

I

Introduction

I INTRODUCTORY REMARKS; SOME ISSUES
 IN THE STUDY OF BILINGUALISM

It is thought that bilingualism is more common than monolingualism, and yet linguistics has traditionally operated as if the monolingual were the normal speaker.¹ Bilingualism across the Roman world cannot be quantified, but numerous languages survive in the written record (usually in a fragmentary state) or are attested in contact with Latin (Gaulish, forms of Hispanic, Oscan, Umbrian, Venetic, Etruscan, Hebrew, Aramaic, Egyptian Demotic and hieroglyphics, Coptic, Punic, Libyan (?), Thracian, forms of Germanic, as well as Greek),² and others were spoken without leaving any trace in our sources. In the vast expanses of the Roman Empire, where mobility was high among such groups as the army, administrative personnel, traders and slaves, language contact was a fact of everyday life. To survey bilingualism in the whole of the ancient world would be an immense task, but the Roman domain, particularly during the Empire, offers more manageable data.

Bilingualism has traditionally been of interest not only to linguists, but also to anthropologists, social and cultural historians and students of literature. As found in the Roman period it has received a good deal of attention, explicitly in some of the works of (e.g.) Dubuisson, Holford-Stevens, Horsfall, Leiwo, Millar, Neumann and Untermann, Rochette and Wenskus, and implicitly in virtually any work on Latin literary genres with Greek forerunners. The time seems appropriate for the topic to be taken up again, not least because bilingualism in modern societies has attracted much research by sociolinguists, psycholinguists and anthropologists in recent years. The issues have become clearer and methodologies

¹ See e.g. Milroy and Muysken (1995: 2–3), Romaine (1995: 1) on this point.

² When I say that such languages are attested ‘in contact with Latin’, I mean that we either have bilingual texts, or that there are *testimonia* recording or implying bilingualism of one sort or another.

have been developed. Those studying bilingualism in Roman antiquity have tended to concentrate on various subjects to the exclusion of others. Loan-words have been ceaselessly investigated to the neglect of code-switching,³ learned imitation in one language of the syntax of another to the neglect of interference, the upper classes as second-language learners to the neglect of sub-élite bilinguals, lexical phenomena to the neglect of syntax, morphology and orthography, anecdotal evidence to the neglect of primary evidence, Romans as learners of Greek to the neglect of Greeks as learners of Latin,⁴ and contact between Latin and Greek to the neglect of contact between Latin and other languages. Where Romans are concerned, much effort has been expended on an attempt to assess the extent of upper-class knowledge of Greek,⁵ through the medium of ancient anecdotes about linguistic performance and through the study of literary translations mainly into the writer's first language. I will be trying to change the emphasis, by considering languages other than Greek in contact with Latin (though contact between Greek and Latin is the best attested, and must be given most space), by using primary material (inscriptions, ostraca and papyri) as well as anecdotal, and by dealing as much with sub-élites as with the upper classes. I will not be discussing (except in passing) the extent of bilingualism, the evidence for which is inadequate, nor will I be mapping language regions across the Empire and points of language contact.⁶ Instead some of the major issues in current bilingual studies will be considered as they impinge on antiquity. These include the nature and motivation of code-switching, the related subject of the determinants of language choice, a topic which will be discussed particularly in relation to the place of Latin in Egypt, and bilingualism as an influence in language change. These issues, as we will see, in turn raise others, such as the part played by language choice and code-switching in the construction or perception of individual and collective identities, language choice as an expression of solidarity on the one hand and of power or dominance on the other, and the significance of topic or domain in language selection. Other themes of the book will include bilingualism in the army, and the relationship between second-language learning and the acquisition of literacy in a second language.

³ Code-switching is now beginning to attract the notice of classicists: see Wenskus (1995, 1996, 1998), Jocelyn (1999), Dunkel (2000).

⁴ But see now Dubuisson (1985), Holford-Strevens (1993), Rochette (1997a).

⁵ See particularly Horsfall (1979), Dubuisson (1992).

⁶ For which see Neumann and Untermann (1980).

In the present chapter I first introduce some terminology which is fundamental to the book, namely ‘bilingualism’ and the difference between ‘élite’ and ‘non-élite’ bilingualism, ‘code-switching’ as distinct from ‘borrowing’ and ‘interference’, and ‘pidgins’ and ‘reduced’ languages. Some of these topics will be dealt with at greater length in later chapters. I also consider here the main types of primary evidence which are relevant to bilingualism. It must be stressed that the primary evidence relating to bilingualism in dead languages is very different from that which modern linguists investigating bilingualism in spoken languages can call on. Written evidence raises its own problems of interpretation, and it would not do to accept uncritically all of the assumptions implicit in linguistic research on bilingualism in spoken forms. For that reason a good deal of space will be given to establishing a typology of texts with bilingual significance. Bilingualism as manifested in written form has been largely disregarded in the modern world. There is also a section on the concept of the ‘authorship’ of inscriptions, particularly bilingual and transliterated, since inscriptions will bulk large as evidence and their authorship is a complicated matter.

II BILINGUALISM

Bilingualism has been understood in many ways, and I begin with a discussion of the term leading to a definition on which this book will be based. Weinreich was content with a definition which does not even occupy two lines (1953: 1): ‘The practice of alternately using two languages will be called BILINGUALISM, and the persons involved, BILINGUAL.’ This would perhaps better serve as a description of code-switching (for which see below, v). Since then, the matter has been seen as more problematic. Hamers and Blanc (1989: 6–30), in a discussion of the difficulties inherent in such definitions, quote that of the *Webster Dictionary* (1961) for the word ‘bilingual’, as follows: ‘having or using two languages especially as spoken with the fluency characteristic of a native speaker; a person using two languages especially habitually and with control like that of a native speaker’. There is embodied here an old and popular view that bilingualism is marked by equal and fluent competence in two languages. This view is found as well in earlier linguistic literature, notably in Bloomfield’s assertion (1933: 55–6) that in cases ‘where . . . perfect foreign-language learning is not accompanied by loss of the native language, it results in *bilingualism*, native-like control of two languages’. There are indeed bilinguals of this type, but equally there are speakers who have

greater competence in one language than another, and it would seem perverse to exclude them from a study of bilingualism given that they might be perfectly capable of communicating fluently in the second language.

From the Roman period, for example, educated Latin writers can be found who, while working with complex Greek as the language of their source material, seem to have made mistakes from time to time in their understanding of the language;⁷ but they should not merely for that reason be deemed not to have been ‘bilingual’. An example of an apparent error in a literary text is at Livy 38.7.10, a passage based on Polybius 21.28.11, describing a confrontation between the Romans and Aetolians in a tunnel at Ambracia in 189 BC. Polybius says that both groups thrust shields in front of them (διὰ τὸ προβάλλεσθαι θυρεούς καὶ γέρρα πρὸ αὐτῶν ἀμφοτέρω), but Livy, seemingly confusing θυρεοί with θύραι, has them holding forth doors (*foribus raptim obiectis*).⁸ Another possible case is at Livy 33.8.13, where *hastis positis* corresponds to Polybius’ καταβαλοῦσι τὰς σαρίσας (18.24.9). Note Briscoe (1973: 263): ‘Polybius said that they were to lower their spears for the charge and L. took him to mean that they were to put them down on the ground.’⁹ But errors of translation (into one’s native language) are arguably of a different order from errors of what I will call ‘positive performance’ in the second language itself (on ‘performance’, see below). It might even be suggested that misunderstandings of the above sort are of no significance at all in assessing second-language competence, because even monolinguals reading their own language do not always read with the same concentration or comprehension.¹⁰ In a strong sense a writer of, say, Latin who could not use passive verb-forms might be said to

⁷ See in general Horsfall (1979: 80–4), and on errors of differing degrees of seriousness in a variety of Latin writers (Gellius, Pliny, Cicero, Terence, Virgil and Catullus), see Holford-Strevens (1988: 169–70). Also worth noting is Lucretius’ account of the plague at Athens (6.1138–1286), which is largely based on Thucydides, but with some misunderstandings. See the notes of Bailey (1947), vol. III, on 1151–9, 1152, 1197–8, 1198–1204, 1230–51, 1235. For errors in Cicero’s translation of Aratus, see Soubiran (1972: 88–9).

⁸ See Walsh (1958).

⁹ Walbank (1967) ad loc. takes the same view, but the case is far from established. Livy talks of the phalanx of the Macedonians laying down their spears, the length of which was a hindrance, and taking to their swords, which is radically different from Polybius’ account of a charge. The possibility cannot be ruled out that Livy made a deliberate change to the nature of the event, for whatever reasons of artistry (see Briscoe ad loc. for additional bibliography on this point). Other possible examples from Livy cited by Briscoe (1973: 6, 1981: 2) are even less convincing, and some are purely speculative. Sometimes, if Livy did not alter the narrative of the original slightly for his own purposes, he might simply have lost the drift of his source.

¹⁰ See Powell (1995: 273–9) for a discussion of the possible reasons why Cicero might sometimes have committed ‘errors’ of translation. Powell too seems disinclined to treat such errors as particularly significant.

have had imperfect knowledge of the language, but errors of translation may in fact be based on *knowledge* of the other language. Livy analysed καταβάλλω correctly, but (if the conventional interpretation is accepted) did not recognise the technical use of the word;¹¹ and in the other case it is well to remember that a writer's source in manuscript form might often have been either corrupt or difficult to read.¹² The presence of non-military objects in the context (γέρρα, πίθος) does indeed suggest the possibility that Livy's text might have had a different reading.

The errors of translation that have been found in Apuleius¹³ similarly lack significance. I cite just one example. At *De mundo* 25 (343), *nec ambigitur eum praestantem ac sublimem sedem tenere et poetarum **laudibus nomen eius consulum ac regum nuncupationibus praedicari*** (of the supreme god: 'nor is it doubted that he occupies an eminent and lofty seat, and that in the eulogies of the poets his name is designated by the titles of consuls and kings'), the words in bold correspond to Περὶ κόσμου 397 b 25 ὕπατός τε [= *summus*] διὰ τοῦτο ὠνόμασται ('because of this he has been called supreme'). Note Beaujeu (1973: xii): 'le traducteur ignorait ce sens assez rare d'ὑπατος, mot qui, de son temps, servait presque uniquement à traduire *consul*'. Thus it is Apuleius' knowledge of the current language that leads him astray, if we accept that a genuine mistake has been made.¹⁴ There is no point in attempting to assess the quality of Romans' knowledge of Greek on the evidence of translation errors alone. For one thing, the high Greek literary language in its various forms did not much resemble the varieties spoken during the Roman period, and even Greeks themselves may have had problems in understanding earlier literature. Romans did not have access to scholarly tools of the modern type (most notably bilingual dictionaries) to help them with the interpretation of classical genres full of archaisms.¹⁵ I will here follow implicitly the principle that bilingual competence can only be seriously examined through examples of positive *performance* in a second language.

But what does 'performance' mean? The skills deployed by a language user (including a bilingual) may be said to fall into four types, listening, reading, speaking and writing.¹⁶ Listening and reading are passive, speaking and writing active, and it is to the last two, as the positive skills,

¹¹ Similarly Walsh (1958: 85) is inclined to take a lenient view of this error.

¹² Compare Bailey's (1947) note on Lucr. 6.1198–1204: 'Lucr. again misunderstands or misrepresents Thuc., unless . . . he was using a corrupt version or even an inaccurate Latin translation.'

¹³ See Beaujeu (1973: xi–xii).

¹⁴ Beaujeu (1973: 330), in his note on the passage, appears not so confident that Apuleius had not made a deliberate change.

¹⁵ See the remarks of Horsfall (1979: 82). ¹⁶ See Romaine (1995: 13).

that attention should ideally be directed.¹⁷ From antiquity we do not have equal access to all four activities. In corpus languages it is possible only to glean bits and pieces of information about the *listening* and *speaking* skills of ‘bilinguals’ in their second language, from anecdotes or by making deductions from narratives of events (see below, III on the shortcomings of anecdotes as evidence). Evidence of this type has its place in the study of ancient bilingualism, but it will not be the main focus of this book. *Reading* a second language is the skill required of translators such as Livy and Apuleius, but in an ancient language the assessment of this activity is made difficult by the literary translator’s artistic licence, which allowed him to make deliberate changes to the content of his source, and also by momentary lapses of no necessary significance, as discussed above. It is *writing* a second language that is the most positive bilingual performance which can be observed from antiquity. On this view translations by Romans of literary Greek into Latin¹⁸ would have less to tell us than specimens of Greek composed by Romans, whether by free composition (note the exercise in declamation at Cic. *Att.* 9.4.2; cf. 6.4.3, 6.5.1–2)¹⁹ or as renderings of Latin originals (as for example the Greek translations of *senatus consulta*, as collected by Sherk (1969)).²⁰

A distinction which is sometimes made is between the *balanced* bilingual, ‘who has equivalent competence in both languages’ (Hamers and Blanc (1989: 8)), and the *dominant* bilingual, ‘for whom competence in one of the languages, more often the mother tongue, is superior to his competence in the other’ (Hamers and Blanc (1989: 8)). Hamers and Blanc stress that balanced bilingualism ‘should not be confused with a very high degree of competence in the two languages; it is rather a question of a state of equilibrium reached by the levels of competence attained in the two languages as compared to monolingual competence’. They go on to say that equivalent competence ‘should not be equated with the ability to use both languages for all functions and domains. Dominance or balance is not equally distributed for all domains and

¹⁷ For reading a foreign language as easier than speaking it, see the remarks of Jerome, *PL* 29, 23–6, cited below, 2.vii.5.

¹⁸ As for example Catullus’ translation of Callimachus (66), Cicero’s translations of the *Timaieus* (see Poncet (1957); also Mueller-Goldingen (1992)) and the *Phaenomena* of Aratus. Cicero also translated the *Oeconomicus* of Xenophon (see *Off.* 2.87). On translating from Greek into Latin, see Quint. 10.5.2–3, Cic. *De orat.* 1.155, *Opt. gen.* 23. See also Horsfall (1979: 83–4), and on Cicero, Powell (1995), Vitruvius, Lendle (1992), and Gellius, Steinmetz (1992). Note too the general discussion (with bibliography) of Traina (1989).

¹⁹ The last two passages were ostensibly in Greek so that the courier could not read them (for code-switching as a form of coding, see below, 3.iii.3).

²⁰ On the usefulness of translating into Greek, see Quint. 10.5.4–5.

functions of language'. Doubts have however been expressed about the value of the concept of 'balanced bilingualism'. Note Romaine (1995: 19): 'The notion of balanced bilingualism is an ideal one, which is largely an artefact of a theoretical perspective which takes the monolingual as its point of reference.'

Identifying fluent or balanced competence in two languages from the written record of antiquity is not easy, though where Greek and Latin speech is concerned there is anecdotal evidence of individuals competent *utraque lingua* (see further below, III).²¹ As far as 'non-balanced' bilingualism is concerned, it is not difficult in inscriptions and elsewhere to find specimens of Latin that were written by Greeks with imperfect competence in Latin, and vice versa (see below). The Greekness or Romanness of the writers is revealed by interference from the first language (on interference, see v), and there may also be signs of a reduced morphology in the target language. The clearest evidence for this latter phenomenon is to be found in a Greek's attempted translation into Latin of parts of two fables of Babrius (*P. Amh.* II.26). This piece will be the subject of Chapter 8. I set out in section IX below some examples of such reduced or imperfect Greek and Latin, which take us into the world of Greeks and others struggling to acquire and communicate in a second language. Material from the hand of learners of Latin as a second language is perhaps the best evidence that we have for the problems of everyday cross-language communication in the multilingual Roman Empire. The evidence is relevant to such issues as the part played by language learning in inflicting change on a target language, the stages in the acquisition of a second language and the nature of learners' errors, the relationship between language learning and the acquisition of literacy in the second language, and more generally the linguistic policy of some groups such as the Roman army. Such evidence, which largely concerns social strata below the level of the highly educated Greco-Roman élites, has tended to be disregarded by students of ancient bilingualism, who have concentrated instead on what might be called *élite bilingualism* (see below, III).

In this book I will not be subscribing to the popular view of bilingualism referred to in the opening paragraph of this section. The bilingual's proficiency in the two languages, on my understanding of the term 'bilingual', may vary greatly across such areas as the phonological, morphological, lexical, semantic and stylistic.²² The merchant who manages to

²¹ See Horsfall (1979), Dubuisson (1981). ²² See e.g. Romaine (1995: 12–13).

communicate in a foreign market place with a mixture of gestures and words of the foreign language shorn of some inflectional morphemes and articulated in a foreign accent may in a sense be described as a practising 'bilingual', but his proficiency in the second language is at a far remove from that, say, of a foreign ambassador who delivers a speech in Latin at Rome on a political subject.²³ It follows that I will be adopting an all-embracing definition of bilingualism. It will be assumed that speakers (or writers) of two languages may have an infinitely variable range of competences in the two languages, from native fluency on the one hand to imperfect competence verging on incompetence on the other. Even the speaker or writer with very poor command of a second language may be able to make himself understood in that language, at least within restricted domains, and is therefore worthy of study, particularly since language learners tend to turn up in important spheres of activity, such as the army and in trade, where their linguistic efforts, however inadequate, might have had considerable influence. Thus the term 'bilingual' will be used here to include even those whose second language is far from perfect. Setting up degrees of linguistic competence in a dead language is out of the question, and even in spoken modern languages is problematic.²⁴ Nevertheless the approximate opposites, competence and poor competence in the second language, are easy enough to distinguish.

I mention finally an obvious criticism to which the minimalist definition adopted here is exposed. Practically everyone knows at least a few words of a second language, and we are thus in danger of having to classify everyone as bilingual.²⁵ It is though intuitively clear that there is a difference between being bilingual, however that term is defined, and 'knowing a few words from a second language'. The bilingual 'performs', however imperfectly, in at least one of the areas listed above, whereas the 'non-bilingual' has at best a few bits and pieces of passive knowledge, which he may never use. The objection is not a real one for the student of ancient bilingualism, because of necessity attention has to be devoted to written sources, and these convey actual 'performance', or anecdotes about performance.

²³ Note the random list of fifteen types of 'bilinguals' given by Hoffmann (1991: 16–17), which include (e.g.) 'the two-year-old who is beginning to talk, speaking English to one parent and Welsh to the other', and 'the Portuguese chemist who can read specialist literature in his subject written in English'. Hoffmann (17) remarks: 'Many specialists would say that all the above individuals could be classed as bilinguals; but public opinion, and at least some of these people themselves, would probably disagree.'

²⁴ See e.g. Hamers and Blanc (1989: 14–25). ²⁵ Cf. Romaine (1995: 11).

III ÉLITE AND SUB-ÉLITE BILINGUALISM: ANECDOTAL
 EVIDENCE AND ITS SHORTCOMINGS

Those bilinguals who have attracted most attention among classicists, implicitly at least, might be called in the current jargon ‘élite bilinguals’, that is members of the educated classes who had freely chosen to become bilingual.²⁶ I say ‘freely chosen’ because there are other bilinguals who have no such choice. Upper-class Romans were by choice learners of Greek, and some are said to have achieved great competence in the second language. Quintilian asserted that the child (and he meant the upper-class child) should begin with Greek: 1.1.12 *a sermone Graeco puerum incipere malo, quia Latinum, qui pluribus in usu est, uel nobis nolentibus perbibet*. It might be said that a child had no choice, but in fact his father or parents were able to exercise such a choice on his behalf, and there is evidence that Quintilian’s advice must often have been followed. Upper-class Romans who could not speak Greek (whether genuinely or allegedly) are sometimes disparaged, as Verres by Cicero: *Verr. 4.127 epigramma Graecum pernobile incisum est in basi, quod iste eruditus homo et Graeculus, qui haec subtiliter iudicat, qui solus intellegit, si unam litteram Graecam scisset, certe non sustulisset* (‘it had a notable Greek inscription on its pedestal, which this learned exponent of Greek culture, with his delicate critical sense and unique appreciation of these matters, would certainly not (?) have removed if he had known a single Greek letter’).²⁷ There is also a good deal of anecdotal and other evidence for fluent bilingualism (in Greek and Latin) among upper-class Romans, though opinions differ as to how it should be interpreted (see below). Here I select a few such anecdotes relating to Romans using Greek.²⁸

According to Valerius Maximus, P. Crassus Mucianus as proconsul in Asia Minor in 131 BC was able to use the five Greek dialects: 8.7.6 *iam P. Crassus, cum in Asiam ad Aristonicum regem debellandum consul uenisset, tanta cura Graecae linguae notitiam animo comprehendit ut eam in quinque diuisam genera per omnes partes ac numeros penitus cognosceret*. The same anecdote is in Quintilian (11.2.50), perhaps taken from a common source: *Crassus ille diues, qui cum Asiae praeesset, quinque Graeci sermonis differentias sic tenuit, ut*

²⁶ See Hoffmann (1991: 46).

²⁷ There is obvious exaggeration here (so Dubuisson (1992: 188)), but it is of interest that elsewhere Cicero refers to an interpreter used by Verres, though allegedly for purposes other than interpreting (*Verr. 3.84*). The negative *non* in the final clause of the passage quoted may be wrong.

²⁸ Further details and evidence are discussed by Kroll (1933: 11.118–19), Boyancé (1956), Kaimio (1979a: 94–110), Horsfall (1979: 84–7), Dubuisson (1982), id. (1992: 192), Weis (1992), Gruen (1993), chapter 6.

*qua quisque apud eum lingua postulasset, eadem ius sibi redditum ferret.*²⁹ Cicero on one occasion spoke Greek in the senate at Syracuse, an action for which he was criticised by an opponent, partly on the grounds that it was an improper act of deference for a Roman to speak Greek in public before a Greek audience: *Verr.* 4.147 *ait indignum facinus esse quod ego in senatu Graeco uerba fecissem; quod quidem apud Graecos Graece locutus essem, id ferri nullo modo posse.*³⁰ The Rhodian ambassador Apollonius Molo was allowed to speak Greek in the senate without an interpreter (Val. Max. 2.2.3). Atticus is said to have spoken Greek as if he were a native of Athens: *Nepos Att.* 4.1 *sic enim Graece loquebatur ut Athenis natus uideretur.* Much the same is said of L. Crassus: *Cic. De orat.* 2.2 *Graece sic loqui, nullam ut nosse aliam linguam uideretur.* Another who was more Greek than the Greeks was T. Albucius (*Cic. Brut.* 131 *doctus etiam Graecis T. Albucius uel potius plane Graecus . . . fuit autem Athenis adulescens*), who was mocked for his Hellenism by Scaevola in an incident reported by Lucilius (*Cic. Fin.* 1.8–9; Lucilius 88–94: see below, 3.IV.1). From the later Empire one may note, for example, the praetorian prefect Strategius Musonianus, who was famed for his knowledge of ‘both languages’: *Amm.* 15.13.1 *facundia sermonis utriusque clarus.*³¹ Anecdotes on the other hand which portray Romans as either refusing to speak or use Greek themselves or to have it spoken directly to them cannot always be taken as evidence for an inability to use the language.³² Greek, the language of high culture in Roman eyes, elicited in Romans a sense of cultural inferiority and in some of them a consequent linguistic aggression, particularly as Rome

²⁹ The division of the Greek dialects into five entailed classifying the koine as a dialect (along with Attic, Ionic, Doric and Aeolic): see Davies (1987: 14–15).

³⁰ For flattering remarks made by Apollonius Molo to Cicero after the latter had declaimed in Greek, see *Plut. Cic.* 4.4–5; also Rochette (1997a: 70–1).

³¹ It has recently been argued (by Drijvers (1996)) that Musonianus knew Aramaic. The arguments advanced are convincing enough, but I would reject the tentative suggestion (537) that Ammianus might have meant by *facundia sermonis utriusque* ‘those languages spoken in his hometown’, viz. Greek and Aramaic. The phrase had long-standing literary associations and an accepted meaning, which could not possibly have been shed without very clear contextual pointers (contrast the example in Jerome, *PL* 29, 25–6, cited below, 2.VII.5, where there are such pointers). There are no pointers in the passage of Ammianus. On the contrary, it would be bizarre in the extreme if Ammianus had meant by *facundia* eloquence in any language other than Greek and Latin: these were the languages in which eloquence (*facundia*) in Greco-Roman culture could be displayed. Ammianus presumably meant that Musonianus was a gifted linguist, fluent of course in Greek and Latin, but by implication able to cope with other languages as well. A parallel can be found in the *protector* Antoninus, who defected to the Persians. He too was *utriusque linguae litteras sciens* (*Amm.* 18.5.1), but it emerges from the narrative that he could also communicate directly with Persians (see, e.g., 18.7.10–11 *dicere, auditis*), though Ammianus does not bother to tell the reader explicitly that he knew Persian (or Aramaic?). On Musonianus, see also 2.VII.5.

³² See, e.g., Val. Max. 2.2.2, D.C. 57.15.2–3, Suet. *Tib.* 71.