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Fusion and the cognitive basis for bilingual discourse markers

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Abstract

This paper argues for a cognitive motivation behind the nonseparation of the systems of discourse marking available to bilinguals. It produces evidence that bilingual speakers, in an unconscious effort to reduce the mental effort which is necessary to monitor and direct the hearer's responses and reactions to the speaker's utterances, can simplify monitoring-and-directing operations by eliminating the language-specific options available to them, thereby automatizing the choice of expressions. This cognitive motivation, I argue, is so strong that it will at times override the social and communicative constraints on the discourse, leading to counterstrategic, unintentional choices or slips. It is suggested that Fusion, as the phenomenon is defined, is responsible for a type of bilingual discourse marking which, if extralinguistic factors permit, may lead to language change. Fusion figures in a function-based model of language contact phenomena alongside Integration, Differentiation, and Convergence, and the position of other approaches to bilingual discourse markers is examined in the light of this model.

Key words

*bilingual
discourse marker*

cognitive base

fusion

1. Introduction

Students of language contact have long been aware of the transferability of the class of expressions now referred to in discourse-oriented literature as discourse markers. Weinreich (1953, p. 30) for example, commenting on American Yiddish utterances like *nit er b'at ix* 'not he but I' says that "it is to be investigated whether forms belonging to some classes are more subject to transfer than others." Maschler (1997, pp. 286–288) has recently taken a brief inventory of studies of bilingual conversation which document language switching around discourse markers. Although partial, the list reveals an impressive range of contact constellations which undeniably testifies to the universal character of the phenomenon.

The question on which investigators will disagree is therefore not the likelihood of the occurrence of switched discourse markers in bilingual conversation (but see Azuma, 1993, for a critical view in syntactic perspective), but rather the reasons and motivations for this kind of bilingual behavior. A traditional, structural view stresses the simplicity of discourse markers and their relative ease of integration, as well as their sentence-peripheral status which requires little structural adjustment and so facilitates accommodation. A controversial though not unpopular view relates the transfer of discourse markers to structural

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gaps in the recipient language. Variationist approaches have interpreted speakers' motivation to integrate switched discourse markers in terms of the overall prestige effect which this has on the discourse. An alternative approach analyzes switched discourse markers in terms of their local, internal communicative functions (see de Rooij, 1996; Maschler, 1994, 1997; Salmons, 1990).

The present paper relates to this latter, communicative view of bilingual discourse markers. However, in so doing it is concerned with those properties of discourse operators which allow to account for a wide range of bilingual phenomena, such as the conscious or partly-conscious insertion of switched markers in bilingual conversation, the conventionalization of switched discourse markers in bilingual communities, counterstrategic bilingual errors, "slips," or interferences around discourse markers, and finally diachronic replacement of the system of discourse markers in many minority languages. My conclusion is that the gain to the bilingual speaker that can be posited for *all* these different cases must be formulated not in terms of conversational strategies or social prestige, but in cognitive terms of language processing. This is suggested especially by the occurrence of bilingual speech production errors surrounding discourse operators, but also by hierarchies of features which seem to govern the likelihood of their diachronic replacement (see discussion in Matras, 1998). I define the type of switching which is triggered by cognitive factors as a nonseparation of the systems of discourse marking in the two languages in contact, or "fusion." In part, I follow the line adopted by Salmons (1990) in his analysis of convergent systems of discourse marking; but in arguing for a cognitive trigger for fusion I attempt to extend this notion further toward an explanatory model.

2. A function-based model of language contact

My point of departure is a function-based model of language contact in which the following types of contact phenomena appear: integration, differentiation, convergence, fusion. The assumption underlying the model is that contact phenomena involve various motivations that can be related in some way to the pragmatic needs of communication. The key to identifying the type of contact strategy employed is an analysis at a local level of speakers' intentions and needs. In this regard my attempt at a more global classification of contact phenomena is partly inspired by the conversational methodology which views language choices in bilingual utterances as locally-negotiated contextualization cues (Auer, 1984; Gumperz, 1982; Li Wei & Milroy, 1995). However, it goes beyond a strictly conversationalist interpretation in assuming that conversational strategies will make use of, and through a process of recurring contact behavior may give rise to, distinct types of contact phenomena with characteristic structural properties. Identifying the type involved therefore requires a combined discourse-functional and structural analysis. A brief outline of the model will lead me to a discussion of various attempts to explain bilingual discourse markers.

2.1 Integration

Integration is defined on this model as the adaptation of parts of an external B-system within the A-system. The local motivation to do so is usually to enhance the system of representation available in the A-language. More specifically, and in the case primarily of lexical items but partly also of grammatical elements, it is to activate locally a conceptualization symbol which is available via the second language. In this regard, increased structural

adaptation could be interpreted as an attempt to provide a license for the permanent transfer of such a symbol into the inventory of representations readily accessible in the A-language. For this reason, the term “integration” seems more appropriate for this particular phenomenon than the term “insertion” (cf. Auer, 1984), which latter can be reserved for one-time occurrences. Consider the following Romani-German excerpt:¹

Example (1)

- (a) *Ta žanes e rači kana dasas but*
 and you-know the night when we-gave much
 And you know at night when we directed strong
 SCHEINWERFER *po iv, dičhol sa, na.*
 headlights on-the snow is-seen everything no
headlights at the snow, everything reflects, right.
- (b) *Ta so dikhastar amaro CAMPINGO vorta sar dam*
 and what we-see our caravan just how we-gave
 And what do we see, our caravan, just as we turned
 MIT DIE SCHEINWERFER *o AUTO našel avri jekh lisica.*
 with the headlights the car runs out a fox
 the headlights, the car, a fox jumps out.

What the speaker wishes to express is the family’s surprise at the fox which came running from below what seemed to be out of their parked caravan, and was caught in the strong reflection of the headlights of the family car which was returning home. There are three conceptualizations which confront the speaker with representation difficulties in the language chosen for the story, Romani. First, there is the lack of a technical term for “headlights”. While it probably would have been possible to paraphrase an expression, integration of the German word is apparently the preferred and more efficient option as it is able to activate existing, well-established conceptual associations. Next, there is the problem of differentiating between the parked caravan, which serves as an important point of reference in the setting, and the moving car whose headlights make all the difference for the point of the story. The native Romani expression *urdon* is ambiguous, as it can mean either one or the other. Resorting to German *Auto* and the ultimately English-based *Camping* (via German *Campingwagen*) allows an adequate solution.² Finally, a grammatical feature involving the instrumental case is integrated in *mit die Scheinwerfer* (the lack of the German dative being a common feature of the variety of German spoken by Romanies). Here, the Romani structure would have involved adding a suffix to a long, composed integrated word. The local switch for the duration of the grammatical procedure can be seen as part of an accommodation strategy aimed at the local adaptation of the German lexical item (and the conceptualization it triggers) into the Romani utterance.

The point to make on Integration is that it involves choosing—subconsciously, in

¹ Recorded from a speaker of the Lovaria dialect in Hamburg, Germany, summer 1991.

² Note that in the approach taken by Poplack et al. (1988), *Scheinwerfer* would be classified as a codeswitch, while *Camping*, which shows morphological adaptation (a loanword-suffix -o) is considered a borrowing.

most cases—among theoretically available options, thereby favoring a B-system component while retaining the choice of the A-system as the overall language of the speech event. Integration thus allows straightforward access from within the A-system to single conceptual entities as represented linguistically within the B-system.

2.2 Differentiation

Differentiation involves an even more strategic choice of elements from the B-system: While Integration is characterized by adaptation of these elements as quasi A-system components, Differentiation is based on the juxtaposition of the two systems, A and B, and the effects created from the contrast between the two. Consider the intrasentential switch in segment (d) of the following North Frisian-German excerpt:³

Example (2)

G: (a) *En wat de määste Jungs GANZ hál määge as heer*
and what the most kids very much like is here
And what most kids really like is here

da latje/sog latje Seetinge to leesen ODER sog
these little such little sentences to read or such
the little/such little sentences, to read, or to read

latje GEDICHTE heer to leesen.
little poems here to read
such little poems.

D: (b) *Mhm.*

G: (c) *Deer hääw dåt GANZ GANZ njüte for Jungs ok,*
there has it very very useful for kids also
It's very very useful for kids too,

da määge den ok [unclear]
they like then also
so they also like [...]

(d) *DAS IS EN GANZ/DIESES BUCH HIER IST GANZ*
that is a very this book here is very
This is a very/This book is very

TOLL, KÖNNEN SIE GANZ BESTIMMT KAUFEN
nice can you very certainly buy
nice, you can certainly purchase it

IM NORDFRIESISCHEN INSTITUT ODER AUCH
in North Frisian institute or also
at the North Frisian Institute or even

³ Recorded in Niebüll, Germany, spring 1984.

HIER, IN JEDER BUCHHANDLUNG HIER BEI UNS
 here in every bookshop here with us
here, in every bookshop in our area

HIER OBEN.
 here up
up here.

D: (e) AHA.

G: (f) *Un den hääw ik ok NOCH en Bök Max en Moritz aw*
 and then have I also still a book Max and Moritz in
 And then I have yet another book, Max and Moritz in

Frasch,
 Frisian
 Frisian

D: (g) AH JA, mhm, mhm.
 Oh yes.

G: (h) *Dat hääw ik for d'dritt Schöljaar [...]*
 that have I for the third schoolyear
 I have it for the third year

The speaker G is a native speaker of Frisian and teaches it as part of a native language instruction program in one of the northernmost German towns, in the province of Schleswig-Holstein. The interviewer D is a speaker of German, but understands Frisian. His supporting signals in segments (e) and (g) at least can be classified as German. In the example under consideration G is presenting some of the teaching materials which she employs in her classes. She has been asked specifically to do so in Frisian. While the presentation itself is in Frisian, the utterance in segment (d) is flagged through the choice of a B-language as a footnote to the main line. Here the hearer is addressed directly in an attempt to supply him with secondary information which, though not part of the main presentation, may nevertheless be of interest. Segment (d) can be seen as an attempt to influence directly the attitudes and possible actions of the hearer, and so it is to a much larger extent situation-bound than the more formal presentation line, which is of global relevance. The departure from the main presentation line is signaled through the switch into German, the normal language of interaction between G and D outside the specifically-defined framework of the current presentation. The return to that line is marked by the switch back into Frisian in (f). Differentiation is based on the contrast and so nonadaptability of the systems and their components.

2.3 Convergence

In historical-areal perspective, language convergence is regarded as the mutual restructuring of two or more languages, giving rise to increasing agreement in their overall structure. Well-known cases of convergent linguistic areas are the Balkans (Joseph, 1983; Sandfeld, 1930) or South Asia (Masica, 1976). With regard to ongoing language change within a bilingual community, convergence has been viewed as one among several

strategies which allows to reduce the processing load on bilinguals, drawing on, and extending the similarity in a given aspect of the grammar of two or more languages (see Savić, 1995; Silva-Corvalán, 1994). In terms of our function-based model, convergence is an attempt to apply the same processing and organization strategies to both systems while retaining their surface-level separation. This ultimately comes down to the adaptation of an *internal* element of the A-system in such a way that it should match the distribution scope and compositional structure of a B-system component which is perceived as its functional counterpart. Convergence may thus facilitate a similar organization and representation of conceptualizations across languages, without allowing one language to interfere with the native material or inventory of forms of the other.

Consider the following example of past tense formation in Kurdish (Kurmanji) and a coteritorial dialect of Neo-Aramaic:

Example (3)

Kurdish: *ez rabû-m û min derî vekir*
 I.nom stood.up-1SG and I.OBL door opened.Ø
 ‘I stood up and opened the door’

Neo-Aramaic: *qîm-na û ptix-lî tara*
 stood.up-1SG.M. SUBJ and opened-1. SG. OBJ door
 ‘I stood up and opened the door’

Kurdish is a language with split morphological ergativity. In the past tense, it treats intransitive and transitive verbs differently. Past tense intransitive verbs agree with the subject, which appears in the nominative case. Past tense transitive verbs agree with the object, while their subject appears in the oblique case. In Neo-Aramaic, a pseudo-ergative construction appears. The language has no morphological case marking and so there is no distinction between the the subject pronoun of transitive and intransitive verbs. But verb inflection in the past tense differs, intransitives taking the subject personal suffix, while transitives are based on a participial form to which an underlying indirect object suffix *l-* is added, here denoting the subject. The result is a passive-like construction which is structurally reminiscent of the composition of the Kurdish transitive past with reversed agreement patterns. Both languages thus make use of internal elements while undergoing a shared development.⁴ The communicative gain for bilingual speakers is to be found in the merging of concept-representation mapping patterns pertaining here to events and actors, marking the transitive subject as an experiencer, and the transitive event as a state.

Now consider in Example (4) a translation into the German Sinti dialect of Romani of a Bible passage (Mark 3:2), along with both a free rendering of the sentence in German, and an official German translation:

Example (4)

Sinti: *Und jon luran koi pre, ob job les nina*
 and they waited demost up whether he him also

⁴ For a comparison of the two languages see also Chyet (1995).

ap o heiligo diwes sasto krela.
 on the holy day healthy make.3sg.fut

German: *Und sie warteten darauf, ob er ihn auch*
 and they waited demonst.up whether he him also
am heiligen Tag gesund macht.
 on-the holy day healthy make.3sg

(= *Und sie gaben acht, ob er ihn auch am Sabbat heilen würde*)
 ‘And they waited (to see) whether he would also heal him on the Sabbath.’

Convergent forms include the correlative expression based on a demonstrative form (German *da*, Romani *koi*) and the preposition “on” (German *auf*, Romani *pre*), and the word order in the subordinate clause, which is identical in the two languages. Once more the systems are kept apart, but processing procedures follow the same patterns, allowing to associate similar operational functions with similar structural entities and their linear-sequential arrangement. The result is a merger of planning operations, while the systems are formally kept apart.

2.4 Fusion

I regard as “fusion” the wholesale, class-specific nonseparation of two systems. Fusion does not involve adaptation processes, since the underlying B-element is not even perceived as a foreign or imported component. There is thus no choice, strategic or otherwise, which speakers make when opting for the B-component when the latter belongs to a class of items which has replaced, or is currently replacing its A-system counterparts. On the other hand, no autonomy of the systems is retained for the particular class either.

My use of “fusion” resembles Salmons’ (1990) use of the term “convergence” to account for the wholesale replacement of a class of items (American English discourse markers in American dialects of German). But Salmons’ “convergence” is a diachronic process. It necessarily presupposes a successful replacement over time of the entire class of elements, with B-system components substituting for A-system components which had once been available. Fusion, on the other hand, is a cognitive process, one which may have both synchronic and diachronic manifestations. I shall return to the synchronic and cognitive features of Fusion below. For the moment consider as an example of historical fusion the use of German discourse particles and phasal adverbs in the German Sinti dialect of Romani (from Holzinger, 1993, p. 322):

Example (5)

ACH *kai DENN? Kon dšajas DENN koi HIN, me DOCH gar!*
 oh where PART who went PART there to I PART not
So where? Who (in the world) went there, I certainly didn’t!

NAJA, DANN *his NOCH mire gešvistre ap o vurdi pre.*
 oh well, then was still my siblings on the wagon up
Oh well, then there were still my siblings on the wagon.

There are, in addition to the highlighted German items, other German-derived words: *gar* ‘not’ (German *gar* ‘at all’), and *gešvistre* ‘siblings’ (German *Geschwister*). For the

highlighted discourse particles and phasal adverbs, however, speakers of this Romani dialect draw entirely and consistently on the inventory of German items. There is no alternative class of indigenous elements available in the language, hence no option of separating the two systems. A similar argument can be made for the use of German modifiers such as *ganz* 'very, entirely' and *noch* 'still, yet' in the Frisian example cited above.

To summarize, I've suggested a set of four functions of contact phenomena: Integration enables to draw on B-system components within the A-system; Differentiation exploits the contrast between the systems; Convergence allows processing operations to merge while retaining the independence of each system; and Fusion involves a wholesale, class-specific nonseparation of the systems. The advantage of this model is that it allows for an analysis of the communicative motivation for the employment of a B-system item or structure at a local level. Thus the distinction between Integration and Differentiation is not dependent on defining the status of the element in question for an entire corpus, as required in order to uphold Poplack, Sankoff, and Miller's (1988) distinction between types of language mixing. Furthermore, it does not need to rely entirely on a diachronic perspective, as does Salmons' (1990) notion of convergence, since distinctions between Convergence as employed here and Fusion, for instance, or between Integration and Differentiation, may be drawn partly on the basis of the conversational context, partly by identifying the resources available to the speaker in the interactional instance under consideration, and partly by taking into account structural features (e.g., adaptation of external vs. internal elements in the case of Integration vs. Convergence).

A final note is necessary on the distinction between Integration and Fusion. Both functions involve activation of material components of the B-system within the A-system while downplaying the contrast between the two. How can it be established whether speakers make deliberate choices when adopting B-system elements, or whether the two systems A and B have undergone fusion with respect to the particular item in question? The answer lies firstly in the definition of Integration as an attempt to enhance the A-system to include something which otherwise would not be available. Fusion, on the other hand, is a nonseparation of the systems which occurs potentially at the expense of the A-system. In addition, and here I follow Salmons' (1990) argument for what he calls "convergence," Fusion typically targets an entire class of items on a *wholesale* basis. The motivation for this will be explained below in terms of processing functions.

3. The position of bilingual discourse markers

What motivates the insertion of B-system discourse markers into A-system discourse? Approaches to grammatical change which note the borrowing of discourse markers (or corresponding structural categories, i.e., conjunctions and adverbs) have highlighted their structural adaptability. Weinreich's (1953) assumption that free morphemes are at a structural advantage over bound morphemes is in line with some of the postulated borrowability hierarchies (Moravcsik, 1978; Thomason, & Kaufman, 1988), while Stolz and Stolz (1996), in their model of contact-related grammatical change, emphasize the sentence-peripheral status of such items. Ease of integration, however, cannot in itself be considered a motivation for transfer across languages. Mithun's (1988) suggestion, inspired largely by Spanish elements in Amerindian languages, that borrowed conjunctions may help introduce new strategies of clause combining unknown in the language before contact

(see also the discussion of grammatical gaps as a motivation for borrowing in Harris & Campbell, 1995, pp. 128–130) could be accommodated on our function-based model of contact as a case for integration: Elements are integrated that are capable of expressing grammatical relations which are otherwise unlikely to be represented within the recipient system. One might however argue that the insertion of B-system discourse markers for such purposes entails an adaptation of the internal system of clause combining to accommodate new operations, a process reminiscent of Convergence.

Plain Integration is implied by the treatment of discourse markers as one among several functionally equivalent categories where switches occur (see e.g., Bentahila & Davies, 1995; Berk-Seligson, 1986; Poplack, 1980). Poplack (1980) nevertheless assigns a distinct motivation to switches involving discourse markers in the speech of less fluent bilinguals, positing a class of “emblematic” switches. The function of emblematic switches is not derived from the local function of the expressions involved, but is based on the effects which switches have on the overall impression of the discourse. English-flavored Spanish discourse is considered socially prestigious. Discourse markers are preferred candidates for emblematic switches since they are, due to their structural properties, easy to integrate and so demand less proficiency in the second language,⁵ while at the same time enabling speakers to flag their usage of English expressions (cf. Poplack, 1980, p. 614). Poplack’s notion of a bilingual discourse mode (see also Stolz & Stolz, 1996, who speak of bilingual registers flagged through the use of switched discourse markers), provides an additional clue to the motivating force behind Integration: it is used to support the differentiating potential of a mode of speech vis a vis other, (A-system) monolingual registers. In terms of our model of contact, then, Integration of this type will aim not at local access to grammatical operations or representations, but at reshaping the character of the accommodating A-system as a whole.

Contrasting with this interpretation of bilingual discourse markers are the studies by de Rooij (1996) and Maschler (1994, 1997). Both derive the attractiveness of language alternation around discourse markers from the locally activated, inherent communicative meaning that the elements convey. Maschler (1994) in particular regards switching around discourse markers in a particular Hebrew-English corpus as a conversational strategy that aims at highlighting the boundaries of conversational units, and she includes in her classification of switched discourse markers also compositions of lexical items including short utterances or phrases (cf. Maschler, 1994, pp. 350–351).⁶ Maschler (1997) even points to a significant difference between patterns of switching involving “discourse markers,” and the rather infrequent switches around items serving as “conjunctions.” Maschler is thus concerned to a large extent with the phenomenon of speakers creating a frame for a message or a “metamessage” (Maschler, 1994, p. 334). The assumption is that speakers produce switched discourse markers not despite, but *because* those belong to a different language

⁵ But see Sankoff et al.’s (1997) conclusion that the use of discourse markers in a foreign language in fact requires greater proficiency.

⁶ Compare also Maschler (1997, p. 284): “discourse markers are defined as utterances, metalingual at the level of discourse, occurring at conversational action boundaries.” To this definition Maschler adds however various structural requirements for consideration as a discourse marker, such as the position in the turn-taking system and intonational patterns (see also Maschler, 1998).

than the one chosen as the language of conversation. On our model of contact phenomena, the type of switches in the corpus discussed by Maschler therefore constitutes a case for Differentiation: the strategic exploitation of the contrast between two systems.

The key question here is, which relation exists, if any, between local switches for Integration and Differentiation purposes on the one hand, and the diachronic development of the kind discussed in Salmons (1990), the long-term replacement of the entire class of discourse markers on the other. De Rooij (1996, pp. 168–171) follows Maschler in arguing that the switch to French markers in Shaba Swahili discourse contributes to the saliency of discourse markers and so reinforces their contrastive function. At the same time however the data he considers show a tendency toward the spread of French markers at the expense of their Swahili counterparts. De Rooij (1996, p. 201) derives this from the dominance of Shaba Swahili in bilingual discourse, hence French markers are considered more salient. One might however argue that the predominance of B-system markers will in fact reduce their contrastive function over time, thus eliminating their differentiating potential.

Stolz and Stolz (1996) explain their model of contact-related language change in Amerindian languages, in which discourse markers figure at the top of the borrowability hierarchy, in terms similar to Poplack's (1980) "emblematic" argument: Discourse markers are structurally simple and sententially peripheral, and therefore easy to integrate. Their integration is motivated by the prestige-related formation of Spanish-flavored registers. The notion of an emerging bilingual register is also found in Maschler's (1997, 1998) interpretation of metalinguistic-switches-turning-habit among a group of speakers, which she defines as an "emergent bilingual grammar." The external motivation to highlight discourse-internal boundaries through switching is to express an ad hoc contrast in the discourse; this becomes conventionalized in a distinctive style.

In Matras (1998) I have argued that a connection between the emergence of such stylistic variants, and actual language change of the type discussed by Salmons (1990), is not self-evident. In particular, it is obscured by the fact that cross-linguistically, borrowed discourse markers tend to show a hierarchical arrangement. The fact that expressions of contrast or change are more likely to be replaced, could be reconciled with the Maschler/de Rooij approach on the grounds of an apparent need for efficient highlighting of contrast (but see Matras, 1998 for an alternative explanation). But the susceptibility of simple, nonlexical elements to contact-related change, as outlined in Matras (1998), contradicts Maschler's (1997) findings, which show a stylistic preference for switched items that are lexically analyzable, or indeed constitute a kind of para-utterance or metalinguistic comment. And so, while I see no reason to doubt the conclusions put forth by the studies cited here, I find it difficult to make a convincing case for a causal relation between their synchronic observations, and the type of diachronic process through which an entire set of discourse markers in a language is replaced through borrowed items.

My alternative explanatory scenario centers around the assumption that bilingual speakers, in an unconscious effort to reduce the mental effort which is necessary to monitor and direct the hearer's responses and reactions to the speaker's utterances, will simplify such monitoring-and-directing operations by eliminating the language-specific options available to them, thereby automaticising the choice of expressions. This cognitive motivation, I argue, is so strong that it will at times override the social and communicative constraints on the discourse, leading to counterstrategic, accidental, or unintentional

choices (i.e., slips). Such cases of situation-bound, local Fusion of the systems may lead to language change especially in minority language communities, which may establish a permanent licensing for speakers to prefer the use of one system for monitoring-and-directing operations over the choice among two. Hence diachronic replacement of one set of items by another is consistent with local, cognitively triggered simplifications.

4. Processing, monitoring, and directing

Let us briefly return to a definition of discourse markers. The tendency, following Schiffrin (1987), is to exclude from the definition fillers, tags, and interjections, and in particular to exclude elements which are phonologically deviant from the normal patterns of the language and whose word-status is often questionable (cf. Fraser, 1990). This practice is however at least in part contradictory. Fillers and tags certainly serve as frame-constituents which “bracket units of talk” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31), if “talk” is taken to mean a speaker’s action of talking, with all its interactional implications. Hesitation markers indicate a break in the fluency of talk and so they signal a boundary which from the point of view of the speaker is not planned or voluntary, but which nevertheless constitutes a frame within the action. Likewise, tags indicate the closing of a unit of speech action. I follow Rehbein’s (1979) analysis of tags and fillers as “augments of a speech action” aimed at directing the hearer’s participation in an action by controlling the hearer’s acceptance of the utterance, anticipating the way the utterance might be received by the hearer, or intervening with the way it is received by the hearer. Taken at this actional or interactional level of discourse, tags and fillers with “word-status” and those that are segmentally “deviant” have essentially similar functions. I consider as “functions” their role in processing the utterance as a whole: as a propositional unit, and as an interactive speech event.

A further argument against the exclusion of phonologically nonsegmentable items is the fact that those are still attributable to a particular language, and so, as Maschler (1994, pp. 347–348) argues with reference to Hebrew *e*, they do indeed contribute to an understanding of language alternation in its relation to framing, both between and within utterances. Sankoff, Thibault, Nagy, Blondeau, Fonollosa, & Gagnon (1997, p. 197) are aware of this language-specific affiliation yet they exclude hesitation forms that are not “articulated as part of smoothly flowing speech production” and that “generally signal word searches.” They do however include French *bon* as a hesitation marker, which, one might argue, has a related function in signaling a search for a proper wording.⁷

Incongruencies among different studies are also apparent with respect to the criterion of de-semanticization. While some include it in their working definition of discourse markers (see e.g., Sankoff et al., 1997; Fraser, 1990), others freely associate discourse marking functions with lexical or even phrase-like items (Maschler, 1994, 1997; Rehbein, 1979). Based on the above-mentioned action-related definition of discourse markers, I favor a maximal classification which includes fillers, hesitation markers, and tags, along with conjunctions and sentence particles.⁸ I also adopt Rehbein’s (1979) listing of the

⁷ Compare Sankoff et al.’s (1997, p. 197) Example (1): “Bien mon copain il vient bon il vient de, de la Colombie-Britannique.”

⁸ See Matras (1998) for yet a further extension of the category to include phasal adverbs and other focus particles.

functions of augments, but prefer to interpret those functions as integrated into the communicative meaning of each and every item in question, rather than as distributed among them.

Discourse markers in my understanding are elements through which the speaker tries to maintain assertive authority by monitoring the way a propositional unit is processed and accepted by the hearer, and by intervening with hearer-sided processing operations (i.e., anticipated interpretations) of the utterance which may cause interactional disharmony and so put the speaker's assertive authority at risk. Potential causes for such "interactional disharmony" may be a break in the causal chain (markers of contrast), difficulties in retrieving the right expression (markers of hesitation or fillers), distraction of the hearer, or failure of the hearer to provide supporting feed-back through hearer-signals. The relevant linguistic devices employed in such instances by the speaker will show a continuum at various levels, ranging from continuation (addition) to more intense intervention (contrast), from grammaticalized expressions to compositions and phrase-like comments, from more gesture-like and automaticized forms to segmentable, word-like elements.

My argument in favor of a cognitive trigger for bilingual discourse markers rests on the impression that there is a separation, in the mental compartmentalization of language processing operations, between tasks which one could loosely define as ordinary "talking" (cf. Slobin, 1996, on "thinking for speaking"), and those which involve "directing." Consider the following excerpt, taken from a television interview in English with P, a native speaker of German:⁹

Example (6)

- I: (a) *So tell me about these weapons that you • remodelled.*
 P: (b) *Well I took in parts, to see how it works nǎ, and it was very easy to manufacture such a silencer because it's no big secret, nǎ, how/how it works.*
 I: (c) *And who were these weapons for?*
 P: (d) *JA, Hein told me this weapons ə were for good friends for self-protection.*
 I: (e) *Why do you need silencers for self-protection?*
 P: (f) *That's ə/that's right and now I know this/this pistol were ə/ for this al/el-Borkan organization in London.*

The speaker is fluent in English, but regularly uses the German tag *nə*, as well as an utterance initial marker of agreement and reinforcement, *ja*. In the case of the latter, its appearance at the beginning of segment (d) is intended to emphasize a joint point of departure and an understanding of the interviewer's intention in posing the question; this, as background for an answer which does not reflect the speaker P's current point of view in retrospect, but rather the state of his knowledge at the point of time which is being discussed. This reinforcement of agreement will prevent the hearer/interviewer from interpreting the answer as representing the speaker's current opinion, and so it will help avoid disagreement and the questioning of the speaker's integrity, sincerity, or accuracy of description. In short, it emphasizes conversational harmony in anticipation of a controversial proposition.

⁹ From "Dispatches," Channel 4, June 09, 1997.

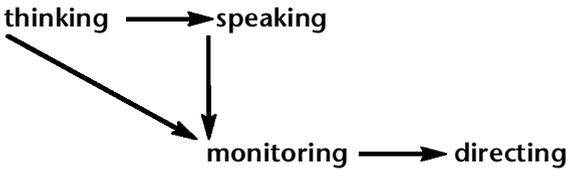


Figure 1

The arrangement of directing operations in linguistic interaction

We must once more establish that the speaker is fluent in English, at least at the visible structural and lexical levels. Furthermore, we can establish that the setting and the style of the conversation, an interview for British television, exclude the possibility that German items are deliberately or consciously inserted in order to create any special effects. (This may have been the case, had the speaker been an actor chosen to portray a German arms dealer; however, the interview is indeed authentic.) We must therefore conclude that while planning his utterances in English, the speaker draws on German at least occasionally, though with apparent regularity, when carrying out monitoring and directing operations.¹⁰

The mental separation of “thinking for speaking” and “monitoring and directing” operations, revealed through the alternation of languages in the example, is depicted in Figure 1, which expresses the double mental load on “monitoring and directing”: It is involved both in the planning ahead of the utterance, and in controlling the actual realization of “speaking” and its situational and interactional effects.

Monitoring-and-directing is cognitively more complex as it involves back-processing, planning ahead, anticipating and controlling reactions, interpreting gestures, and finally, intervening with a possible undesired course of processing on the part of the hearer (cf. again the characteristics of “augments” as listed by Rehbein, 1979). It is this cognitive load which bilingual speakers will aim at reducing by eliminating at least the choice between two available systems. Alternatively, one might argue that monitoring and directing operations are so automatized, that speakers risk compromising their competence in a B-system in favor of striking the right key for an adequate linguistic-mental directing operation. It seems that for bilinguals there exists around monitoring-and-directing operations a competition between efficient maintenance of assertive authority (issuing quick and automatized directing instructions), and maintaining a linguistic performance which would satisfy the social and overall communicative requirements on the discourse.

Further evidence for the process of Fusion comes from the observation that the transfer phenomena observed in (6) are not unidirectional, that is, they do not necessarily involve transfer from a native into a foreign language. Consider in (7) and (8) (from Anders,

¹⁰ In this sense, I do not disagree with an anonymous referee’s suggestion that the speaker is directing maximum (conscious) effort towards his L2 here, while his L1 is only active in the “background,” which is compatible with its usage for “backchannelling.” However, I do not see a contradiction between this interpretation and the notion of a “pragmatically dominant language” outlined below. Despite the effort to produce correct and coherent English here, the speaker’s German infiltrates his speech around monitoring and directing operations, revealing the dominance of German at a subconscious underlying level of discourse processing and discourse management.

1993, pp.II/8, I/6–7, respectively) a speaker of one of the Volga German dialects, who is a recent immigrant to Germany:

Example (7)

Und auch in einer Brigade, wo mer hat •• ETOT (A)• war ich
 and also in a brigade where one has this uh was I
 And also in a brigade, where we had •• what-do-you-call-it (uh)• I was
auch (wie) der Helfer zum Brigadier.
 also like the assistant to-the brigadier
 also like an assistant to the brigadier.

Example (8)

- (a) *Und die hat doch lauter/die Katarina hat lauter so •••*
 and she has PART all the Katarina has all these
 And she had al those/Katarina had all those •••,
 SPECIALISTY, *die wo •• baue hän kenne. Die, wo*
 specialists who build have could those who
specialists, who •• were able to build. Those who
des alles hän kenne mache.
 that all have could do
 were able to do everything.
- (b) *Und so weiter und weiter und/wie wir dort sin*
 and so on and on and as we there are
 And so on and on and/when we
niberkomme • alle.
 come-over all
 all came there,
- (c) POTOM • NU *die Wolgarepublik, POTOM/NU so is*
 then well the Volga Republic then well so is
then • well, the Volga Republic, then/well it
weiter und weiter/ • die ganze ISTORIA!
 on and on the entire history
 (went) on and on like this/• the entire history!

Russian hesitation markers in (7), and markers of progression (“then”, “well”) in (8), are incorporated into the native speech which for centuries constituted a minority language amidst a Russian-speaking majority. Here, essential components of the grammar of directing have undergone fusion with that of the surrounding majority language. Significantly, the most frequently-used Russian items in these varieties are of the type exemplified here: hesitation markers and markers of emphatic progression those with a maximum situational, gesture-like projection. Their frequency suggests a hierarchy of contact-susceptibility which is sensitive to the properties of monitoring-and-directing

operations outlined above (cf. discussion in Matras, 1998). This leads me to postulate a connection between the type of transfer phenomena exemplified by (7)–(8), that shown in (6), and the counterstrategic transfers discussed in the following section.

5. Accidental and counterstrategic choices: Bilingual slips

Above I hypothesized that the cognitive motivation for overload-reduction in the verbal representation of the grammar of directing is so strong, that it will at times override the normal social and communicative constraints on the discourse. In (6), the German markers are on the margin of what could still be considered segmentable or analyzable and so one might argue that the speaker is entirely “unaware” of his employment of items external to the language chosen in the conversation, and so less on the look-out to avoid such breaching of the conversational constraints. Along similar lines, one might (rightfully) posit that in (7) and (8), the speaker, being only a recent immigrant to Germany, is drawing out of habit on a variety or register of German which allows the incorporation in-principle of a wide range of Russian-derived vocabulary.¹¹ Thus, Examples (6)–(8) can be taken as evidence for the *convenience* of nonseparation of linguistic systems representing the grammar of directing, but they may be found not to testify to the “willingness” of speakers to sacrifice other communicative considerations in return for this cognitive convenience. Consider however in (9) a further extract from the interview with the German arms-dealer already cited in (6):

Example (9)

At the border in England were by the custom, they have investigated this car, very very ə ə thoroughly, and they have removed the panels from the doors, the panels from the luggage room and they in/ investigated in the engine compartments ABER they didn't find anything but they/ they have forgotten to get ə/ ə •/ [clears throat] they/ they forgot to look under the • car.

Despite general fluency in English, we find a number of convergent patterns here: the speaker is aiming at a verb-subject inversion in *were by the custom [Ø]*, he uses the perfect in *they have investigated, they have removed, and they have forgotten*, and the expression *luggage room* for the boot (trunk) of a car, a calque on German *Kofferraum*. It is not my concern here to deal with Convergence at length, and it would therefore seem sufficient to characterize these cases as attempts by the speaker to draw on B-system (i.e., German) patterns of processing as expressed in syntactic, aspectual, and lexical organization while structuring his utterance within the A-system (English), thus restructuring and so adapting internal components of the A-system.

It is clear that the occurrence of *aber* ‘but’ is of a different quality. Here, the speaker actually departs from his otherwise (in this example) consistent managing of the utterance *within* the A-system. There is no case for Integration here, since the choice of a German item is neither intended to compensate for a gap in the speaker’s English competence—this can be safely assumed not just on the basis of his overall English performance, but also through

¹¹ The freedom to incorporate Russian items is no doubt also licensed by the fact that the researcher/interviewer herself is fluent in Russian.

his actual use of English *but* further in the same utterance—nor can there be a motivation to use German emblematically to achieve a more general effect. And while the local effect of contrast itself would not rule out Differentiation, a strategic alternation of languages here can definitely be eliminated as a possible interpretation due to the character of the interview (see discussion of (6) above). We are left with the case for a nonvoluntary, counterstrategic switch around a marker of contrast, which I classify as a local instance of Fusion: the mental nonseparation of linguistic systems while executing a linguistic operation.

In the instance under consideration, there is even some overt conversational evidence to support the notion of mental overload-reduction as the trigger behind Fusion. Thus there is repetition and hesitation as well as self-repairs and new starts in the first part of the utterance, with conversational tension rising in anticipation of a climax to the suspenseful episode.

Now consider in (10) a native speaker of Polish who moved to Germany while still at school age, a decade or so ago. She has been attending an advanced English language course and living with an English family in London during the two weeks prior to the incident documented in the example. While seeing German-speaking friends in London, she is challenged to comment on the allegedly Polish style of a particular restaurant. Having crossed the street for a closer look, she returns making the following statement:

Example (10)

... *bis auf/ bis auf die Tischdecken*, BECAUSE/ *eh weil sie ...*
 except/ except for the tablecloth, because/ uh because it
 ‘...except/ except for the tablecloth, because/ uh because it ...’

Here too, there is no strategic advantage or prestige-related motivation for language alternation. The most convincing indication for this is the self-repair inserted by the speaker immediately following the switch into English around *because*. Rather, it is safe to assume that the speaker had very recently been directing maximum mental effort in linguistic performance toward mastering proficiency in the use of English. This mental training routine to which she has been subjecting herself overlaps in Example (10) with the conversational cognitive strain already present when needing to justify a statement, leading to a collapse at a local level of the control mechanism that generally allows separation of the systems and proper choices among them.

6. Pragmatic dominance and conventionalization

My claim in the previous two sections was that B-system discourse markers that are counterstrategic and, from a conversational point of view, disadvantageous to speakers share essential language alternation behavior with B-system discourse markers to which one might attribute a prestigious effect on the overall style of the discourse. Both, it was argued, are triggered by the cognitive advantages of nonseparation of the two linguistic systems, thereby greatly simplifying—by reducing the mental burden of control—linguistic-interactional monitoring-and-directing operations. But these two classes of switches differ in one fundamental feature: In the first case, that of bilingual slips or production errors, they run contrary to normative constraints, while in the second case they may indeed satisfy the community-specific norms of linguistic behavior. While this distinction is likely to make all the difference between isolated occurrences and the emergence of a recurring pattern

(leading ultimately, perhaps, to language change), a point to be made is that the target languages or *direction* of the switch can in both cases be classified together in a single functional category. I propose for this purpose the category of a *pragmatically dominant* language.

The pragmatically dominant language is the language toward which a speaker directs maximum mental effort at a given instance of linguistic interaction. It may therefore overlap with either a language in which the speaker is generally more confident or proficient, as in Examples (6) and (9), or indeed with a language which enjoys at a given moment increased attention, as in Example (10), or alternatively one which is associated with a socially dominant, mainstream majority which is in a position to sanction the linguistic behavior of the minority, as in Examples (7) and (8). When reducing the inventory of forms involved in monitoring-and-directing operations—the class of discourse markers—in favor of just one system, the choice does not fall a priori on the prestigious or socially advantageous language, as we have seen, but on the pragmatically dominant and so cognitively advantageous language.

In this section I return to the issue addressed in Section 2 on the position of discourse markers and the connection between synchronic variation and diachronic replacement. I propose that for each pragmatically dominant language, that is, each system which is at some point or other the target of Fusion around discourse markers, a position can be determined, taking into account relevant sociolinguistic factors, on a continuum in respect to the likelihood of diachronic replacement. The switches in (9) and (10) will for obvious reasons rank low on this continuum: they are one-time local occurrences which are unlikely to become habit even for the individual speakers concerned.

In support of the case for a locally-defined pragmatically dominant language, consider the Hebrew-German switch in Example (11). The conversation takes place in Germany, where the participants are taking part at a wedding celebration where nearly all participants but themselves are German. B and M are native speakers of Polish, which they use among themselves; but they reside in Israel and are fluent in Hebrew. Y is a native speaker of Hebrew. All three are fluent in German. M had just taken a photograph, and is confronted with the remarks by B and Y:

Example (11)

- B: (a) *lo haya fleš.*
not was flash
There was no flash.
- Y: (b) *lo haya fleš.*
not was flash
There was no flash.
- M: (c) *lo haya fleš?*
not was flash
Was there no flash?
- Y: (d) *lo*
no
No.

M: (e) DOCH, *haya fleš!*
 yes was flash
Yes, there *was* a flash!

German is not used habitually in this circle of speakers, and so we need not assume a conventionalisation of Hebrew-German switching habits along the lines of what Maschler (1997) calls an “emergent bilingual grammar.” And yet it appears that the situative dominance of German as the language of interaction with virtually everybody present outside this circle of three speakers allows for the use of *doch* in segment (e), but also licenses it, making it an acceptable insertion into the Hebrew discourse. The contrast effect is definitely the internal conversational trigger for the switch, the speaker aiming at intensified intervention with hearer-sided processing—here, in fact, with the explicit evaluation of events on the part of the hearer. The license to switch is nevertheless restricted to this particular interaction, and it is highly unlikely that *doch* should become a regular component in the Hebrew speech of one of the participants.

Compare, however, the following extract from a conversation between a native speaker of Lovari Romani, born in Poland but raised in Germany, and an interviewer (from Matras, 1996, p. 73):

Example (12)

Laki familija sas ALSO kesave sar te phenav, artisturi, NƏ?
 her family were like such how that I-say showpeople right
 ‘Her family were like such, how shall I say, showpeople, right?’

German is usually the preferred language of interaction between the two participants; Romani is chosen for the sake of the interview. Besides being a pragmatically dominant language in the immediate situation of the current interaction (being the normal choice of language in conversation between these two speakers), German however also represents the pragmatically dominant language in the broader social and interactional context, being the majority language and the second language of interaction even within the Romani-speaking community. Indeed, German discourse particles as in (12) appear frequently in the speech of this person and her Romani-speaking peers of a similar age-group.

A somewhat comparable case is the Yiddish-Hebrew switch in (13), recorded in Israel (from Reershemius, 1997, p. 340):

Example (13)

- (a) *Zogt er: “Ver bintsə?”*
 says he who are-you
 He says: “Who are you?”
- (b) *Zog ix: “A folksdojtšə”*
 say I an ethnic-German
 I say: “An ethnic German”
- (c) *Zogt er: “AZ lojf!”*
 says he so run
 He says: “So run!”

Here, speaker and interviewer generally communicate in Hebrew, alongside Yiddish, while the surrounding majority language is Hebrew. There is thus a local situational-interactive as well as a more general impact of Hebrew as the pragmatically dominant language. However, in (13c) the Hebrew marker of consequence *az* is embedded into the story in a quote from a soldier who originally, in fact, spoke German. This projection from the interactional situation into the body of the story might lead to the conclusion that *az* is considered a rather permanent component of the Yiddish inventory of forms at the speaker's disposal.¹² Alternatively, situational and general licensing of Hebrew markers in the Yiddish speech of the speaker in (13) could be regarded as strong enough to allow for such a projection of the form into the story. Contrasting with this latter example, consider once again Hebrew *az*, here in the Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) of a speaker born in Saloniki, Greece, and raised in Israel (from Matras, 1998):

Example (14)

- H: (a) *Los eh/ MEKOMIYIM, los lokales, eran relaciones*
 the uh locals the locals were relations
 [With] The uh/locals, the locals, there were better relations
midžores de los ġrexos ke vinieron de la Turkía.
 better from the Greeks who came from Turkey
 than the Greeks who came from Turkey.
- (b) *Por ke los ke vinieron de Turkía eran ublixados*
 because those who came from Turkey were obliged
 Because those who came from Turkey were obliged
de tomar trabajos de los eh/ ciudadanos/ ciudadanos, si.
 to take jobs from the uh citizens citizens yes
 to take jobs from the citizens/citizens, yes.
- Y: (c) *Mhm, mhm.*
- H: (d) *AZ/ eh es/ entonses empesó la/ la kel/ la enemistad la*
 so uh then began the the that the hatred the
más grande.
 greatest
So then uh/ th/ then the/ uh/ the greatest hatred emerged.

The speaker spontaneously inserts the Hebrew consequential marker in segment (d), but proceeds to a self-repair after which he ends up substituting it through the Spanish marker of succession *entonses*, the functions of which only partly overlap with *az*. Evidently, awareness of the switch and personal preferences lead the speaker to override it under conditions which are otherwise comparable with those encountered in (13). Once more we have evidence for the cognitive motivation for Fusion, which at times will clash with the norms and constraints on social-communicative appropriateness.

¹² Unlike other grammatical and of course numerous lexical items, *az* is not an early borrowing into Yiddish from Classical or Rabbinic Hebrew.

Further on the licensing continuum for Fusion, Examples (15) and (16) present extracts from conversations with two native speakers of Low German who are originally from the province of Schleswig-Holstein. The conversations were recorded in the United States. Both speakers were in their midfifties at the time, both having immigrated to the United States as teenagers in the mid-1950s:¹³

Example (15)

IF: (a) *und dor arbeit ik den för hunnertfofti Dåler*
and there worked I then for hundredfifty dollar
And there I then worked for onehundred and fifty dollars
de Monat
the month
a month.

DH: (b) *jââ, dat weer al wat anners.*
yes that was already something else
Yes that was already different.

IF: (c) *dat weer wat anners, und he weer uk en Diiütsche*
that was something else and he was also a German
That was different, and he was also a German,
een, ni, AND äh ik weer de drüdde, drüdde OR
one no and uh I was the third third or
right, and uh I was the third, third or
feerte Diiütsche, wat för em arbeiden dee.
fourth German who for him work did
fourth German who worked for him.

Example (16)

dat weer'n Ünnericht för süstein Stunnen, BUT ik hef bloos
that was a lesson for sixteen hours but I have only
That was a sixteen-hour class, but I only did
acht Stunnen måkt, åber dor hef ik uk nix leert.
eight hours made but there have I also nothing learned
eight hours, but I also didn't learn anything there.

It seems clear that variation prevails, with speakers alternating in their use of connectors between Low German *und*, *åber* and English *and*, *but*, *or*. Although it is doubtful whether the English connectors stand a chance of replacing the Low German forms entirely in this generation of immigrant speakers, their recurring usage in Low German conversation with an interviewer who is not American, but German, does suggest that the speakers have *accepted* them as part of the inventory of forms accessible through

¹³ I am grateful to Dörte Hansen-Jaax for providing me with these data.

the Low German system, implying at least a partial removal of the constraint which identifies grammatical items as components of one particular linguistic system. In other words, though Fusion may not appear here as a completed diachronic development (i.e., the full replacement of one system by another), it is nevertheless synchronically licensed in the sense that speakers are not expected—or rather, do not demand from themselves—to undertake a consistent separation of the systems.

Finally, let us return to the Volga German corpus presented by Anders (1993) and the use of Russian particles, especially markers of hesitation and progression. In Example (17) (from Anders, 1993: II/3), two of the three speakers, B and A, use Russian *nu*:¹⁴

Example (17)

B: (a) *Die haben keine so schwere Kindheit wie/ wi/ wie*
 they have no such hard childhood like we like
 They didn't have such a hard childhood like/
wir eine erlebt habe. Die Kindheit, di war/• NU
 we one experienced have the childhood it was well
 we/like the one we experienced. The childhood, it was • well
nach de Fuffzig scho nicht mehr so, wie wir
 after the fifty already not more such as we
 after the fifties no longer the way we had
sie erlebt haben.
 it experienced have
 experienced it.

M: (b) *Ja. sie haben gelernt.*
 yes they have learned
 Yes, they learned.

A: (c) *Nu es war a(uch) schon schwer. Aber was mir*
 well it was also already hard but what we
Well, it was still hard. But (compared to) what we
erlebt han!
 experienced have
 lived through!

Here, one might imagine a similar gradual process involving the spread of Russian markers in German conversation, as for the other cases—Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, or Low German. But here, unlike in the other examples, we are confronted with evidence for the

¹⁴ The fact that German has no equivalent for Russian *nu* might favor an explanation along the lines of filling a gap in the native system. I would contend however that the “gap” emerges here (unlike cultural vocabulary, for example) as a result of the need for fusion of monitoring and directing operations with those of the L2, Russian. The motivation to draw on Russian is thus created by the need to lift the separation of the two languages for discourse marking purposes. This explains the import into German discourse of other Russian discourse markers, which do indeed have German equivalents, such as *no* ‘but’ for *aber*.

collective licensing of the form through its use in conversation by more than one speaker. Thus, for *nu*, at least, and as the corpus reveals for a series of other items, nonseparation of the linguistic systems is an acceptable norm.

The point I wish to make in this final section is that there are stages in the acceptability of nonseparation—i.e., in the establishment of a permanent license for Fusion around discourse markers. While the overall motivation for Fusion is a cognitive one, whether or not local occurrences of Fusion stand a chance of emerging into a recurrent or permanent pattern will depend on the relations among the languages. In particular, the progression of a diachronic process of Fusion will depend on (a) speakers' will and ability to resist Fusion, versus their will and ability to accept it, and (b) a speech community's interest in licensing Fusion. Thus, prestige, conversation-strategic goals, or stylistic effects constitute important background factors that are likely to determine the ultimate fate of the phenomenon termed Fusion in a given constellation. However important, though, those factors are not responsible for triggering the local occurrences of Fusion whose generalization may lead to language change.

7. Conclusion

Above I have argued for Fusion as a contact phenomenon that is functionally separable from Integration, Differentiation, or Convergence. While other approaches to bilingual discourse markers have adopted an interpretation which, on our model, matches the functions of Integration and Differentiation, it was argued here that the trigger behind local switches involving discourse markers relates to an overall attempt by speakers to reduce the mental processing load on complex monitoring-and-directing operations. Evidence for this cognitive trigger was sought in occurrences of bilingual discourse markers which violate social, communicative, stylistic, and conversation-strategic constraints. These show that speakers will at times resort to a switched marker not *because*, but *despite* the fact that it belongs to a separate system. Fusion was defined as a nonseparation of the systems. As a working category depicting the target of Fusion, I have suggested the concept of a "pragmatically dominant" language to which speakers have a situative commitment and to which they direct much of their linguistic-mental processing effort. It is through the help of this concept that it is possible to explain switches involving discourse markers into nonprestigious languages, or even languages in which speakers are less proficient. Whether local instances of Fusion will gain ground in an individual's pattern of speech, or even lead to language change in an entire speech community, will depend on the chances of establishing a permanent license for Fusion. In the final section of this paper it was suggested that bilingual constellations where Fusion around discourse markers occurs can form a continuum, ranging from switches that are limited to local occurrences which are then overridden by norms and repairs, on to those that are licensed by the participants of an individual interaction, further to those which become individual habits, and finally to the collective licensing of Fusion at the level of a speech community.

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