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LANGUAGE CONTACT AND CHANGE: SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

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Various facets of the general topic of *multilingualism,* including *language contact*, have been dealt with in previous *ARAL* volumes (e.g., under separate entries in volumes 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, and 15) and as a major substantive focus in volumes 6, 14 and 17. Nonetheless, it does not seem at all surprising that we return to the specific topic of *language contact and change* in volume 23 given the worldwide incidence of the phenomenon and the attention, and often controversy, which various aspects of language contact, language change or language loss arouses. Thus, I find it interesting that, within the past 12 months, issues related to language contact and derivative implications have surfaced as important factors in public discussions in such disparate settings as the November 2002 elections in several of the states in the United States, the admission of new members to the European Union, and immigration to Australia. Clearly, the topics of language contact and language change are salient and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Overview of Prominent Concerns

Although each of the other 14 contributions to the present volume, organized into three major divisions, stands alone and can profitably be consulted for specific information, the volume for me is also marked by two juxtaposed and often interwoven prominent concerns: (1) a concern with *site of contact* and the ways in which *locus* appears to be the predominant variable facilitating or inhibiting language shift; and (2) a concern with individual *speakers or language users* and the dynamic ways in which they add, maintain, or subtract codes from their personal repertoires—and the resulting implications of these changes.

Thus, various authors examine the recent research related to language change following contact in sites such as *advertising* (Piller), *business* (Harris & Bargiela-Chiappini), *education* (Baker), the *"plantation"* (McWhorter), and *religion* (Spolsky). Except for the entry by Baker, each of the other contributors draws our attention to the relative paucity of work in their area and the tremendous potential (as well as the complexity) that they see for additional research in these areas in the coming decade. The pressure of globalization is such as Harris and Bargiela-Chiappini note that "business interaction [these days] is rarely a monolingual

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event"—a significant change from 15 years ago when the topic was reviewed by Johns in *ARAL 1987*. As the Candlins observe, health care delivery always implicates communication across a range of professional and lay discourses and, in addition, is increasingly characterized by communication across multiple ethnolinguistic and cultural communities as well.

These demographic and economic changes are likely to provide rich sites for additional research in the decade to come and also to give rise to a broad array of innovative methodologies for collecting and analyzing relevant data—of both the seemingly "traditional" kind but also data resulting from "virtual" interactions that now occur continually across national and ethnolinguistic boundaries (see, e.g., Baron, 2000; Crystal, 2001). Indeed, in reviewing *ARAL* entries over the years, it is quite striking how the balance of research articles that have been included for review over the years has begun to shift from quantitative to qualitative, and how the prevailing theoretical orientations of the contributors have become more inclusive.

Other authors in the present volume choose as their primary concern research related to the speaker or language user as, for example, the entries focusing on *interpreters and exceptional bilinguals* by Valdés and Angelelli, *gender issues* (Cameron), and *second language or second dialect speakers* [in contact with the legal system] (Eades). The contributions in this second category are particularly rich since all in some way force the reader to consider the issue of language contact at multiple levels simultaneously, as, for example, the article by Valdés and Angelelli in which they ask us to consider how so-called exceptional bilinguals solve problems in real time using diverse strategies and then ask us to consider the ways in which these experiences further affect the repertoire of the individuals and their subsequent interactions. In her focus on the individual, Cameron asks the intriguing question of whether a "feminization" of public discourse is occurring. She notes further that the opportunities for contact with the so-called majority community may differ quite markedly between men and women and that gender may be an important source of variation in the current global conditions. Likewise, despite the fact that many of the world's legal systems take monolingualism as normative, more and more of the legal interactions that occur involve second language or second dialect speakers, which doubtless will have implications not only for the administration of justice but also for more fundamental change in the language of law itself.

From my perspective, the tone for the volume, and the complexity and importance of the underlying issues, is captured by authors' observations such as the following: García, reviewing the recent research (1998–2000) on language maintenance, notes that it is rare to find (minority) language maintenance among immigrant children beyond the third generation even when there are well-developed opportunities for home- or heritage-language education (see also the excellent overview by Baker in which he distinguishes the contributions of so-called weak vs. strong forms of bilingual education to language maintenance and educational development, and that by Hinton in which she examines the factors and the situations that seem to have failed, save with the exception of Hawaiian, to lead to revitalization of a moribund language).

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Kamwangamalu, however, describes in detail social and political changes that have occurred in South Africa since 1994 that have led to politically supported indigenous languages of numerically large groups being voluntarily "surrendered" so that children can acquire fluency in English, the economically dominant language that was for so many years the object of restricted teaching and acquisition. At a slightly more abstract level, Kymlicka and Patten note that linguistic diversity is an enduring fact about most societies, but that there continue to be controversies about the legitimacy of language policies and conflict about whether planning should lead to linguistic assimilation or language maintenance. As Finegan notes through his corpus analysis of legal language using Lexis-Nexis, *even* "hegemonic" English has and continues to be affected by contact with other languages, as have others, despite strong official steps taken, for example, in Quebec, France, and Japan to counteract such tendencies.

Major Cross-Cutting Themes and Neglected Areas

Against this complex mosaic of human and social issues and of unmet research needs, a number of important cross-cutting themes seem to permeate many of the present reviews and indeed much of the contemporary work by members of the applied linguistics profession. I propose to identify and comment briefly on three of these themes and then to conclude by alluding to three relatively neglected areas that I believe warrant future attention.

Major Cross-Cutting Themes

The cross-cutting themes include: (1) the variable impact of educational programs on language maintenance or revitalization; (2) the contrasting, and in some cases, diametrically opposed views toward the bilingual (or bidialectal) individual; and (3) "voluntary" language loss and the "welcome" hegemony of English.

Variable impact of educational programs. Educational researchers and policy makers have long assumed that formal schooling in the "target" language can provide a major deterrent to language loss. But Baker, García, and Hinton in their comprehensive reviews each conclude that education alone is not sufficient to halt or reverse language shift. They do, however, call our attention to the need to examine closely certain successful programs (cf. Hinton, the case of Hawaiian; Baker, the contributions of "strong" forms of bilingual education). Still, I think that it may be instructive to underscore the observations made by Swain (1996) at an international conference on bilingualism held in Brunei Darussalam. There, she described some of the critical attributes of successful Canadian immersion programs and shared with participants the ways in which she and colleagues have continued to reflect upon the products of their earlier research in order to better understand and clarify some of the basic processes underlying successful and nonsuccessful language education programs.

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Swain described the need to "transfer" the stages and processes of evaluation, theory building, generation of hypotheses, experimentation, and further evaluation that will help to ensure the implementation of programs appropriate for the unique sociocultural contexts in which they will operate. That is, she cautioned it is *not* a particular model of innovative language education (and, in particular, a Western model) that should be transferred; but rather a "cycle of discovery" that should be transferred. Many policy makers have characterized bilingual education as a "high risk" undertaking by which they doubtless mean that it is necessary to attend to a complex set of interacting educational, sociolinguistic, economic, and political factors simultaneously.

Views toward the bilingual or bidialectal individual. Although the review by Eades is the only one that explicitly makes the link between social stereotyping and the guise (or language variety) presented to interlocutors by bilingual or bidialectal individuals, the topic in many ways underpins a majority of the contributions to this volume. As the likelihood of interaction with individuals using a second or later acquired language or using a nonmainstream variety of speech in business, educational, and recreational settings increases, one is forced to confront the observation raised by scholars such as Elgin (2000) and Lippi-Green (1997) that discrimination on the basis of language is one of the few types of discrimination that is seemingly still tolerated by many members of present society. In the United States, the recent controversy concerning the role of "Ebonics" in the classroom was one manifestation of this looming maelstrom (see, e.g., Rickford, 2000). Clearly, as one thinks about language contact and the implications of communication among individuals using various languages or dialects, the challenge of reducing, if not eliminating altogether, language-based discrimination looms large.

Voluntary language loss. An undercurrent that runs throughout a number of the contributions is that language loss and subsequent adoption of another primary language for communication and subsequent transmission is a "voluntary" and inevitable process, one that occurs naturally over the course of several generations (e.g., García, Hinton, Kamwangamalu, McWhorter). The case is argued most strongly by Kamwangamalu with respect to a "decision" frequently taken by parents to educate their children in South Africa *in English* rather than in one of the official indigenous languages that may be spoken in their home; but one sees evidence of such change in numbers of immigrant or refugee communities in other settings throughout the world.

What are the factors or processes that underlie parental decision making in such cases? Are these decisions *rational* ones based upon an examination of likely long term costs and benefits? Clearly, the inclusion of a contribution in this volume by two political theorists (Kymlicka & Patten) might well be taken as the beginning of a welcome trend of systematically inviting contributions to various *ARAL* volumes from recognized researchers in other disciplines as a way of facilitating a broader dialogue about language issues across the social and the behavioral sciences; and as a way of helping to investigate and to understand whether decisions made by parents

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or others about their own or their children's language development are based upon rational choices (cf. Hastie & Dawes, 2001).

Relatively Neglected Areas

The three relatively neglected areas—at least for me in this volume—which, I believe, deserve our increased attention during the coming decade are: (1) information about exceptional bilinguals, (2) the seeming lack of attention–at least as this is demonstrated through easily accessible publications–to case studies of language contact and change in many areas of the world, and (3) the lack of studies of the impact of languages other than English as the global language (one can think, for example, of the continuing spread of Arabic associated in some cases with fundamentalism and Islam). I turn now to a brief consideration of these issues.

Information about exceptional bilingual individuals. Although there have been numerous attempts to describe the characteristics and the abilities of bilingual individuals (see, for example, contributions to *ARAL 21* as well syntheses such as that by Bialystok, 2001), researchers have devoted relatively little attention over the years to the so-called "exceptional" bilinguals described by Valdés and Angelelli. They note, in their review, that not all bilinguals—even those certified as having relatively high oral proficiency in two languages as assessed by an Interagency Language Roundtable Oral Proficiency Interview—can function effectively as interpreters. Further, they ask whether this is a "state" that can be developed; and, if so, what the optimal course of training or experiences would be to bring someone to such a state. There seem, at present, to be no simple or straightforward answers to these questions; but the growing worldwide need for skilled interpreters suggests that this is an area well worth further exploration.

Need for additional case studies. The final composition of a volume such as this usually results from a combination of careful planning and a good deal of serendipity. The strength of the contribution by Kamwangamalu as well as the excellent, albeit brief, country profiles by García and by Spolsky draw attention to the need for collection and dissemination of additional case-study material. Given the present attention to the development of community-based language and literacy programs in Canada (e.g., in the Northwest Territories or in Nunavut) or in Papua New Guinea, for example, one can imagine a language outcome quite different from that described for South Africa. However, information about the implications of educational reform in these other settings has, for the most part, circulated as "fugitive" literature in the form of unpublished conference reports or private papers. Although there has been increasing attention to the role of indigenous languages in many countries (see, for example, the excellent compilation of information by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) (2001), or studies such as those by Clayton, (2000); it is still the case that there is relatively little information available about language maintenance, loss, or revitalization for many of the polities in which the issue is a critical one.

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Study of other "hegemonic" languages. Lastly, it almost goes without saying that educators, policy makers, and researchers would welcome information about language contact and spread in settings where languages *other than* English are the primary language. In particular, one thinks of the continuing worldwide spread of Arabic, Hindi, Mandarin, and Spanish documented and predicted by Graddol (1997) and hopes that additional research will soon be forthcoming—and disseminated widely—about language contact, loss or maintenance involving those languages.

Concluding Observations

I have been struck during the past several years by the salient indicators of the vitality of this field. There are regular fora (e.g., the conferences of the Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée, American Association for Applied Linguistics; Linguistic Society of America; National Association for Bilingual Education; Society for Pidgin and Creole Languages; the biennial conference dealing with Heritage Language issues sponsored by the Center for Applied Linguistics and the National Foreign Language Center) devoted to facilitating communication among researchers, practitioners and policy makers interested in language contact and language change. There are numerous journals (e.g., *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages, Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *Language and Intercultural Communication*) uniquely devoted to publication of work in the general area. There are many new monographs on diverse aspects of this topic which continue to appear with regular frequency. Indeed a new peer-refereed electronic periodical, the *Heritage Language Journal*, will deal exclusively with issues related to this general topic (see http://www.international.ucla.edu/lrp/hlj/about.asp).

Clearly, the continuing demographic, social, and political changes that have been described by various contributors to this volume make it increasingly likely that those concerned with diverse aspects of language contact (loss, maintenance, or revitalization) will find continuing interest in their work during the coming decade. Although I continue to believe as I also noted six years ago (Tucker, 1997) that the question of financial support—whether from public or private sources—for such work remains problematic, it does seem inevitable to me that at some point multilingualism and language contact will come to be regarded both by specialists and by ordinary citizens as normative rather than exceptional.

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