

Measuring bilingualism

One of the key aspects of investigating bilingualism in the individual is the issue of how exactly levels of bilingualism can be measured. It should be fairly obvious from previous discussion and the various aspects examined that *measuring* levels of bilingualism in the individual is an extremely complicated issue. As Baker (1993) states:

Defining who is or is not bilingual is essentially elusive and ultimately impossible. Some categorisation and explication is often necessary and helpful to make sense of the world. Therefore, categorisations and approximations may be required. ...Yet the simplification of categorisation often hides the subtle complexity of reality. Sorting often simplifies unsympathetically. Individual differences are reduced to similarities. Yet over-complexity can be frustrating and confusing. Complications can confound those needing order and pattern. The measurement of bilinguals attempts to locate similarities, order and pattern. (Baker, 1993:15,19).

Baetens Beardsmore (1986:85) points out that “any attempt at measuring the phenomenon is hampered by the elasticity of what is covered” and that such measurement should be made within the terms of reference for *a particular type of bilingual case* if one is to measure with any degree of accuracy “aspects of specific linguistic behaviour which typify a particular bilingual situation.”

In Reader 4, Skutnabb-Kangas (1981:194) considers “attempts to describe bilingualism and bilingual individuals to be more useful than attempts at measuring...” The added complication in measuring proficiency in bilinguals as opposed to monolingual speakers is perhaps highlighted by the way Bialystok (2001) refers to the different permutations of measuring the former, namely:

- the *absolute* level of the proficiency of bilinguals in each language relative to the competence of *native-speakers* (regarding which, however, we are mindful of the caveat mentioned earlier about the use of this term)
- the *relative* level of proficiency across the two languages or, as Bialystok (2001) puts it, “an estimate of the command of each of the bilingual’s languages with respect to the other.”

Readings discussing the *measurement* of bilingualism which accompany this module introduce the student to various aspects of the topic. However, despite addressing some of the same fundamental issues and methodological problems related to this area of study, students will realise that authors choose to structure the discussion differently. For example, Chin & Wigglesworth (Reading 1), based on their decision to concentrate on *developing* bilinguals, divide these into two groups, namely:

- Elective bilinguals (also referred to in the literature as secondary bilinguals): the measurement of bilingual proficiency being usually directed at ability and use in the *second language* only, and
- Circumstantial bilinguals (also referred to as primary bilinguals): the measurement of proficiency encompassing ability and use of *both* languages.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) (Reading 4) also refers to this differentiation (albeit in a less specific way) but chooses to structure the discussion by categorising measurement according to *methods*. Baetens Beardsmore (1986) on the other hand categorises various tests in relation to language domination and attitude etc. which *subsume* specific methods. Nevertheless, the student will realise that chosen readings compliment each other in many ways.

Reasons for measuring levels of bilingualism can be various, be it at the level of the individual, the community or nationally, as in a census for example. However, since this module is concerned with *individual bilingualism* rather than *societal bilingualism*, we shall confine our discussion to the former. Such reasons, for example, can be:

- to assess individual needs in order to allocate students to educational or linguistic groups
- to choose pupils as individuals or groups for research samples
- to assess the linguistic skills of individuals for specific jobs where bilingualism / multilingualism is required
- to assess the linguistic progress of individuals within an educational course when such assessment is usually of two kinds:
 - (a) formative
 - (b) summative

Formative testing

Formative tests are usually adopted to assess the progress of individuals on the basis of set linguistic criteria which usually encompass, for example, the four basic skills of speaking, listening, writing and reading. For this reason they are said to be criterion-referenced, which means that one would be assessed in certain skills *as an individual and without being compared with others*. An example usually used to illustrate criterion-referenced testing is the driving test which allows a driver to be on a public highway as long as he/she has the necessary driving skills as an individual. Just as in English language and other subjects in the school National Curriculum, pupils in Wales are graded at different levels of attainment in the Welsh language according to their performance against specific criteria.

Criterion-referencing is a crucial component in the process of *formative assessment* which provides teachers with specific feedback regarding a pupil's performance by pinpointing certain weaknesses, thus enabling remedial action.

Summative testing

Summative testing is usually applied at a certain terminal stage in an educational process. Although assessment can again be criterion-referenced in terms of being based on an individual's attainment of specific skills (as in the above example), it

is also *norm-referenced* by being compared with *the attainment of others*, thus enabling the individual's score to be incorporated within a general level of attainment and placed, for example, within a certain quartile. Such a procedure also allows the general linguistic and academic achievements of individual schools to be compared with other educational establishments. Quoting the evidence of researchers such as Thomas & Collier (1997) in Reading 1, Chin & Wigglesworth (2007:) state that the adoption of norm-referenced tests "is widely recognised as being problematic" in assessing simultaneous bilinguals brought up to speak two languages since such tests, usually based on monolingual norms, can put bilinguals at a disadvantage. Reading 1 refers to methods discussed by Saenz & Huer (2003) which are designed to minimise the bias in the assessment of bilingual children, such as *renorming* and *dynamic assessment*. However, as will be shown in a later module (Cognitive Aspects of Bilingualism, ECDA-7004), the concern that such norm-referenced testing can cause simultaneous or circumstantial bilinguals to appear comparatively linguistically limited and cognitively deficient has been convincingly countered for many years by substantial and widely acknowledged research evidence.

As will be seen already from previous discussion of sub-skills etc., the identification of language criteria for testing purposes is problematic both in terms of definition and measurement. This is an aspect of assessment which will become even more evident as we later examine models designed to also accommodate *sociolinguistic* components in the measurement of language proficiency.

In Reading 4, Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) divides methods of bilingual measurement into two categories:

1. **measurement which is reported:** i.e. information which is provided by the speaker himself or herself, such as in a questionnaire or interview, and which also includes background data or language background scales, self-assessment and measurements of attitudes.
2. **measurement through observation** of the linguistic performance of the speaker by means of interview or participant observation during which *confirmation of data reported by the speaker* is sought. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), language tests used as part of the observation of linguistic behaviour can be divided into two categories:
 - (a) those designed to test the proficiency of *monolinguals*, (thus the need to test the bilingual speaker *separately in both languages*) and
 - (b) those designed to test a speaker's *bilingual* proficiency, thus providing the ability to make a comparable assessment of the languages involved.

1. Measurement by means of reported data

Interviews and questionnaires enable the collection of background data regarding when, where, with whom, as well as why a speaker makes use of different languages. As Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) mentions in Reader 4, the Hoffman Bilingual Schedule, for example, despite being published as early as 1934, is still used and contains questions regarding the productive, receptive as well as passive use made of language. Scores for each question have been weighted equally and

averaged for a bilingual score. However, such a procedure immediately highlights the danger of adopting a rather over-simplified approach to an extremely complicated set of variables, a practice of which Haugen (1964), for example, was rather critical (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981).

Reading 4 makes it amply evident that the range variables involved in the productive, receptive and passive linguistic experience of an individual, as well as the virtual impossibility of attaching a valid weighting to each variable, makes accurate measurement very difficult and problematic.

Baker (2008) highlights the deficiencies of language background scales in terms of the limited domains and interlocutors which tend to be included. However, a hypothetical situation described by Baker and Hinde (1984: 46) illustrates clearly that increasing the range of contexts and people covered by such exercises would not necessarily ensure the data's reliability:

A person who says she speaks Welsh to her father (mostly away at sea), her grandparents (seen once a year), her friends (but tends to be an isolate), reads Welsh books and newspapers (only occasionally), attends Welsh chapel (marriages and funerals only) but spends most of her time with an English speaking mother and in an English speaking school, might gain a fairly high 'Welsh' score.

Attention was drawn earlier to the fundamental issue of the difference between language skill (knowledge/ ability) and use; what Mackey (1962) refers to as *degree* and *function*. The measurement of language *proficiency* using questionnaires such as the Hoffman Bilingual Schedule, however, raises issues of dubious methodology. As Chin & Wigglesworth (2007:38) state:

While language background scales ...have been used extensively in bilingual research, they do not purport to measure the proficiency of speakers, rather their patterns of language use across a variety of domains.

Like Baker (2011, 2017), Skutnabb-Kangas (1981:197-8) lists a number of issues which make reported data very questionable, such as the past practice in Ireland of paying parents to speak Gaelic to their children. She nevertheless states that:

“If the above caveats are borne in mind as to the possible sources of error, background data can be used as one kind of measurement of bilingualism. The collection of background data is the easiest way of acquiring information about the use of language,” conceding, however, that despite the practical difficulties, a “more reliable way would be a lengthy period of participant observation.”

Bearing in mind that, as far as is humanly possible, accuracy must be considered to be paramount, it is difficult to see how this method can be recommended as a method of *measuring* levels of bilingual proficiency. In Wales, for example, due to a recent departure from past practice, the assessment of children's competence in the Welsh language for the purpose of the ten-year census is now the responsibility

of parents rather than head teachers with, arguably, questionable consequences. This introduces us to the next method of measurement, namely, self-assessment.

Self-assessment

With self-assessment, the speaker is expected to assess his or her own linguistic ability in terms of competence (degree) and /or usage (function). Such exercises can vary considerably in content and detail as is illustrated in Reading 4. Again Skutnabb-Kangas (1981:198) states that self-assessment “seems to be a fairly reliable way of measuring bilingualism”, referring to the Swedish Immigrant Survey as evidence, but yet points to various pitfalls which can affect data reliability. These include, for example:

- the status of the L2 (or even the L1) within the community
- the amount of contact with either language
- an individual's own linguistic standards and self-expectations
- the feed-back (verbal or otherwise) and attitude of native-speakers, as perceived by the speaker.

Reaffirming some of the issues mentioned by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), Baker (2017:30-31) also refers to various problems connected with the self-assessment of language proficiency, including among others:

- the *ambiguity* of questions which use words which can cover a wide range of linguistic proficiency as well as those which might not distinguish between ability and use of language
- the need to specify *domains of proficiency*
- the respondent's desire to identify with the language for reasons of status in an *additive* context or to do otherwise in a *subtractive* context
- the use of monolingual proficiency as a point of comparison.

We should also be mindful of issues of which the everyday speaker may not be aware. With regard to language proficiency, as previously discussed, Cummins (1984) distinguishes between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (what Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) referred to respectively as *surface fluency* and *academically related aspects of language competence*) which, generally speaking, distinguishes between everyday speech and conceptual language of a more academic nature. With regard to the process of self-assessment, linguistic fluency in terms of dealing with everyday topics and within familiar domains may prove to be misleading when faced with domains and terminology with which a speaker is less familiar.

Despite the limitations attached to the measurement of linguistic proficiency by self-assessment methods, nevertheless, as part of its European Language Portfolio, the Council of Europe has developed the European Language Passport. As mentioned in Reader 1 by Chin & Wigglesworth (2007), this is an instrument which allows self-assessment to be made in various areas within the four basic skills, namely:

- Understanding (Reading and Listening)
- Speaking (interaction and production)
- Writing

Assessment is made on a six-point scale covering advanced, intermediate and beginner levels of proficiency.

Again, as seen previously, it is arguably evident that there are too many variables involved in self-assessment to make it a measurement which is reliable and in which one can have complete confidence.

It is this issue which underpins Skutnabb-Kangas'(1981) discussion under the subtitle "Measurement or description", pointing out that background data can be better used to *describe* the choice and use of language rather than to *measure* its level of proficiency, with the implication that the latter is unreliable. Such an implication is made more explicit by stating that, when used for measuring, "the variables have to be restricted so that one single measurement can be produced", adding that "the choice of variables is crucial, and will at the same time also be a measurement of the researcher's ideological and political priorities." (Skutnabb-Kangas,1981: 201).

Attitudes

In relation to the study of attitudes to languages, Baetens Beardsmore (1986:99) in Chapter 3 provides various examples of research which reflects established methodology (including the Likert scale and Lambert's *Matched Guise Technique*) to which the student is advised to give some attention. Although examination of this aspect of research, *ethnolinguistics*, is closely related to sociolinguistics which will be studied in the next module (ECDA-7011), yet there is also a strong link between attitude and motivation and success in second language acquisition, into which much research has been carried out. Chapter 3 also later links attitude and motivation with *bilingual competence* and discusses such matters as the concept of *instrumental motivation* and *integrative motivation* for example.

It should be noted that the chapter also proceeds to discuss research relating to cognitive issues and the relationship between bilingualism and intelligence which again will be studied in a later module (ECDA-7004). It also addresses issues of attitudes towards languages and language users. However, the content has a predominantly sociolinguistic dimension.

2. Observed linguistic behaviour

The measurement of linguistic behaviour (both productive and receptive skills) by means of reported data can be confirmed by adopting observational methods, the most objective of which are those which assess language proficiency by means of tests. Again, however, with regard to reliability, a most important caveat offered in Reading 4 is for us to be mindful that:

Many linguists still doubt that we know enough about language, language learning and linguistic proficiency to be able to construct adequate, varied, objective, linguistic tests. (Skutnabb-Kangas,1981:206).

Reading 4 points to the fact that tests designed to measure linguistic proficiency can be classified as:

1. those which aim to examine the proficiency of the monolingual speaker and where the monolingual *native-speaker* is the point of reference to make comparisons and

2. those which are designed to examine bilingual proficiency.

The adoption of tests in the first category are designed to assess the bilingual's proficiency against that of the monolingual in the latter's own language (based on the assumption that a bilingual is capable of achieving an equal level of proficiency in that particular language), whereas tests in the second category assess the differences between the monolingual speaker and the bilingual speaker i.e. the linguistic attributes of the bilingual.

The student will infer that this categorisation corresponds generally to the differentiation made by Chin & Wigglesworth (2007) between elective bilinguals and circumstantial bilinguals. As Chin & Wigglesworth (2007) also mention, the question of whether the proficiency of balanced bilinguals should be assessed against the norms of monolingual native-speakers is a matter of debate. Grosjean (1989) argues that a bilingual speaker is not the combination of two monolingual speakers, a point of view also shared by DeGroot & Kroll (1992).

Tests using the monolingual as the point of reference or the norm

In Reading 1, Chin & Wigglesworth (2007) refer to the following kinds of tests as mentioned by Henning (1987):

- Proficiency tests
- Achievement tests
- Diagnostic tests
- Placement tests

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), however, divides these into 3 categories, namely:

- (a) pedagogically orientated tests
- (b) linguistically orientated tests
- (c) psychologically orientated tests

(a) Pedagogically orientated tests

These are tests usually related to language teaching in order to determine the level of proficiency in the L2 either before or after undertaking language tuition. They concentrate on assessing proficiency in the L2 and do not usually take account of the L1 since they are used for such purposes as assessing the individual for tuition through the medium of the L2, for example. As Reading 4 mentions, these have been criticized for not being related to any linguistic theory.

For example, despite its more recent contribution to pedagogy, adequate attention has perhaps not been paid in the past to studies in interlanguage which, as previously explained, see this phenomenon as a series of developmental stages during which the learner constructs his/her own grammatical rules in the process of moving towards the norm of the L1 native-speaker.

(b) Linguistically orientated tests

The criticism levelled at linguistically orientated tests for not being able to accommodate the intricacies of real, everyday social contact is widely acknowledged, as we shall see later when discussing sophisticated models designed to give due attention to the range of variables involved in the process of measuring language proficiency. However, as Reading 4 points out, despite the validity of such criticism, we should be careful not to 'throw the baby out with the

bathwater' by ignoring the usefulness of such tests in particular contexts, since they can be informative in pinpointing specific deficiencies in the process of linguistic development.

(c) Psychologically orientated tests

See Reading 4 (Skutnabb-Kangas,1981:209)

Bilingual linguistic proficiency tests

Tests have also been developed which treat bilingual proficiency as a unified linguistic system, unlike the past tendency of testing languages separately using the monolingual native-speaker as the point of reference or norm. As Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) states, that was a practice which represented a “two-code” theory of language proficiency or what Cummins (1981) refers to as the Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) Model (see Baker, 2017:157-158).

Reading 4 also draws attention to the fact that this reflected negative attitudes towards bilingualism, “the description and enumeration of the characteristics of bilinguals as though they were the symptoms of a disease, a deviation from the healthy norm represented by monolingualism” (Skutnabb-Kangas,1981:2010). As Baker (2017:157) also shows, such prejudicial attitudes reflected the generally-believed ‘Balloon’ or Balance Theory which perceived languages as existing and operating separately in the brain, the development or the ‘inflation’ of L2 being at the expense or ‘deflation’ of L1. However, as we shall see in module ECDA-7004 (Cognitive Aspects of Bilingualism), current thinking reflects the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) Model and the ‘Ice-Berg’ analogy (Baker, 2017:158-159) which sees the bilingual cognitive process as emanating from a single, *unified* operating system.

Balance or Dominance

Baetens Bearsdmore (1986:90) states that the attempt to measure language dominance in bilinguals “represents a hazardous venture for which some intriguing solutions have been proposed.”

The term ‘dominant bilingual’ is often used to refer to a bilingual person who has greater proficiency in one language, the term ‘subordinate language’, therefore, used to refer to the weaker of the two.

Bilingual proficiency tests seem to reflect a fundamental belief that balanced bilingualism is a state of linguistic proficiency at which one should aim as well as the premise that the more equally balanced the two languages are, the more bilingual the speaker is likely to be. However, despite the common tendency to equate the term *balanced bilingual* with an effective command of *both* languages, the use of *balance* as a measurement is flawed since the criterion of ‘balance’ does not necessarily go hand in hand with fluency or proficiency, as we saw earlier in our discussion of semilingualism.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) also refers to Fishman’s (1968) criticism of the use of balance as a measurement of bilingualism since, in diglossic societies where different languages are often used for different functions, linguistic proficiency can vary across a range of domains. From a *sociolinguistic* point of view, Fishman’s (1968) well-acknowledged contention that functional differentiation is a means of sustaining a diglossic society may well be valid. However, with regard to *measuring bilingualism in an individual*, the inability of a so-called ‘bilingual’ speaker to use

one of his/her languages fairly competently in certain domains is something which can hardly be ignored.

This issue also relates to the measurement of dominance (as opposed to balance). In criticising the measurement of dominance, Reading 4 clearly defines 'dominance' emphatically in terms of language *use* as well as ability, stating that the results of dominance testing can be skewed by limiting the domains chosen for the test:

Before the dominance measurement can be used as a measurement of bilingualism, *the bilingual's linguistic ability should be tested in a number of different domains* to guarantee that the content of the test material is representative at least to a certain extent. As long as the dominance measurement uses material *that takes no account of the domains in which a bilingual might be dominant* in which language..., the measurement of dominance that results will be largely a matter of chance. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 2011-12) (emphasis added).

However, Baetens Beardsmore (1986:90), whilst acknowledging the validity of Dodson's (1981) use of the term 'preferred language' in relation to functional specialisation or domains of *use*, yet seems to define dominance fundamentally in terms of *ability*:

With the late bilingual...it is highly unlikely that the second language becomes dominant in the sense of *the language of primary grammatical functioning*, though this may well become dominant in the sense of most frequently used or preferred. (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986:90) (emphasis added).

Although clear signs of dominance are not easily discernable as a rule in cases of early bilingualism, thus possibly reflecting a balanced level of proficiency, yet, as pointed out, balanced proficiency achieved by means of a *consecutive* rather than a simultaneous process might well lead to dominance in certain *domains*. The student might well detect a certain level of ambivalence at this point with regard to how dominance should be defined, and the recurring dichotomy of degree (ability) and function (use).

Whereas specific aspects of *interference* (see above) in the subordinate language would seem to be an obvious, albeit possibly superficial, measurement of dominance, Baetens Beardsmore (1986) provides details of a wide range of other methods which have been adopted for this purpose, including those relating to tests of speed.

Tests of speed

Tests of speed cover both productive and receptive linguistic skills. Such tests seem to be based on the premise that the quickness in which an individual responds to stimuli, or functions in a particular language, reflects a certain level of

proficiency. In comparative terms, the quicker the response in one language (or the greater the production within limited time) is also taken to signify the dominance of one over the other. However, again, one should not confuse dominance with competence. It is obvious how an individual can be competent in two (or more) languages but dominant in one or, conversely, dominant in one but at a relatively low level of competence. Such tests have included:

- the *speed of response* to instructions in both languages or in a word association test
- the *number of words* produced within a given amount of time in response to a stimulus
- the number of words memorised within a limited period of time
- the number of words created in both languages from a nonsensical word, the letters of which are representative of both languages. Baker (2017:29) gives DADSONODEND as an example
- the time taken to read in both languages.

It is common for a bilingual's reaction to be slightly longer either in one or both languages than that of the monolingual person, especially in cases where the stimulus could be in either language or when there is uncertainty regarding the language in which the stimulus is likely to be. However, in relation to the validity of applying speed as a criterion to the *use* of language, Reading 4 again raises some important issues since such a criterion has little value in certain cultures (Fishman, 1968:24-25) and no practical importance in most linguistic contexts (Mägiste, 1979:99).

Baker (2017:29) also mentions other valid issues related to dominance and balance tests, especially in terms of being representative of the level of proficiency since "such tests would appear to tap only a small part of a much larger and complex whole (language ability or language use)."

Tests designed to focus on the assessment of specific aspects of language, whether it be ability, use, balance or dominance etc, inevitably fail to encompass wider components which may impinge on the aspects being tested.

The emphasis placed on *testing* during what Spolsky (1976) described as the psychometric-structuralist stage in the development of language testing, tended to ignore the real-life, everyday situations in which language is used. As Baker (1993:26) states:

In attempting to assess a bilingual's competence in two languages, there is a danger of using a simple paper and pencil test, believing the test will provide a faithful estimation of everyday language life. ...In order to collect data which is realistic and representative, we need to know how situations (domains) relate to one another. We also need to know the sample of language performance that relates adequately to all round language competence and what examples of test performance relate strongly to language competence. This demands an overall model or theory of language competence. (Baker,1993:26)

Baker (1993) refers to the US Foreign Service oral interview as an example of more recent attempts in the testing process to incorporate communicative language skills related to real-life situations, stating however:

“There are doubts about whether such interview procedures can validly imitate and investigate real communicative competence. At the same time, they are a compromise between artificial pencil and paper tests and the impracticality of the detailed observation of individuals.” (Baker, 1993:27)

Models of Communicative Language Competence

In further efforts to accommodate the ‘real’ everyday aspects of social discourse in the testing of language proficiency, other more sophisticated models of Communicative Language Competence have been developed which aim to integrate various linguistic, sociolinguistic and socio-cultural components in an overall assessment and measurement. Chin & Wigglesworth (2007:3) state that “the impact of social, psychological and cultural variables on the bilingual individual is ultimately central to the experience of being bilingual.”

Baker (2017:13) points out that the earlier language theories of the 1960s tended to concentrate only on *linguistic* skills and components in relation to the individual’s competence and failed to involve aspects of *negotiating the contribution and role of others*, as found in real conversation. Yet, Malherbe (1969:50, quoted in Baetens Beardsmore (1986)) provides early indications of questioning the validity of such an approach:

It is doubtful whether bilingualism *per se* can be measured apart from the situation in which it is to function in the social context in which a particular individual operates linguistically. The only practical approach ... is to assess bilingualism in terms of certain social and occupational demands of a practical nature in a particular society...Purpose and function are the main determinants.

As Baker (2017: 13) points out, various holistic models of language competence have been developed, the most widely accepted being *communicative competence* which reflected Hymes’ (1972) view of language proficiency and was “in direct contrast to Chomsky’s cognitive theory of language with its narrow focuses on the ability of native speakers to produce grammatically correct sentences.”

Baker (2011:14) therefore, presents an illustration of such an approach, namely, Bachman’s (1990) Model of Language Competence which clearly indicates that there are a range of variables which need to be incorporated in a valid and reliable assessment of linguistic competence.

Language competence

1. Organizational competence
 - (i) Grammatical (e.g. syntax, vocabulary)
 - (ii) Textual (written and oral cohesion)
2. Pragmatic competence
 - (i) Illocutionary Competence (e.g. speech strategies, language functions)

- (ii) Sociolinguistic Competence (e.g. sensitivity to register, dialect, cultural figures of speech).

As Bachman (1990:84) states:

Communicative Language Ability can be described as consisting of both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized, communicative language use."

A similar model illustrated in Baker (2017:13) reflects an earlier approach by Canale & Swain (1980) which developed Hymes' (1972) construct and identified four dimensions of communicative competence:

- grammatical
- discourse
- sociocultural
- strategic

As Jones (1997) points out, the advantages of using the Communicative Competence Model in studies of bilingualism have been highlighted by Baetens-Beardsmore (1986). Its theoretical basis is important since it concerns not only the grammatical knowledge of languages used by the speaker but also the social aspects and implications of their use. It can, therefore, provide a more comprehensive explanation of the bilingual's linguistic behaviour. In terms of what makes the language of a bilingual different from that of the monolingual, it can investigate wider issues than those of a purely *linguistic* nature attributed to interference. As Baetens-Beardsmore (1986: 46) shows, and as was also mentioned earlier in relation to code-switching, the use of more than one language within a conversation is not necessarily an indication of linguistic weakness:

...a bilingual in communication with another bilingual who shares the same linguistic background may feel free to use both of his language repertoires on the assumption that communication may well be enhanced by using elements from two languages- if so, there is no question of impaired communication brought about by what has traditionally been considered as interference.

Such a theoretical framework can also accommodate other linguistic phenomena, such as the use of interlanguage in the communicative process (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1986) as well as fossilization when individuals reach an 'acceptable' level of communicative competence and develop no further (Jones, 1987). However, another aspect of linguistic behaviour which can be incorporated within such a framework is Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT).

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Sachdev & Giles (2006:355) in Reading 5 define Communication Accommodation Theory as an attempt "to model the motives and evaluations of switching in terms of a balance of social psychological processes focusing on social integration and

differentiation” thus reflecting the fact that “individuals use communication, in part, to indicate their attitudes toward each other and, as such, communication is a barometer of the level of social distance between them. This constant movement toward and away from others, by changing one’s communicative behaviour, is called *accommodation*.”

Reading 5 refers to various aspects of accommodation including that of:

- *convergence*, whereby individuals adapt their speech by adopting features mentioned as being: linguistic (e.g. accents); paralinguistic (e.g. pauses); non-verbal (e.g. smiling): the objective being to become “more similar to their interlocutor’s behaviour”;
- *divergence* defined as “an accentuation of language (and cultural) differences”;
- *maintenance* which simply characterises the desire to maintain the usage of one’s native language without the attributes of divergence.

However, as the Reading illustrates, both convergence and divergence as features of linguistic behaviour can be further analysed, for example, as being ‘upward’ or ‘downward’. The Reading goes on to examine motives which underpin the adoption of such linguistic strategies (including among others the desire to gain the approval of the recipient interlocutor) and provides further illustrative examples of both positive and negative aspects of such motives. It also highlights the power dynamics related to the concept of the ‘intergroup’ and the issue of social identity. Finally, Sachdev and Giles (2006) provide what they refer to as a Social-Psychologically Oriented Model of Bilingual Accommodation which enables one to further examine three classes of variables which can have a crucial role in the process of bilingual communication, namely, those relating to:

- the societal intergroup context
- the sociolinguistic setting
- the social psychological processes.

As the Reading points out by quoting Coupland & Jaworski (1997: 241-242), what started out in the 1970s as a concept related to the evaluation of the monolingual accent has since developed into an “interdisciplinary model of relational and identity processes in communicative interaction.” The student will, however, immediately acknowledge and understand the relevance of CAT to the Communicative Language Competence models previously discussed as a further, small yet important cog in a much larger wheel and a very valid component in terms of placing the measurement of pure *linguistic* skills within a wider *sociolinguistic* context. In other words, it provides a means of accommodating any psychological and micropolitical variables which may exist in the interface between degree and function.

The study of Communicative Accommodation Theory in Reading 5 also takes us in the direction of the wider field of group and societal language dynamics and the realisation that the dimension of *function* makes the line between individual and societal bilingualism very thin and permeable, as we shall find out in the next module, ECDA-7011, Societal Bilingualism.