability to manipulate two or more codes proficiently. It seems possible that an increase in ethnic self-consciousness and confidence may alter attitudes among minority group members in other communities over time.

These issues will be discussed further in the next chapter. Attitudes to a minority language are very important in determining not only its use in a code-switching style, but also its very chances of survival.

In this chapter, the focus has moved from macro-level sociolinguistic patterns and norms observable in multilingual and bilingual contexts, to micro-level interactions between individuals in these contexts. Individuals draw on their knowledge of the norms when they talk to one another. They may choose to conform to them and follow the majority pattern, using the H variety when giving a formal lecture, for example. Or they may decide to challenge the norms and sow the seeds of potential change, writing poetry in the L variety, for instance. People also draw on their knowledge of sociolinguistic patterns and their social meanings when they code-switch within a particular domain. Skilful communicators may dynamically construct many different facets of their social identities in interaction. This point will be developed further in Section B.

Exercise 12

In the first section of the discussion of code-switching above, the sociolinguistic patterns which characterise the behaviour of young people in Pamaka (Eastern Suriname) were described. How could the behaviour of the young man who avoids using Pamaka with his friends be interpreted, if we assume he was engaged in dynamic social identity construction?

Answer at end of chapter

Answers to exercises in chapter 2**Answer to exercise 1 (a)**

You need to consider a number of factors in assessing how well you know a language. Can you both understand and speak the language? Can you read and write it? And how well? Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 for each skill: speaking, understanding, reading, writing.

Here is an example of a scale for speaking skills.

1. Complete fluency in a wide range of contexts.
2. Cope with most everyday conversations.
3. Cope with very simple conversation.
4. A few words and phrases such as simple greetings, thanks etc.
5. No knowledge.

Generally, the degree of linguistic skill we develop is an indication of the extent of our social experience with a language. If, for example, we use a language only in speaking to others in the market-place, the vocabulary and grammar we use will be restricted to such contexts. If we use a language only for reading the newspaper, we may not be able to speak it fluently.

Answers to exercise 1 (b)

- (i) Kalala would probably use informal Shi, especially if his parents were present. If his brother was close in age and they got on well they would be likely to use Indoubil to each other. If his brother was much younger he would not yet know much Indoubil.
- (ii) Indoubil, the language of peer-group friendship.
- (iii) This would depend on his assessment of what languages the stranger knew. He would probably use Kingwana if he guessed the person lived in Bukavu, but standard Swahili if he thought they came from out of town. However, his assessment of the stranger's social status, or the function of the interaction might also be relevant, as discussed in the next section.

Answer to exercise 3 (a)

The domain-based approach allows for only one choice of language per domain, namely the language used most of the time in that domain. Clearly more than one language may occur in any domain. Different people may use different languages in the same domain. We will see below that for a variety of reasons (such as who they are talking to) the same person may also use different languages in the same domain.

Answer to exercise 3 (b)

Oi Lin’s choices illustrate further factors which may influence code choice. The particular addressee may influence code choice within a domain. She uses Singapore English to her sisters and friends of the same age – it is the code commonly used by young people to each other, partly because they use it so much at school, partly because they feel positive about it. She uses Cantonese to elderly vegetable sellers, perhaps because she wants to emphasise their common ethnicity so they will feel well-disposed towards her and she may get a better bargain, perhaps also because she judges that Cantonese is the language they are most proficient in and she wants the exchange to be as comfortable as possible for them. A model which took account of these factors would be much more complicated than that illustrated above.

Answer to exercise 4

Figure 2.2 illustrates one way of representing language choice in Bukavu for Kalala. (Other arrangements of the relevant factors are also possible.)

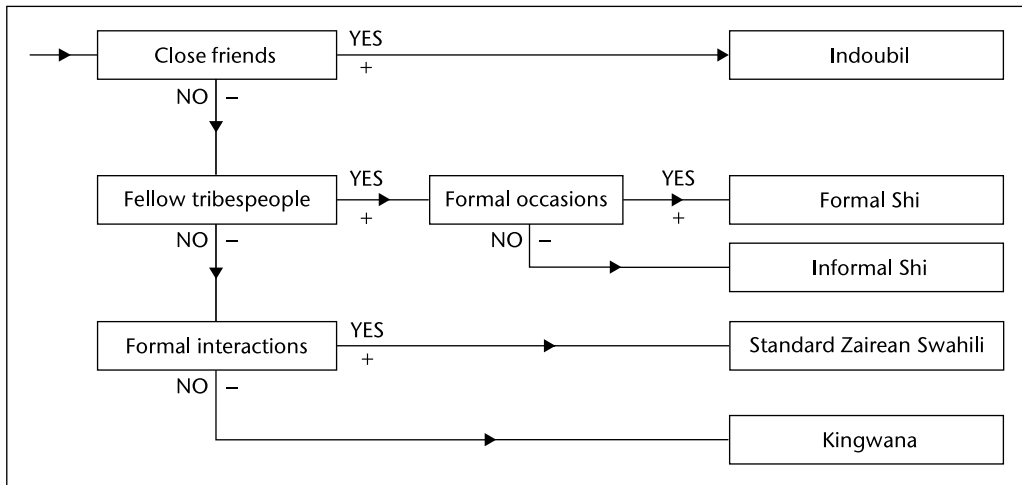


Figure 2.2 Model of appropriate code choice in Bukavu

Answer to exercise 5

	H(igh) variety	L(ow) variety
Religion (sermon, prayers)	H	
Literature (novels, non-fiction)	H	
Newspaper (editorial)	H	
Broadcasting: TV news	H	
Education (written material, lectures)	H	
Education (lesson discussion)		L
Broadcasting: radio		L
Shopping		L
Gossiping		L

Answers to exercise 6 (a)

- (i) They are different varieties of the same language.
- (ii) They are used in mutually exclusive situations. Where H is appropriate, L is not, and vice versa. H is used in more formal contexts and L in less formal contexts.
- (iii) Only L is used for conversation with family and friends.
- (iv) L is learned ‘naturally’ in the home. H is learned more formally – usually in school.
- (v) This is a tricky question. In the usual sense of prestige – i.e. high status – the answer is H. However, people are often more attached to L emotionally. When people have this kind of fondness for a variety, the variety is sometimes described as having ‘covert prestige’ (see [chapter 14](#)).
- (vi) H is generally codified in grammar books and dictionaries. More recently linguists have also begun to codify the L variety in some places such as Haiti.
- (vii) Literature is usually written in H, but when the L variety begins to gain status people begin to use it to write in too.

Answer to exercise 6 (b)

The use of Ranamål and Bokmål by members of the Hemnesberget speech community, as described by Blom and Gumperz, qualifies as diglossic on all criteria. One apparent exception is the fact that people used Bokmål or standard Norwegian for everyday conversation to those from outside the village. To fellow villagers it would be considered snobbish, but it was normal to outsiders. This simply emphasises that the diglossic pattern characterises the Hemnesberget speech community as Blom and Gumperz described it, but does not necessarily extend outside it. Note, however, that in a ‘classic’ diglossic community, H would not generally be used comfortably for everyday conversation even to outsiders.

Answer to exercise 7 (a)

	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>Guaraní</i>
Religion	✓	
Literature	✓ (serious)	✓ (magazines)
Schooling	✓	
Broadcasting	✓	✓ (e.g. farming)
Shopping		✓
Gossiping		✓

Answer to exercise 7 (b)

Yes, on the whole. In some domains, as discussed above, choice of language depended on factors such as the particular topic or function of the interaction. In rural areas, lack of proficiency in Spanish may (still) lead to the use of Guaraní in situations where Spanish would be appropriate in the town. Nevertheless in general in the 1960s, people were still clear that one code rather than the other is most appropriate in particular interactions. In the 21st century, however, interactions in urban homes typically involve both languages.

Answer to exercise 8

	<i>H typically used</i>	<i>L typically used</i>
Formality	In formal settings: e.g. lecture	In informal settings: e.g. family dinner
Social distance	Between participants with high social distance in low solidarity contexts: e.g. broadcast political debate	Between participants with low social distance in high solidarity contexts: e.g. friends in a coffee bar
Social status	With people of high(er) status because of the domains in which it is used: e.g. to the doctor in a medical examination	With people of equal or low(er) status because of the domains in which it is used: e.g. to a child in the shops

Answers to exercise 9

- (a) From Ranamål to Bokmål because Ranamål is the variety used for personal interactions while Bokmål is appropriate for official transactions.
- (b) From their Chinese dialect, Cantonese, to English because the topic of Chinese food is appropriately discussed in Cantonese but the technical topic introduced is more easily discussed in English, the language in which they are studying.

Answer to exercise 10

The use of title and full name (*Mr Robert Harris*) rather than affectionate nickname (*Robbie*). The very full and formal construction with a subordinate clause (*if . . . immediately*) preceding the main clause. The use of a distancing construction (*there will be consequences which you will regret*) rather than, say, the more familiar *you'll be sorry*. The use of relatively formal vocabulary (e.g. *consequences, immediately* rather than, say, *right now, regret* rather than *be sorry*).

Answer to exercise 12

The young man's avoidance of Pamaka and use of Sranan Tongo can be interpreted in a number of ways. Since the sociolinguistic norm is to use Pamaka in a conversation with friends in the village, he could be indicating he is feeling annoyed or irritated by his friends. However, since Sranan Tongo is associated with urban centres and modernity, his behaviour can also be interpreted as a deliberate construction of a cool, sophisticated social identity.

■ Concepts introduced

Domain

Diglossia

H and L varieties

Bilingualism with and without diglossia

Polyglossia

Code-switching

Situational switching

Metaphorical switching

Code-mixing

Fused lect

Lexical borrowing

Intra-sentential code-switching

Embedded and matrix language

Inter-sentential code-switching

■ **References**

The basic concepts introduced in this chapter are discussed further in the following sources:

Ferguson (1959) reprinted in Coupland and Jaworski (2009)
Fishman (1971, 1972, 2003)
Gumperz (1971, 1977)
Myers-Scotton (1993, 1997, 2009)
Platt (1977)
Poplack (1980)
Rampton (1995)

The following sources provided material for this chapter:

'Aipolo and Holmes (1991) on Tongan in New Zealand
Auer (1999) introduces the term 'fused lect'
Blom and Gumperz (1972) on Hemnesberget, Norway
Browning (1982) on Greece
Choi (2005) on Paraguay in the 21st century
Clyne (1984) on Luxembourg
De Bres, Julia (personal communication) on Luxembourg
Dorian (1982) on Gaelic, Scottish Highlands
Ervin-Tripp (1968) on Japanese war-brides
Gal (1979) on Oberwart, Hungary
Gardner-Chloros (1997) on code-switching in Strasbourg stores
Goyvaerts (1988, 1996), Goyvaerts, Naeyaert and Semikenke *et al.* (1983) on Bukavu
Gumperz (1977) on code-switching
Li (2005) on Chinese–English code-switching in England
Migge (2007) on Pamaka and Sranan Tongo in Suriname
Mputubwele (2003) on Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire)
Rubin (1968, 1985) on Paraguay
Santarita and Martin-Jones (1990) on Portuguese in London
Siebenhaar (2006) in Swiss–German internet chat
Siegel (1995) on Fijian–Hindi code-switching for humour
Valdman (1988) on Haiti

■ **Quotations**

Example 7 is from Reinecke (1964: 540).

Example 9 (3) is adapted from Gumperz (1977: 1).

Example 11 is from Smith (1971: 4).

Example 14 is from Edwards (1986: 90–1).

Example 15 is from Gal (1979: 112).

Example 17 is an excerpt from Sankoff (1972: 45–6) where a full analysis of the complete text from which this excerpt is taken is provided, demonstrating the complexities of analysing code-switching behaviour.

Example 19 is adapted from information provided by Julia de Bres.

Example 21 is adapted from Myers-Scotton (1997: 80).

Example 22 (b) is a Kurdish–Arabic bilingual, example 22 (c) is a Hebrew–Arabic–English trilingual, and example 22 (d) is a French–English bilingual. All are quoted in Grosjean (1982: 148).

Quotation about current attitudes to Katharévoussa is from Dimitropoulos (1983), cited in *Linguistic Minorities Project* (1985: 68).

■ Useful additional reading

Fasold (1984) [Chs 1 and 2](#)

Mesthrie *et al.* (2009) [Ch. 5](#)

Mahootian (2006)

Meyerhoff (2011) [Ch. 6](#)

Myers-Scotton (2005) [Ch. 6](#)

Romaine (2000) [Ch. 2](#)

Saville-Troike (2003) [Ch. 3](#)

Wardhaugh (2010) [Ch. 4](#)

■ Note

1. I have used the system for representing sounds (rather than letters) which is described in the Appendix. Linguists provide representations of the way people pronounce words, as opposed to their spellings, in square brackets. Individual sounds are also represented in square brackets, to distinguish them from letters.