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CHAPTER 1

LANGUAGE AND LIFE IN LETTERS

Epistolographic Characters and Sociolinguists

In an awkward letter to Atticus (*Att.* 1.1), Cicero has to defend his decision not to speak against one of his own clients, Caninius Satyrus, who has allegedly defrauded Atticus' uncle, Caecilius. Cicero has clearly upset Caecilius, who is advocating action, and needs Atticus on side to smooth things over. Cicero explains that he told Caecilius he did not want to hurt Satyrus or, more importantly, his powerful patron Lucius Domitius, and that he denied Caecilius' request for reasons of *humanitas* and because the group of creditors is powerful enough without him anyway. Cicero worries, however, that Atticus will come to another assessment:

quod si uoles in me esse durior, ambitionem putabis mihi obstitisse. ego autem arbitror, etiam si id sit, mihi ignoscendum esse, 'ἐπεὶ οὐχ ἱερήιον οὐδὲ βοείην.' *uides enim in quo cursu simus et quam omnis gratias non modo retinendas uerum etiam acquirendas putemus. spero tibi me causam probasse, cupio quidem certe*. *Att.* 1.1.4

If however you want to take a harsher view of me, you will consider that my candidature got in the way. But I think that, even if that were the case, I should be forgiven, 'for it was not for beast of sacrifice or for bull's hide …'. For you know the race I am in and how I think not only must all favours be kept but new ones sought. I hope you now approve of my reasons – I certainly want you to.[1]

In this letter the quotation from *Iliad* 22.159–61 only makes sense if the reader completes it himself:

ἐπεὶ οὐχ ἱερήϊον οὐδὲ βοείην
ἀρνύσθην, ἅ τε ποσσὶν ἀέθλια γίγνεται ἀνδρῶν,
ἀλλὰ περὶ ψυχῆς θέον Ἕκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο.

[1] Translations in this chapter are the author's own, unless published versions are particularly appropriate, in which case the source is credited.

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> For it was not for beast of sacrifice or for bull's hide that they strove, such as are men's prizes for swiftness of foot, but it was for the life of horse-taming Hector that they ran.

Cicero is concerned that Atticus (and Caecilius) may think that he is being entirely selfish, and considering only the success of his political career. In fact, the bulk of the letter is devoted to exactly that as he enumerates his rivals in the upcoming elections and his plans to go to Gaul to canvass in the 'swing state'. But the Homeric passage, which explains that Achilles and Hector are not running to win prizes, but are in mortal combat which will determine the fate of their peoples, is intended to remind Atticus that, even if the reason for Cicero's actions really *is* his candidature, this prioritizing of political success is not for mere personal reward but a higher purpose, namely the good of the *res publica*. The passage is neatly bilingual as *ambitio* and *cursus* in their semantic breadth can conjure up the competition and curves of the race track and send the reader to the intensity of the horse-racing in the Homeric quotation. It was no doubt designed to stop Atticus in his tracks and to make him think through, and empathize with, Cicero's conundrum. Cicero knows that Atticus will appreciate the full context of the Homeric passage and the implication that perhaps the awkwardness of their situation is mirrored in the scenes on Olympus which follow, where the gods have to compromise given their split allegiances.

This passage introduces several of the themes of the volume. Along with other evidence for wordplay and coding, it demonstrates that parallel bilingual processing is likely to be occurring in the brains of our highly competent elite epistolographers. This parallel processing involves not simply the languages of the Roman world, but also the broader Graeco-Roman cultural context, especially literary, philosophical and political. The frequent and creative use of Greek literary quotations, however, is not simply part of an erudite game played by a similarly educated ruling elite: it serves a psychological and communicative purpose in creating a space in which awkward problems could be reasoned through and, sometimes, resolved. This is seen most clearly in the letters

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of Cicero: when there are options to be discussed, Greek is often deployed, when there is no hope, it does not feature (Chapter 3).

This passage also contemplates the issue of relationships and the importance of carefully negotiating *amicitia* – a practice in which a misstep could spell career suicide. *Amicitia* is performed at length in Roman elite correspondence, which is overwhelmingly political, in the broadest sense, even when the content is not explicitly so (Chapter 3) and served to replace the frequent face-to-face meetings of the elite when members were away from Rome. The political class needed to stay abreast of developments in the centre and elsewhere in the provinces and would send constant streams of letters, which are a lifeline, however difficult to employ, for modern historians of certain periods.[2] Our opening letter is itself an output of one of the most enduring epistolary interactions, namely that between Cicero and Atticus, whose close relationship, and its link with the frequent Greek of the letters, have often been taken for granted. Chapters 3 and 4 explore notions of intimacy and how this may be expressed, or not, through Greek and present reconstructions of our epistolographic characters and their interactions, especially Cicero and Atticus and Fronto and Marcus Aurelius. The letter shows, however, that these relationships are not performed in isolation. We shall repeatedly see the blurring of public and private spheres, and the over-the-shoulder glances to other potential readers and listeners. Indeed, in some letters we know the author expects, hopes for, or is wary of, an audience beyond the named recipient (Chapter 3).

Roman letters demonstrate that language has *imperium:* the power to resolve problems, to negotiate relationships and to construct characters and even Roman culture itself. This is not an anachronistic view, imposed on the Roman world. Fronto expounds the power of speech as he constantly tries to bring Marcus Aurelius back from philosophy to rhetoric and states bluntly in a letter to Lucius Verus that *imperium* is about both

[2] Whitehorne 1977: 41.

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potestas and *oratio:* a leader commands through words (VdH 123.16–18; Chapter 5). In the same letter, Fronto also closely associates good and bad emperors with the quality of their language, indicating that he sees character and identity as indivisible from speech (VdH 123.3–10; Chapter 5). This echoes Seneca's emphasis on the close link between language and the essence of men. He concludes that *talis hominibus fuit oratio, qualis uita* 'as a man's speech is, so is his life' (*Ep.* 114.1). Our authors also implicitly and explicitly struggle with the nature of that speech and especially what 'Roman' language, rather than 'Latin' language, might be and how precisely Greek language and culture fit within the creation of the elite Roman world. In two letters of recommendation, Fronto states that Greek terms cannot be Roman if they refer to concepts which are not Roman, an extreme view, not necessarily reflective of his practice, but which underlines his interest in, and manipulation of, the interconnection of language and culture (VdH 111.16–20; 173.15–16, Chapter 4). In their linguistic awareness and concern with the links between language, identities and culture, elite Roman letter writers are, in a sense, sociolinguists themselves.

Utraque lingua: The Language of Letters and the Construction of Identities

With the exception of Suetonius (*c.* AD 69–after AD 122), the main authors discussed in detail in this volume, Cicero (106–43 BC), Pliny (*c.* AD 61–112), Fronto (*c.* AD 90/95–167) and Marcus Aurelius (AD 121–180), who is Fronto's most frequent correspondent, have large sets of extant letters assigned to them. All five are skilled rhetoricians, whose use of language is sophisticated and sensitive. Suetonius features as his works contain direct citations of letters and a comparative approach with 'real' collections of correspondence and in particular the patterns of their use of Greek may allow us not only to understand better the Suetonian text, but also, since the Suetonian corpus presents other types and layers of evidence alongside the letters within the same text, to aid the reconstruction of the linguistic and cultural world creating the letters (Chapter 5).

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The bilingual practices of these elite Roman letter writers of the Late Republic and the first two centuries AD who write primarily in Latin and switch into Greek have long attracted attention. Scholars have used the letters in debates about which of the two languages may have been learnt first, whether the conversations of the Roman elite regularly included Greek (Chapter 2),[3] whether code-switching in the letters might be marked or unmarked (Chapter 3),[4] and whether these bilingual practices reflect expressions of Romanness, whatever that might mean, rather than 'genuine biculturalism' (Chapter 4).[5] Expressions of identity, linguistic attitudes and the broader cultural associations of the languages will be considered throughout this volume, and an attempt made to assess whether the letter writers saw themselves as operating in two languages and cultures or as writing not *latine et graece* but in one intertwined language.

Bilingualism forces us to confront conceptual issues. If languages express identities and influence the way we construct and view the world, what happens when people are bilingual? Bilinguals regularly remark that they associate one or other of their languages with various concepts, emotions and memories.[6] So how do we reconcile the suggestion that different languages at some level might encode a different *Weltansicht* with their presence within the same individuals? One way to solve this apparent problem has been to view bilinguals as switching between different identities not within a context of 'either/or' associations, but of both simultaneously and the term 'biculturalism' has been used to express the integration of more than one cultural-linguistic strand within the same community and/or individual. However, the term 'biculturalism', itself variously defined and poorly empirically investigated and theorized,[7] is problematic: bilinguals may not always recognize

[3] See, for example, Jocelyn 1999, Swain 2002.
[4] See, for example, Adams 2003a; Swain 2002.
[5] See, for example, Swain 2002, 2004.
[6] See Pavlenko 2014.
[7] See Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005 for further discussion.

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it as relevant for their experiences and may even argue that their bilingualism is not associated with any sense of duality at all, or is more binary than the term 'biculturalism' might imply. The analysis of the bilingualism of the Roman letters acts as a lens through which to explore how elite Romans constructed their identities through language.

In exploring the use of Greek in Latin letters, we have found it useful to focus on the phenomenon of 'code-switching', the full-blown switch from one language to another in both bilingual speech and writing and of relevance far beyond the purely linguistic. Extensive research into modern code-switching has demonstrated that variations in the use or avoidance of code-switching and the modes employed are intimately linked with social circumstances, levels of bilingualism, attitudinal factors and, in non-oral contexts, the types of writing involved. Cross-culturally it seems that code-switching is more common in less formal genres and, in the Roman world, the purity of language striven for under the banner of *Latinitas* on the model of *Hellenismos* appears to have encouraged a resistance to overt mixing.[8] The debate about what constitutes a *lingua Romana* and the correct way to be a Roman linguistically, especially in a bilingual context, stretches across the centuries and is implicitly and explicitly, particularly in the case of Fronto, expressed in the correspondence explored here. Comparative analysis of the code-switches in these letters, systematically collected and analysed at: http://csrl.classics.cam.ac.uk/index.html, allows us to contribute an empirically based new perspective to the broader discussion of the entangled relationship between Latin and Greek language and culture, which is fundamental to our understanding of the Roman elite and what it means to be Roman.[9]

[8] Callahan (2004: 69) notes that '[w]ritten formats are often considered to be more formal, and formality constrains the use of code-switching. In speech as well as in writing, codeswitching tends to be restricted to certain genres'. For code-switching across time and space, see Gardner-Chloros and Weston 2015. For *Latinitas* and *Hellenismos,* see Clackson 2015b.

[9] The database was designed collaboratively by Elder and Mullen. Data collection was undertaken by them with assistance from Rob Stroud, who populated the

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Research into Ancient and Modern Code-Switching

Code-switching in writing can be defined as the switch from one language to another within a single text, comparable to the definition of spoken code-switching as the use of more than one language within the same conversation or sentence. It is distinct from other bilingualism in writing, such as translation, 'translingualism' (writing in more than one language or in a language which is not the mother tongue),[10] language choice according to literary genre and language shift over time.[11] Code-switching is characterized by its use by bilinguals and its relative spontaneity (or, perhaps better, in the written medium, its flexibility and lack of fixedness), whereas 'borrowing' designates forms incorporated into the receiving language and used by monolinguals. This might sound straightforward, but identifying switches can be problematic.[12] We should remember that borrowing and code-switching reside on a continuum and that the linguistic classification is not attached to the words absolutely, but may depend on the time period, context and linguistic groups, together with the preferences of the individual. Indeed, the same word can even be used by the same author at different times as a borrowing and as a code-switch, for example Cicero's *sittybae*, which is discussed in Chapter 3. Modern sociolinguists struggle with a range of problems in diagnosing and analysing contemporary code-switching,[13] but these are multiplied when we tackle ancient written material. For example, as we shall see, it is not always clear what might constitute a borrowing: since we are dealing with such a restricted volume of the total spoken and written evidence

syntactic and grammatical fields in the database for the corpora, with the exception of *Ad Atticum* and *Ad Quintum fratrem*.

[10] Kellman 2000, 2003.

[11] See Gardner-Chloros and Weston 2015, for further discussion of literary code-switching.

[12] See, for example, Langslow 2012 and Mullen 2012, 2013a, for the difficulties of distinguishing between code-switching and other bilingual phenomena.

[13] We should not assume that it is 'easier' for modern linguists to assess code-switching. Problems for them include the over-abundance of material and the fact that practitioners of code-switching are sometimes embarrassed and therefore misreport or avoid it under examination.

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from the ancient world, it is often difficult to trace the extent of a word's integration, and commentary on the practice is not easy to find.

Studying Classics has always entailed an appreciation of bilingualism and biculturalism and yet only more recently has full engagement with modern bi- and multilingualism theory and practice begun.[14] Pioneering work by Adams and others built explicitly on earlier analysis of bilingualism in literary texts, such as Cicero's epistolary output and the representation of linguistic varieties in authors such as Plautus and Petronius,[15] but expanded the view to take into account the mass of work in modern bilingualism studies. This encouraged others to venture systematically beyond literature, initiating a wave of research on a range of non-literary outputs, for example on papyri, wooden tablets, lead sheets and *instrumentum domesticum*.[16] In particular, the specific bilingual phenomenon of code-switching was identified and explored in a range of ancient sources.[17] In turn, and partly inspired by Adams' publications,[18] modern code-switching research, which has focused on the oral,[19] has started to consider written evidence as an extension of its domain. In recent years, a number of studies have focused on computer-mediated communication, inspired by the resemblance to oral discourse of much writing in blogs, emails, SMS, Twitter and so on.[20] There has also been

[14] See, for example, Adams 2003a; Adams, Janse and Swain 2002; Biville et al. 2008; Cotton et al. 2009; Mullen 2013a; Mullen and James 2012.

[15] Studies of Greek in Latin literature have been undertaken for centuries and include the following: Dean 1918a, 1918b; Housman 1910; Rose 1921; Shipp 1955; Steele 1900.

[16] We know that contextual uncertainties arise with literary sources; in non-literary, archaeological material such as funerary epigraphy or inscribed pottery the contextual holes are often even deeper; see, for example, Mullen 2013b for the problems in the interpretation of apparent code-switching in the La Graufesenque graffiti.

[17] For work on Greek in Latin literature, explicitly using the concept of code-switching, see Adams 2003a *passim*; Dubuisson 2000, 2005; Jackson 2014; Jocelyn 1999; Pelttari 2011; Rochette 2007, 2013; Swain 2002, 2004; Uden 2011; Valette 2014; Wenskus 1993, 1998, 2003.

[18] Adams 2003a is cited as representative of the work in Classics several times; see, for example, Sebba, Mahootian and Jonsson 2012.

[19] This no doubt stems from the belief in sociolinguistics that the oral is the spontaneous and natural form.

[20] See, for example, Sebba, Mahootian and Jonsson 2012.

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a concerted effort to consider written code-switching more broadly, including in literature, with a growing awareness that this material can be usefully studied and compared with the oral evidence, despite the usual disciplinary boundaries, which mean literary material does not always fall under the jurisdiction of linguistics departments. This drive has been spurred on by the growth in the study of literary multilingualism more generally and by several high-profile texts employing code-switching (e.g. Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth*). As work into code-switching is broadening and deepening the questions seem to multiply and '[t]he three way relationship between spoken, written and literary multilingualism ... remains to be clarified'.[21] Our investigation of ancient letters tries to shed light on this relationship and to continue the discussion with modern sociolinguists, medievalists and others.[22]

The vast research output on modern code-switching comprises three main strands: sociolinguistic, grammatical and psycholinguistic.[23] This volume has been inspired by all three, and primarily by the first. For some considerable time, code-switching was considered an aberration and the result of poor competence.[24] The sociolinguistic approach of anthropologist Gumperz and co-workers stimulated a change in attitudes.[25] Code-switching came to be regarded as a phenomenon of competent bilinguals and as functional in their speech, with evidence used to demonstrate

[21] Gardner-Chloros and Weston 2015: 188.

[22] See Gardner-Chloros and Weston 2015. Written code-switching allows, for example, complexities in visual representation, such as page layout, images and writing styles, which require proper analysis; see Sebba, Mahootian and Jonsson 2012. For medieval code-switching, see Schendl and Wright 2011. The detailed analysis of code-switching in elite Roman letters should allow us to attempt to consider the similarities and differences between the code-switching found in Roman letters and early modern/modern equivalents, and between these and bilingual speech. For early modern/modern letters with code-switching, see, for example, the correspondence of Virginia Woolf, the eighteenth-century letters of the tenth Earl of Pembroke and his circle (Pembroke 1942), the Corpus of Early English Correspondence compiled by a team at the University of Helsinki (Nurmi and Pahta 2012), modern Spanish–English letters and notes (Montes-Alcalá 2005)) and between these and bilingual speech.

[23] See Gardner-Chloros 2009 for an overview.

[24] Weinreich 1953 is the *locus classicus*.

[25] See, for example, Gumperz 1982.

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that in circumstances where either of two languages could be used, the choice of language could make a difference to the meaning, based on several factors, including the external associations of the languages. A range of specific recurring functions of code-switching were identified, including quotation, interjection, reiteration and exclamation. The later Conversation Analysis approach, popular in the 1980s and 1990s, focused on conversational internal approaches and showed that the choice between the languages in turn-taking could be functional even in the absence of any reference to the external associations of the languages.[26] Negativity, for example, could be expressed simply by answering someone in a language other than the one just used. Both approaches (i.e. the text internal and the contextualized) should be employed in code-switching studies, ancient and modern. Indeed it is hard to see how the former can operate without the latter, given that a view that a code-switch has occurred in the absence of reference to external context indicates the analysis of the broader context.

Grammatical studies of code-switching were extensively pursued in the 1980s and 1990s and continue to this day, although exceptions to all the models (e.g. the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model pioneered by Myers-Scotton) and constraints proposed have led to a widely held view that this research can only ever produce tendencies rather than absolutes.[27] Chapter 2 explores the grammatical shape of epistolary code-switching from Cicero to Fronto and compares it to what we know about modern assessments of both spoken and written outputs. This analysis demonstrates that the MLF model proposed for oral code-switching is useful in general terms, but the application and revision of it in detail for Roman code-switching would not necessarily be a fruitful task; the claims of the MLF to universality have been challenged and, in any case, it is unclear what improvements to our understanding of Roman elite

[26] See, for example, Gafaranga 2009. For Conversation Analysis, see Auer 1984 and 1998a.
[27] For the MLF model, see Myers-Scotton 1993, 2002, 2006 and Chapter 2.

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