

HERITAGE BILINGUALISM AND DIGLOSSIA: CHALLENGES OF FUNCTIONAL BILINGUALISM

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Abstract: *This paper examines heritage bilingualism in relation to diglossia and functional bilingualism, focusing on the maintenance of family languages within a dominant-language environment. The discussion draws on the example of Spanish-speaking immigrant communities in the United States and considers the roles of language policy, education, social integration, and economic pressures. Particular attention is given to the distribution of Spanish and English across communicative domains and to the challenges of preserving linguistic and cultural identity.*

Keywords: *heritage bilingualism; heritage language; diglossia; functional bilingualism; Spanish; linguistic identity; language maintenance.*

MEROSIY BILINGVIZM VA DIGLOSSIYA: FUNKSIONAL IKKI TILLILIK MUAMMOLARI

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu tezisda merosiy bilingvizm diglossiya va funksional ikki tillilik bilan bog'liq holda ko'rib chiqilib, jamiyatda boshqa til ustun bo'lgan sharoitda oila tilini saqlash masalasiga e'tibor qaratiladi. Tahlil AQShdagi ispan tilida so'zlashuvchi immigrant jamoalar misoliga asoslanadi hamda til siyosati, ta'lim, ijtimoiy integratsiya va iqtisodiy bosimlarning rolini yoritadi. Ispan va ingliz*

tillarining turli muloqot sohalarida qo'llanishi, shuningdek, til va madaniy o'zlikni saqlashdagi qiyinchiliklar alohida ko'rib chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: merosiy bilingvizm; merosiy til; diglossiya; funksional ikki tillilik; ispan tili; tilga oid o'zlik; tilni saqlash.

ЭРИТАЖНЫЙ БИЛИНГВИЗМ И ДИГЛОССИЯ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНОГО ДВУЯЗЫЧИЯ

Аннотация: В тезисах рассматривается эритажный билингвизм во взаимосвязи с диглоссией и функциональным двуязычием, с акцентом на сохранении семейных языков в условиях доминирования другого языка в обществе. Анализ основан на примере испаноязычных иммигрантских сообществ в США и охватывает роль языковой политики, образования, социальной интеграции и экономического давления. Особое внимание уделяется распределению испанского и английского языков по сферам общения, а также трудностям сохранения языковой и культурной идентичности.

Ключевые слова: эритажный билингвизм; эритажный язык; диглоссия; функциональное двуязычие; испанский язык; языковая идентичность; сохранение языка.

INTRODUCTION

The study of bilingualism and the preservation of linguistic heritage belongs to the field of heritage linguistics. This comparatively young field developed in the United States during the twentieth century in response to immigration and the need to examine the maintenance and development of minority languages in multilingual settings [1, 2]. Researchers have addressed phonetic, morphological, and syntactic changes that can emerge in one language under the influence of another. Heritage linguistics is concerned, in particular, with the functioning and development of languages maintained through family and cultural ties.



The terminology of this field includes “heritage language” and “heritage speaker.” In a broad interpretation presented in the source material, a heritage speaker is a descendant of immigrants who seeks to maintain a cultural connection with the ancestral homeland and may choose to study the family language in adulthood. In a narrower interpretation, heritage speakers are unbalanced bilinguals, including children of immigrants whose first family language gradually weakens when they grow up outside its original linguistic environment [3]. These interpretations draw attention to the relationship between language competence, family history, and cultural identification.

Heritage Bilingualism, Diglossia, and Functional Bilingualism

Heritage bilingualism should not be considered separately from diglossia and functional bilingualism. Heritage bilingualism is primarily related to the preservation of the family language or the language of cultural heritage. Diglossia and functional bilingualism, in turn, provide a way of describing the distribution of languages among social and communicative domains. This distinction is important in immigrant communities, where the language used in the family may be maintained alongside a different language that dominates the wider society.

The interaction between these phenomena can be observed in the experience of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the United States. The use of Spanish within families and everyday interactions helps preserve links with cultural heritage, while English occupies a central role in education and other areas of public life. The source material therefore approaches Spanish–English bilingualism not only as an individual linguistic ability but also as a social situation shaped by language choices and unequal communicative conditions.

Spanish-Speaking Communities in the United States

The example of Spanish-speaking immigrant communities, especially in the southwestern United States, illustrates the complexity of heritage language maintenance. The source material describes bilingual signs in shops, buses, and

other public settings as visible evidence of the coexistence of Spanish and English [4]. Such signs indicate that Spanish can retain a place in public communication as well as in family life. At the same time, the use of two languages does not eliminate disagreements over their social status or appropriate spheres of use.

Discussion of the “Only English” movement in the source material demonstrates that language diversity has been accompanied by political and social tension [4]. Some groups perceive the public use of Spanish as a challenge to national unity, whereas Spanish-speaking communities seek opportunities to use their own language. This contrast illustrates how language policy, social attitudes, and cultural identities can affect everyday linguistic practices. It also shows that the maintenance of a heritage language takes place within a broader social environment rather than solely through the preferences of individual speakers.

Spanish-speaking immigrants may continue using Spanish for everyday communication, thereby preserving cultural identity and connections to family heritage. Bilingual signs and the presence of Spanish in public places offer examples of participation in social life without complete abandonment of the inherited language. The preservation of Spanish can coexist with adaptation to an English-speaking environment. In this sense, bilingualism provides a means of maintaining cultural continuity while participating in a different linguistic setting.

The possibility of speaking a familiar language can also make everyday interaction more comfortable, reduce feelings of alienation, and support confidence in communication. Nevertheless, the source material notes that Spanish-speaking communities may experience prejudice and discrimination, which complicate integration and affect well-being. Heritage bilingualism thus has both communicative and social dimensions: it may facilitate adaptation but can also expose speakers to tensions associated with minority-language status.

Education and the Risk of Language Loss

Educational practices are another important factor in the relationship between heritage bilingualism and functional bilingualism. The source discusses the predominance of English as a language of instruction and the pressure that this can place on the maintenance of Spanish [4]. When the dominant language becomes central to schooling, heritage speakers may find fewer opportunities to develop and use their family language in educational settings. Such circumstances may contribute to the gradual weakening of the heritage language across generations.

The source also connects the limited availability of minority-language education with the risk of language loss. If the family language receives insufficient institutional support, the younger generation may increasingly rely on the dominant language. This situation underlines the importance of differences between language use in the home and language use at school. These domains may support different linguistic practices and, over time, affect the preservation of inherited linguistic and cultural ties.

The relationship between heritage bilingualism and education therefore illustrates a central issue of functional bilingualism: languages may not have equal roles in all areas of life. Spanish may remain meaningful in intimate and community communication, while English is treated as the principal language of formal education. This distribution can place heritage speakers in a position where they need both languages but encounter unequal opportunities to maintain them.

Socioeconomic Pressures and Language Maintenance

The source material further refers to research in North America indicating that speakers of languages other than the regionally dominant language can face lower incomes and higher unemployment [5]. In the discussion presented here, such socioeconomic difficulties are connected with pressure to assimilate linguistically. When employment opportunities are limited, use of the dominant language may

appear more practical in everyday life, while the heritage language may be regarded as less advantageous outside the family.

In these circumstances, economic and educational pressures can reinforce one another. Insufficient support for the heritage language in education, together with perceptions of its lower social prestige, may increase the risk of gradual language loss. Reduced use of a family language can also weaken connections with inherited cultural practices and identity. The interaction of social status, language choice, and institutional support is therefore significant for understanding the long-term position of minority languages.

CONCLUSION

The example of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the United States demonstrates the complex interaction of heritage bilingualism, diglossia, and functional bilingualism. The coexistence of Spanish and English creates opportunities for communication and cultural continuity, but also raises challenges associated with language policy, education, social attitudes, and socioeconomic inequality. The preservation of heritage languages depends not only on their use within families but also on the conditions under which speakers participate in wider society. These relationships call for a comprehensive understanding of functional bilingualism in contemporary multilingual communities.

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