



ISSN: 0976-3031

Available Online at <http://www.recentscientific.com>

CODEN: IJRSFP (USA)

International Journal of Recent Scientific Research
Vol. 8, Issue, 12, pp. 22182-22186, December, 2017

**International Journal of
Recent Scientific
Research**

DOI: 10.24327/IJRSR

Research Article

EARLY BILINGUAL TEXTS

Elida Begaj*

Center for Albanological Studies

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2017.0812.1217>

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 20th September, 2017

Received in revised form 29th
October, 2017

Accepted 30th November, 2017

Published online 28th December, 2017

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses mainly on examining some of the earliest bilingual inscriptions and manuscripts documented from the Sumerian Babylonian period until the Middle Ages. The paper intends to present in chronological order the early bilingual manuscripts and the mixing of language codes.

Key Words:

Bilingualism, bilingual texts, mixing of language codes, elite and non-elite bilingualism.

Copyright © Elida Begaj, 2017, this is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

Bilingual writing has been well documented since ancient times. The Sumerian Babylonian period brought into existence the first term to define bilingual writing.

Alloglottography is defined as the practice of using one language in writing and another in reading. In both cases this is not a rare intercultural phenomenon in the Middle East. Moreover the tradition of writing in different languages from the spoken language is very well in accordance with the tradition of writing ancient writings/inscriptions during that period. The author cites that for the first time the term *alloglottography* was used by Ilia Gershevitch. In the Behistun Inscription authored by Darius the Great, the text in Elamite is inscribed first, the text in Babilonian comes second, and the text in Old Persian comes third. The question that arises is simple. If the Persian king used Old Persian as his native tongue why are the Elamite letters so visible on the rock relief? According to Gershevitch, the Elamite text faithfully represents Darius's exact words. However the text in Old Persian is simply a translation of the Elamite text or to put it more precisely a back translation. Thus, the Great King must have used Old Persian in his speeches while his scribes wrote his words in Elamite and read them back to him (as it is written in the Inscription) in Old Persian.

The concept of *partial alloglottography* and *full/complete alloglottography* must be clarified. The definition does not simply have a quantitative criterion but a qualitative one. Despite the number of words written in this style, true alloglottography simply means: a discussion that can be read and understood grammatically in other languages.¹

The Sumerian literary and liturgics language was an essential component in the training of scribes. Most likely Sumerian was used among scribes and teachers and was considered a language of prime importance. A similar case was the use of Latin by a few academic and clerical circles until the twentieth century. A Sumerian proverb clearly expresses the importance of language:

"dub-sareme-gir 15 nu-un- zu-a-a na- am3 dub-sar e-ne
(Alster 1997/1: 54)

A scribe who does not know sumerian, what kind of scribe is he? (SP 2:47)

Leichity writes in 1993 that – "Tradition required the scribe to simultaneously possess two qualities: complete mastery of an ancient language writing system and proficiency in oral interpretation of the text written in that language. This appears to be a case of *alloglottography* divided into two parts where the speaking competence (the spoken language) is completely

*Corresponding author: **Elida Begaj**
Center for Albanological Studies

detached from the anchor of writing (the language in which a text is written).

Throughout Mesopotamian history scribes learned a language that was already dead (Sumerian language) and adapted and copied it to one of the old dialects of their native language. Most of the later Akkadian dialects (Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Late-Babylonian) were not used as a spoken language, but rather as attempts to produce and maintain as language relics, spoken dialects of long ago. In the sentences written by scribes we notice a variation of short back vowels. This shows that the language used by scribes in that period no longer needed these vowels. This became apparent during the transition of the Neo-Babylonian dialect to the Late Babylonian dialect where high vowel variations at the end of the sentence are more evident.

In fact, the transition from Neo Babylonian into Late Babylonian has been preserved in written documents making it easily acceptable. The Neo Assyrian grammar variations are considered to be reflections of the spoken language variations. Regarding the lexicon and morphology we can find answers in the geographic variations (diatopic), diachronic variations and even idiolect variations. However, it is the pronunciation variations that display the poor language and grammar competence of the scribes. (HammenAntila 2000; p. 32-33)

In regard to short vowels, it is true that Neo Assyrian vowels display better regularity than Neo Babylonian and Late Babylonian vowels. Despite this regularity the Neo Assyrian language exhibits some unmistakable linguistic forms which are linked to a linguistic environment especially present in many cases of "inaccurate back vowels". The author thinks that some grammarians still write them in this manner and from time to time call them "short forms". (In some verbs and nouns the short vowels are missing). According to him this is a general phenomenon in Akkadian and other Semitic languages. *Undoubtedly* the presence of Aramaic in both Assyrian language and Babylonian language has left deep marks, given that Aramaic was the mother tongue of a considerable number of scribes. The journal "Aramaic and Aramaic Presence" suggests that prior to Old Persian and Sumerian alloglottography might have existed the Akkadian Sumerian alloglottography. (Tadmor: 1982). The expression "Assyrian Letters" may not be just a coincidence. These letters were used by some Greek authors in writing the "Demotic Chronicle" or in Rabbinical texts "texts used by lawmakers and rabbis that refer to Aramaic script". (Schmitt 1992,a).

In conclusion the author writes that such mechanisms that affect one another, spread gradually in syllabic form and became part of the cuneiform alphabet during the first millennium in Mesopotamia. (Strek 2001).

The environment where scribes completely disconnected the process of writing from the process of speaking (including here any possible mental disorders) would definitely affect the old ideologies that kings learned during their process of education. Interpreted step by step, alloglottography embodies the disturbing phenomenon of disconnection of the speaking process from the writing process and the disconnection of the writing process from the speaking process in a place where different languages were used.¹

Bilingualism in Antiquity

In his study "Aspects of Bilingualism in the History of the Greek Language" Mark Janse proposes the idea of language contact in antiquity. Jansen states that: when speakers of different languages meet we have language contact. If this contact is regular or prolonged, it will automatically produce a certain degree of bilingualism if the speakers of the different languages are to communicate with each other. Language is essential to communication. Monolingualism or Unilingualism represents the fall of any intercultural barriers as a result of multilingualism.

According to Ludi, bilingualism is a type of game. (Ludi 1996a: 234) He reiterates the fact that language contacts were well known since antiquity. One of the earliest references he brings is from "Odysseus" when he tells his wife Penelope about the "mixed languages" in Crete.

"It has a mix of languages all unlike each other. There are Achaeans among them, and great-hearted True-Cretans, and Cydones, and Dorians with long, flowing hair, and glorius Pelasgians." (Odysseus.book 19.175)

This part was named "Ancient Oligarchs" and includes the Athenians who spoke a mixed language. ([XEN.] ath. 2.8.):

Listening to the many languages around them they chose from each of them. The Hellenes have a distinguished language, way of living and dressing whereas the Athenians use a mixture borrowed from the Hellenes and the barbarians.

(4) φωνὴν πᾶσαν ἀκούοντες ἐξελέξαντο τοῦτο μὲν ἐκ τῆς, τοῦτο δὲ ἐκ τῆς· καὶ οἱ μὲν Ἕλληνας ἰδίᾳ μᾶλλον καὶ φωνῇ καὶ διαίτῃ καὶ σχήματι χροῦνται, Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ κεκραμένη ἐξ ἀπάντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ βαρβάρων.

Bilingualism in the Roman period. Elite bilingualism

At the beginning of his study "Bilingualism and the Latin Language), James Noel Adams quotes the study made by Milroy and Muysken (1995; 2-3). They suggest that "bilingualism is more common than unilingualism and now the traditionalist linguists have reviewed the concept of unilingualists whether they are normal speakers or not. The number of bilingualists during the Roman period cannot be determined but a considerable number of languages have survived from written documents (these are mainly written official documents) or made known by their contacts with Latin. (Gaulish, a form of the Hispanic language, Oscan, Umbrian, Venetian, Etruscan, Hebrew, Aramaic, Demotic Egyptian and hieroglyphs, Coptic, Punic language, Libian, Thracian, a form of German, and Greek) and other languages which have disappeared without a trace. Studying bilingualism during the whole of antiquity is an endless endeavor but the Roman domain, especially the Roman Empire Period offers enough data to work on this process. In 1995 Romaine (Romaine;1995:-19) offers a new notion in bilingualism known as balanced bilingualism. It is of course an idealized notion based on theoretical perspective which takes as point of reference a unilingual individual. But for Adams as long as there is concern about the notion of unbalanced bilingualism, it is not difficult to find in manuscripts or elsewhere, Latin texts

written by Greeks who did not master language competence and vice versa.

Among the classics, the bilinguals who attracted more attention were members of the educated class who decided deliberately to become such individuals. They were secretly known as “Elite Bilinguals”. Adams defines this as “free choice” to contrast it with the other bilinguals who did not have a choice in the matter. The Roman elite chose to study Greek and a few of them even achieved very high language competence in it. Quintilianus stated that children (he certainly had in mind the children of the upper class) had to begin their studies by starting to learn Greek.^{11.122} While defending his position on a certain matter in the Syracuse senate, Cicero spoke Greek and was criticized by his opponent because it was deemed inappropriate to speak and defend in Greek in front of a Greek speaking audience. Verr. 4. 147 *“Ait indignum facinus esse quod ego in senatu Graecouerbafecissem; quod, quidem apud Graecos, Graecelocutus esse, id ferri nullomodo posse”* (Pluto, cice 4.4-5; also Rochette. The opponent says: *“that is a Greek word, what a shame for me that in this court of law Greek is spoken. This has never happened before”* (Pluto, Cicero 4,4-5; Rochette 1997: 70-1)². The ambassador Rhodian Apollonius Molo was allowed to speak Greek in the senate without an interpreter. (Val. Max. 2.2.3). Atticus tells us that the ambassador spoke Greek as if he was a native born in Athens. Nepos Att 4.1 *“Sicenim Graecis cloquebatur ut Athenis natus uideretur”*³.

Adams thinks that Romans aspired to speak Greek fluently but on the other side, speaking Greek in public could be humiliating to the Roman state.⁴

Even though the above examples have come to us in the form of stories, Adams comes to the conclusion that elite bilingualism is extremely difficult to interpret since there are always biased claims on the subject. It is thus impossible to make a completely impartial linguistic assertion in such cases. There is absolutely no doubt that bilingualism has existed at different levels of language competence, but as to what extent, it is difficult to say.

Non-elite bilingualism

Adams acknowledges that the type of bilingualism which includes Greek speakers and Latin speakers or Latin speakers and speakers of another language has not attracted the same attention as the bilingualism of the upper classes. The term “non-elite bilingualism” is somewhat unclear. This category includes all Latin speakers (who speak another language as well) that do not belong to the small upper class which has received a good education. This term includes an array of social and education levels. The group of bilinguals, especially the well educated, was not homogeneous. On one hand we have bilingual slaves (among which some might have had a good education) and on the other hand the local educated classes. To illustrate this point we quote a Christian manuscript:

ILCV 4463 Βηρατιους Νικατορας [sic = *Nicagoras*] Λαζαρη και Ιουλιη και Ονησιμη κον φιλιους βεβε μερεντες ο βιος ταυτα, which, given its

“Language mixing was the end result of bilinguals who wrote a mediocre form of Latin and had no proper education in Greek language”⁵.

Bilingualism in the Middle Ages

What is the meaning of bilingualism in the Middle Ages? Does it mean the same thing that it meant in Antiquity? Are bilinguals, scribes from the upper classes, or do they have an other status?

In her study “Bilingualism in the Late Middle Ages” Linda Ehrsam Voigits puts forth a few linguistic concepts that evaluate the fusion and mixing of scientific and medical languages written in late medieval England. One of the them is the “field” concept which includes the distinction between “high language” and “low language”. The “high language” concept is very different from “low language” since the first is acquired through formal education. According to Romaine’s viewpoint a detailed analysis and understanding of the concepts of “diglossia” and the “field” can help us discover the different ways through which linguistic sources are organized in multilingual communities. (Romaine 30- 38,77). Even though the use of the term “diglossi” referring to latin-english literature is connected to the mixing of codes (referring to the study by Piers Plowman), she employs Romaine’s concept which states that: *Mixed linguistic codes* can be used to construct a neutral position between two or more fields. (Romaine, 166). Voigits puts forth the idea that the mixing of codes could be what is evident in the relations that exist between Latin and English in the collection of “Sloane Manuscripts”.

The premise is that bilinguals are separated from unilingual based on the *use of linguistic limits*. Mixing of language codes is a form of bilingualist manifestation which allows bilinguals to display the full array of linguistic competence during the process of communication. (Romaine; 173). If we take for example a medical text with mixed codes it can be noted that bilingualism is largely cultivated, at least for a century, and this is an undisputable fact. A few years ago she had selected 187 manuscripts which represented the linguistic code, and belonged to the 1375-1500 period. Fifty two of them were written in Latin, forty in English, eighty six (almost half of them) were written in more than one language. Seventy five of these manuscripts were written in both Latin and medieval English, whereas eleven of the codices were trilingual, respectively Latin, English and French or Anglo-Norman.⁶ (Voigits’ “Scientific”).

In this study she states that from 1375 to 1500 bilingual texts are more evident in medical manuscripts. In both languages, Latin and English, the text should be taken into consideration as a whole and not only the fragment where the mixing of languages is identified. Her examples have been arbitrarily chosen keeping in mind the text as a whole might contain dozens of such examples. Mixing of codes cannot be explained in all cases. Voigits writes: “I do not know why RECEPTARIUM in “Sloane 135” starts in Latin and after 64 recipes, communication continues in English. Can we call the mixing of codes intentional?”

On the other hand this author easily uses Latin words to ensure rhyme in an alchemy poem without feeling the need to explain the meaning or the word choice. The poem quoted below is titled:

“Sapientia Partris”

First lines:

'I am Mercury the mighti flos florum/
I am most royall and richest singolorum

[BrownandRobbins; (RobbinsandCutler 1276, citedhenceforth as/ IMEV/S)]

Voigts agrees that code mixing can certainly distract and confuse the reader. However, it could also be unknown, as in the previous text where the translator or writer inexplicably finds himself/herself changing words in a sentence from English into Latin. (underlined *florum, singolorum*). Entire unintentional examples in a sense, include certain classes of words or phrases that pass from one language into another or from one context into another with ease. Examples of such cases are underlined and given below⁷:

1-From a uroscopy treatise in Sloane 135, fol. 37⁸;
"blakecolors, subblakcolors significant mortem;
grenecolour,cyanos colour, yonoposcolour significant
brennyng and hard- nesse..."

2-From a zodiacal calendar in Wellcome 404, fol.29.v⁹
"Januare the xiiii kalends regnataquarius; feverer the xv
kalends regnant pisses..."

Voigts interpretation treats these examples as a tendency to write in such manner in order to provide an available basic lexical source to reinforce meaning in another language. However the diversity of these examples shows that the main purpose of this manner of writing is to create a vast stock of words, which can be easily mistaken for language code mixing if we take into consideration the examples below:

John Bordeaux's, text in Latin on epidemic disease found in Sloane 7, fols 85v-87r. This is a text where the change of language code and the reinforcement of the lexic is clear. The words in English are inserted as synonyms of Latin and are underlined in red whereas the Latin words are underlined in black. "Eper" is underlined in black followed by "lyver" in red, or "cavillapedis at calcem" underlined in black followed by "angliceperanleof pe fot e and pe hele" underlined in red (fol.86.v).

Taking all these examples into consideration and using her experience Voigts suggests that the concept of "field" used in diglossia or in digraphia can also be used in bilingual texts. She brings numerous examples where the use of Latin and medieval English in many recipes is very clear. In a medical recipe written during the last years of the fourteenth century, found inside an amulet, the text starts in English but when describing the healing process switches to French. (Ellis FM.175). The amulet contains a spell in French and a prayer in Latin which are followed by three prayers in Latin and three prayers in English to reduce fevers. (fol. 82 r-v)

This type of language mixing in medicine and science bears more rhetorical fuctions.

Bilingulism comes naturally in other areas of life. She brings a clear example from outside the field of medicine. It is a letter written in the fifteenth century by a student to his parents in which he asks them for money to pay the tuition at HARVARD LAW, Library 43. In the letter to his parents he uses Latin phrases, for example: "EcceSalutatio" or "EcceExordium" even in cases where alternative English phrases exist. (Voigts, "Awletter").

Intentional mixing of language codes can be found in fourteenth century texts. Dominican friar Henry Daniel translated into English "Liber Uricrisiarum". He started by writing each entry in Latin followed by an explanation of its use in English (Sloane 1100). These entries are followed by a text in English which contains medical texts in Latin where the Latin version of Giles and Corbei is also inserted. It is from this version that the tradition of uroscopy derives (fols. 3v-118r;) and is very well illustrated in Sloane 1721.

When reading these texts one gets the idea that they were intended for a circle of bilinguals, as in the case of "receptaria" where Latin and English are mixed without any distinction.

It is also possible to distinguish between the lines the fusion of Latin and English. They have been written and fused together in alternating lines in this alchemy poem. (Ashmole 1453).

"GemmaSalutarisquinasciturorbicularis / A
preciusstonhelpfulroundwycheysborne /
Estlapisoccultussecreto fonte sepultus / An hydston he ys in
secreteelleybyrid" (fols. 35r-42v;) TK 580

In this study, of particular importance is also the case of a Latin poem where the English verse clearly originates from the Latin verse. (Bodley 591, fol. 39r-v). Both versions have similar content and are presented in a format where the texts interlace for every prediction made for each month. However none of these poems appears to be a translated version of the other; "Quandonatusest in Aquarionecgligeneserit / If it thonder in Jenuere and be gretwynde it betocnethekeplente of frute..." (TK 1170; not in IMEV/S; see also Longleat House 174). Anyone can quote both languages equally from the manuscript. At the end of the study Voigts implies that this group of Latin and English texts (referring to Sloane manuscripts) demonstrates very well the occurrence of mixed texts in different languages. Both positive and negative results justify the mix of medical and scientific languages in the manuscripts produced in England from 1375 to 1500. Mixed codes by no means imply that the writers were ignorant, incompetent or clumsy. The similarity of the numerous examples does not mean that their survival is the end result of the pollution of Latin by English or vice versa. We cannot make a new assumption and write about the manner in which language was integrated at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Bibliography

1. Ilia Gershevitch *The alloglotography of old Persian* pg.120 november. 1979. Transaction of the Philological society. Volume. 77. issue.1 version. record on line 25. 2008
2. Leichity, 1997 f. 27,
3. Reiner 1966; 66.Mayer 19/1 Gronenberg 1981: 78- 79;
4. Stein 2000, 31-34, Hammen Antila 2000; 32- 33, 50; 77; Luuko 20004; 109-15
5. Woodington 1982 fq 11-12
6. Mark Janse *Aspekte të dygjuhësise në historinë e greqishtes së vjetër.*
7. Nicht die Einsprachigkeit, sondern Mehrsprachigkeit stellt den Normalfall dar Einsprachigkeit ist ein kulturbedingte Grenzfall von Mehrsprachigkeit und

- Zweisprachigkeit eine Spileart der letzteren (Lüdi 1996a:234)¹ “Non-elite bilingualism”.
8. Linda Ersham Voigts 1997 “What’s the word? *Bilingualism in the Late Medieval in England* “Speculum /Volume 71/Issue04/ 1997 / pp.813-826
 9. The Sloane Group: 1990 “Related Scientific and Medical Manuscripts from the Fifteenth Century in the Sloane Collection” *British Library journal* 16, f. 26- 57
 10. Sloane 135, fol 37
 11. Wellcome 404, fol 29 James Noel Adams 2008 *Bilingualism and the Latin Society* Cambridge University Press 2003 James Noel Adams and All the Souls College, Oxford. Bilingualism and the Latin Language. Cambridge University Press. fq 1
 12. Hoffman 1991; *Non-elite bilingualis*. Poaty f. 1415-
 13. Linda Ersham Voigts “What’s the word? *Bilingualism in the Late Medieval in England* “Speculum /Volume 71/Issue04/ 1996/ pp.813-826
 14. The Sloane Group: “Related Scientific and Medical Manuscripts from the Fifteenth Century in the Sloane Collection” *British Library journal* 16 (1990) f. 26- 57, saktësim i autores

How to cite this article:

Elida Begaj. 2017, Early Bilingual Texts. *Int J Recent Sci Res*. 8(12), pp. 22182-22186.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2017.0812.1217>
