

Codeswitching in War and Peace

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Introduction

The language employed by L. N. Tolstoy in his monumental novel War and Peace is richly varied and intricate in design. His dialogue conveys with clarity and intense vividness the multiplicity of voices of the aristocracy, the military, the peasants and other groups, expressing a wide range of attitudes and emotions. Diverse characters, such as Pierre, Natasha, Andrej, Helene, Kutuzov, and many others are differentiated by their speech with a remarkable subtlety only attainable through the precise and intricate manipulation of language.

One of the most interesting and specialized aspects of Tolstoy's use of language in the novel is the prominence of the French language in dialogue and letters. The inclusion of French lends to the characterization of the Napoleonic era in Russia a realism that would be difficult to capture in any other manner. More importantly Tolstoy's use of French in his characters' speech serves as an effective stylistic device for conveying information relevant to the interpretation of the work itself. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the consideration of such language material can be applied to a literary analysis and to suggest the extent and variety of such information indirectly conveyed in the language use pattern of the novel's characters.

Although there exists a substantial body of criticism on Tolstoy's style, relatively little of this writing is concerned directly with Tolstoy's use of language from a linguistic point of view. A great deal less of a systematic nature has been written about the use of French in War and Peace. A prominent view that has been put forward is that the alternation of French and Russian in the novel's character speech is used by Tolstoy primarily as a means of evoking a central meaning important to the thematic structure of the work (N.N. Naumova, 1959). According to this view, such variations in language usage serve to discriminate the positive characters of the novel, people of essentially high moral character who are closer in spirit to the Russian people (masses), from other characters, cut-off from the masses, whose behavior is seen as false and often deceitful.

The former category is said to include notably Pierre, Andrej, Natasha and the Rostov family in general, all of whom use French infrequently in the novel. The latter set includes such characters as Helene, Anatole, and Hippolyte Kuragin among others, who speak French extensively. Tolstoy's selection of Russian or French for those of his characters who are bilingual is also seen as a device for distinguishing occasions when they are expressing sincere, moral feelings and ideas from other moments when their speech reveals false or insincere behavior. For example, it is argued that Pierre expresses his feelings of love for Natasha in the Russian language because these feelings are sincerely felt. On the other hand, his feelings for Helene are expressed in French presumably because there is something less than honest or good about what he feels for her.

The use of the French language by characters is also interpreted as a means of expressing certain feelings and ideas of the author, specifically negative moral associations, connected with the French language. Naumov notes that in Pierre's dialogue with Captain Ramballe, Ramballe is able to express certain shameful and immoral thoughts with ease in French in a manner which tends to conceal their evil, while these same thoughts, had they been expressed in Russian, would have immediately revealed their true evil nature. In this same conversation it is noted that Pierre cannot tell Ramballe about his love for Natasha in the French language. Another example which is proposed deals with the use of French by Hippolyte Kuragin, the weak minded elder son of Prince Vasilij and brother of Helene, at one of Anna Pavlovna's soirees. Hippolyte, who always speaks French in the novel, attempts to tell an anecdote in Russian. His joke makes him look quite foolish and perhaps even stupid. Naumov claims that Hippolyte's exclusive use of French veils his inherent stupidity, which is instantly evident once he begins to express himself in Russian. What is argued from these examples is that Tolstoy uses the two languages to set up an invariable moral dichotomy between that which is false, unnatural and deceitful (bad) and that which is true, natural and sincere (good), with French signifying the negative qualities and Russian indicating the positive values.

There can be no doubt that the use of French and Russian adds a great deal of depth and verisimilitude to the novel. This becomes obvious by comparing the original text with any translation which fails to distinguish the use of the one language from the other, as both Maude and Garnet do by rendering all dialogue in English. It is also difficult to argue with the idea that the distribution of French and Russian usage has an important ideational significance for the novel. But all of this should be not be reduced to a simple ethical-didactic good/bad dichotomy at the expense of a more thorough analysis of bilingual usage in the novel. Overemphasis of such a dichotomy fails to catch many subtle and intricate nuances connected with the alternation of French and Russian in the novel.

Some aspects of Naumov's interpretation discussed above are contradicted by further evidence. For example, in the case of the passage about Hyppolite Kuragin, it should be noted that Hyppolite makes as big a fool out of himself on another occasion telling a joke in French. Other claims rely too heavily on the ethical opposition of "good" and "bad", where a more detailed analysis of the specific interactions involved and the social aspects of the context are necessary to understand the full significance of bilingual patterns. Investigations of the use of two or more languages by bilingual speakers in natural, everyday speech situations have shown that language switching of the sort found in *War and Peace* contains a variety of information on how one is to understand the words being spoken in relation to the particular context in which they are uttered.

The study of the significance of such switching is commonly understood to fall under the study of the pragmatic aspect of language, specifically the phenomenon of code switching. In this paper we begin with a general background section on the functions of linguistic code switching. This is followed by an analytical section which attempts to apply code switching to the analysis of dialogue from *War and Peace*, as a way to achieve greater precision in describing the interactions that occur in the work and in order to get at presuppositions and meanings relevant to literary interpretation.

The Code Switching Phenomenon

The use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction is called codeswitching (Trudgill, 1975). The varieties used may range from two genetically unrelated languages to two speech styles, of the same language, e.g. casual speech versus formal style. Other combinations, such as a switch from a standard variety to a regional dialect, are also included under this definition. The isolated usage of well established loan words or phrases, however, is not considered as part of the code switching phenomenon. Code switching which involves two genetically unrelated languages, such as the French/Russian code switching in *War and Peace*, is the simplest type to identify in a stretch of text (oral or written).

A speaker may switch codes for only one word or for longer stretches of speech. The other interactants in the verbal exchange may adjust their language behavior as a result of the code switching behavior or their behavior may remain unchanged. The most important characteristic of code switching is that this behavior is not performed in a random fashion. It is strictly rule governed, although the speaker may not always be able to consciously articulate these rules. The rules are primarily of a social nature in that the type of code switching that occurs may depend on such factors as the social roles of the interactants, the social situations in which the exchange is taking place, and a variety of other socially related factors.

Thus code switching is not simply ideosyncratic, whimsical behavior reflecting the speaker's individual choice, but conveys important information about the interrelationship(s) of the interactants and the social circumstances of the interaction (Timm 1975). The sociolinguistic rules that govern code switching are an integral part of the knowledge that the speaker must have in order to achieve his ends in interpersonal relations with other bilinguals. The listener must also have this knowledge in order to interpret the full meaning of the speaker and to make certain inferences about the speaker's intent in the specific context of the particular interaction taking place. Otherwise, effective communication cannot take place. Thus this aspect of sentence form -- the code in which an utterance is produced among bilinguals, can directly affect the interpretation of the utterance in the same way in which alterations in prosody, rhythm and voice quality affect the interpretation of utterances used by monolinguals.

Ordinarily code switching is classified into two basic types. The classification is based upon various underlying social constraints present at the time of switching which in fact make the code switching possible and even probable. The two types of code switching are: situational code switching and metaphorical code switching (Fishman 1972).

Code switching of a situational type is tied to a consensus on the part of a speech community that a particular linguistic variety is most appropriate when the conversation or interaction involves a particular combination of topics, persons, locations, and purposes. That is, distinct varieties are designated as most appropriate for use in certain settings (home, work, etc.) or certain activities (public speeches, personal conversations, etc.) or certain categories of people (friends, strangers, public officials, etc.). In such situational code switching ordinarily only one code is used at a time. There is almost a one-to-one correspondence between language usage and the social context. Each variety has a distinct position in the local speech repertory. Norms or rules of language usage are stable and well established in the community and code selection can be viewed as conformance or as nonconformance to such rules. Classic examples of such speech communities where situational code switching exists are the Hochdeutsch/Schweizerdeutsch variations in Swiss/German, the classical Arabic/colloquial Arabic variation in most Arab countries and the Katharevousa/Dhivotiki variation in Greek. In these situations typically the "high variety" (Hochdeutsch, Classical Arabic, etc.) are used for sermons, formal letters and lectures, and newspaper editorials, while the "low variety" is used in conversations with family and friends, radio programs, political and academic discussions and "folk" literature. Whenever a code is regularly associated with certain types of activities in such a manner it comes to connote these associations. Eventually its use even in absence of the other contextual clues can signal these activities.

The second type of codeswitching, metaphorical switching, also depends on socially defined usage rules as to the circumstances of code allocation, but the relationship of the language usage to the social context is much more complex (Gumperz 1976). In this type of codeswitching, the speaker utilizes and capitalizes on the understanding of the situational norms for code usage shared by himself and the listener(s) in order to communicate information about how the speaker's words are to be understood in this specific instance. The situational norm becomes thus a point of departure when relating a metaphorical message message (Gumperz and Hernandez, 1971).

This type of code switching is used to effect some specific set of inferences about the speaker's intent. Speakers rely on their sociolinguistically based knowledge about code usage to communicate (and decode) indirect conversational inferences. The monolingual also has devices available to him to accomplish similar types of ends, but the mechanisms available for manipulation obviously do not involve switching from one language to another. Even more commonly, he can alter the prosodic and rhythmic aspect of his speech. This greatly increases the range of options available to speakers to communicate indirect meanings in dialogues.

In general the grammatical distinction marking the two codes of the bilingual are a reflection of the contrasting cultural styles and attitudes with which these bilinguals deal in their daily encounters. The code associated with informal relations and in group activities is perceived as the "we code" while the code associated with more formal, out-group interactions is perceived as the "they-code" (Gumperz 1976). The associations influence the shifting of codes during interactions among bilinguals but are mediated by other aspects of the speech situation, such as discourse context and social presuppositions, so that they are not the sole factors involved in determining which code (or combination of codes) to use at a given time.

Code Switching in the Literary Dialogue of War and Peace

In this section we will consider instances of code switching occurring in opening lines of War and Peace, spoken by Anna Pavlovna Sherer as she greets her guest Prince Vasiliij. The code switches will be considered in terms of both the type of function it illustrates and the particular effect that the speaker aims to achieve in communicating to the listener how the utterance is to be interpreted. Although French dominates in this passage, there are four code switches to Russian. For purposes of discussion these are marked in the text below as C1, C2, C3, and C4 below:

"Eh bien, mon prince, Gènes at Lucques ne sont plus des apanages, des /C1/ pomest'ija, de la famille Bounaparte. Non, je vous préviens, que si vous ne me dites pas, que nous avons la guerre, si vous vous permettez encore de paillier

toutes les infamies, toutes les atrocités de cet Antichrist (ma parole, j'y crois) -- je ne vous connais plus, vous n'etes plus mon ami, vous n'êtes plus /C2/ moi vernyi rab, comme vous dites. /C3/ Nu, zdravstvuite. Je vois que je vous fais peur, /C4/ sadites' i rasskazyvajte."

Codeswitches C1 and C2 both involve approximate repetitions in Russian of what is said previously in French. In C1, the Russian word "pomest'ja" follows directly after the French word "apanages" creating a parallelism (des apanage/ des pomest'ja). Codeswitch C2 also involves the use of a parallel construction, but in the form of two sentences, both of which begin with the words "vous n'etes plus.." In the parallel rephrasing of the statement, the sentence is completed by a Russian phrase rather than a French one. Generally the function of repetitions involving a codeswitch is to clarify, amplify or emphasize the message. This occurs in the two examples cited, but each produces slightly different effects and different sets of possible interpretations.

The words "apanages" and "pomest'ja" are very close in meaning, both referring to land grant estates owned by the higher ranking members of society. The switch to "pomest'ja" however, carries greater associations of the Russian lands owned and governed by the Russian people. The use of this word with all its local contextual connotations can possibly be seen as an indirect means used by the speaker (Anna Pavlovna) to emphasize in her statement the point that, although at the present time the "apanages" of Napoleon may be far off in Italy, who is to say that the land he may divide up in the future will not include Russian "pomest'ja." The use of the word "pomest'ja" serves to activate in the mind of the listener psychological associations and no doubt strong personal feelings connected with it, e.g. ones own estate, that of one's friends and relatives, a whole life style. The aim of the codeswitch is to dramatize for the listener the threat of the Russian land coming under the control of the Bonapartes, who in spite of the dependencé of Russian royalty on French language and culture, are ideologically viewed as foreigners.

The second instance of codeswitching in the passage also involves repetition. Here the expression "mon ami" is followed by the Russian "moi vernyi rab" (my true slave). These two expressions, though similar in meaning, are much farther apart than are the words in the previous codeswitch. In French "ami" is the general word for a person with whom one shares a friendship. The Russian equivalent would of course be drug. The phrase "vernjy rab" represents a stronger expression of loyalty, devotion, and attention, far in excess of the more general word. There are certainly expressions in French which could come very close to conveying the connotations of the Russian expression. However, to understand the codeswitch in terms of its effect on the listener, it is necessary to examine briefly the probable usage of the Russian expression in the society represented in the novel and in the specific relationship between the speaker (Anna

Pavlovna) and listener (Prince Andrej).

On the societal level, the phrase is no doubt a part of the entire set of verbal phrase, gestures, and other behavior that convey the code of chivalry of the period with regard to relations between men and women of royalty. We can say with some degree of certainty that this expression was used by either the listener or the speaker in prior encounters. Indeed, the subsequent French phrase "comme vous dites" would seem to indicate that both the French "mon ami": and the Russian "moi vernyi rab" are derived from corresponding assertions by Prince Andrej. Quotation is another type of function in metaphorical codeswitching in conversation. The specific choice of Russian here, however, is significant for another reason. The precise word "rab" conveys a sense of humility, honesty, and simpleheartedness (prostodušie) which is less likely to be felt with the same intensity by the speaker and listener if a French equivalent were chosen. Second, it emphasizes their bonds of mutual membership in Russian as opposed to French society, in which they are in fact the leaders of the Russian people. The use of the Russian phrase "moi vernyi rab" with all of these associations, thus serves to underscore the interpersonal consequences to the relationship between Anna Pavlova and the Prince, should he continue to defend the action of Napoleon ("si vous vous permettez..."). Thus, here also, repetition of a similar form involving a codeswitch performs the conversational function of clarifying, amplifying, and emphasizing certain elements in the communication.

Codeswitches C3 and C4 are examples of another type of codeswitching occurring in conversation. They also function as a form of message qualification. However, whereas the preceding codeswitches performed a more localized function, C3 and C4 help to clarify the organization of all of the speaker's preceding utterances within this piece of discourse. The phrase "nu zdravstvuite, zdravstvuite" takes a form which from a societal standpoint might well serve as a more appropriate setting to the encounter that is taking place. It is precisely the sort of greeting that an invited guest like Prince Vasiliij can, and most likely does, expect to receive from a close friend such as Anna Pavlovna. The subsequent Russian phrase "sadites' i rasskazyvajte" may be seen as a natural outgrowth and continuation of this greeting. The choice of Russian as the language in which the greeting, albeit belated is delivered, functions in the conversation as a marker of the degree of speaker involvement/distance of Anna Pavlovna from various parts of her entire statement. Codeswitches C3 and C4 taken together fall into the category of metaphorical codeswitching indicating personalization versus objectification.

The code contrast at this point (starting with "nu...") conveys the varying degrees of speaker involvement in different parts of the message. The Russian portions of this latter part of the text are Anna Pavlovna's expression of her personal feelings and

relationship with her addressees, while the preceding portions of the text, which are in French, (albeit with skillfully and subtly inserted Russian words which emphasize and clarify particular points of her argument), is produced in the French language to emphasize the personal distance she feels from her arguments about Napoleon. In French she is expressing her opinions about a state of affairs in the world and these are the personal opinions of Prince Vasilij on this topic. But the Russian portions of the latter part of the text are an expression of her personal feelings and inclinations toward the Prince putting aside certain of his opinions on world affairs. The content of Anna Pavlovna's utterances produced in French are undoubtedly of no surprise to Prince Vasilij since they seem to have had at least one other discussion of the topic, as evidenced by Anna Pavlovna's use of "encore" in "si vous vous permettez encore de pallier....". This at least hints at the possibility that there has been a previous exchange of opinions between the two interactants on this issue before, and that she is particularly distressed by new events relevant to the topic.

The fact that such verbal strategies of objectification and personalization have not been successfully conveyed is evidenced by the phrase "je vois que je vous fais peur" inserted between the Russian phrases of codeswitch C3 and C4. This is not a continuation of the arguments presented in French prior to C3, but rather her metacomment on the undesired effect of her entire preceding statement.

The final phrase of this opening text, "sadites' i rasskazyvajte" is a well formed and appropriate closing to this set of utterances and is a mechanism to turn the responsibility of speaking next to the listener, that is, this phrase allocates a conversation turn to Prince Vasilij, simultaneously terminating Anna Pavlovna's turn in speaking as well.

Broader Application of the Analysis of Codeswitching in Literary Communication

In the previous section we have presented a microanalysis of codeswitching in a short piece of literary text using the descriptive apparatus that has been developed to analyze codeswitching occurring in natural everyday conversations among bilinguals. The analysis indicates that in cases of metaphorical codeswitching, both in literary and natural conversations, such behavior is meaningful. It involves the use of language for purposes beyond the communication of simple factual information, and carries great potential in communicating indirect meanings which are essential to the interpretation of speakers' intent in a conversation. In the case of literary texts, speakers' intent is, of course, the intent the author envisions for the character. What is generated by the analysis of codeswitching, however, is not a single interpretation of the speakers' intent, but, rather, a set of preferred or possible interpretations, i.e. certain

chains of inferences which are favored over others. This is the case in both literary texts, and texts of natural conversations. Thus, the interpretation is never invariant, but the reliability of the addressee's judgments as to the intended interpretation is a result of familiarity with the way in which different types of codeswitching are to be understood in particular contexts. In everyday life, this is achieved through socialization of a speaker/listener into particular types of interpersonal relationships in a social community and knowledge of the rules of ethnically specific traditions.

In the case of literary communication, i.e. in a created text, the analysis and interpretation of communication as produced by the literary critic, must be achieved with knowledge gained from familiarity with the social and ethnic rules of the community represented in the text. In certain types of literary texts, this knowledge may be gained by the study of the period/community, e.g. by the study of the society of early 19th century Russia, the study of non-literary sources, such as letters, diaries, and through the careful analysis of the characterization of the period by the author -- the creator of the entire work within which the piece of text being analyzed is embedded. This latter point is important, since as in the case with War and Peace, the period depicted in the novel may not be a totally accurate and objective rendering of the Napoleonic period, but rather Tolstoy's personal vision and understanding of the period. In fairness to Tolstoy, we do know that he spent much time going over actual letters, documents, and memoirs from this period in preparing to write the novel. The task of capturing in all detail an era which is not one's own is, however, a monumental one. In works which are not historical, critics would have to rely on information provided by the author about the situations, events, and other aspects of the context of the conversation in order to make judgments on possible interpretations of codeswitches.

The analysis of the opening lines of War and Peace as spoken by Anna Pavlovna, presented in the previous section, is an illustration of how codeswitching is meaningful in a literary text and how a particular descriptive apparatus can be applied to instances of codeswitching in literary communication. As the thrust of this paper is primarily methodological, there is no attempt to relate this analysis to any other portions of the novel (See Note 1). It is our contention, however, that the analysis of codeswitching is useful in the overall interpretation of this literary text, and that, in fact, codeswitching of both the situational and metaphorical variety are manipulated by the author to convey important aspects of the interrelationships between characters, the contexts of the other details essential to the reading of the text. A thorough analysis of the codeswitching patterns in War and Peace are bound to be an important aid to a more complete understanding of both the novel and the mechanisms Tolstoy employs which distinguish him as a stylist.

The analysis of codeswitching has broader applications to literary analysis than only in the work discussed here. There are numerous instances of codeswitching in other Russian works depicting 19th century society written by Tolstoy and other writers. Works of authors from many other periods and of other linguistic cultures can also be analyzed using this methodology. In spite of the promising potential of such an approach for many such texts, it should be kept in mind that the analysis of bilingual usage in literature can serve only as one of many tools for interpretation and not as an end in itself. The detailed analysis of codeswitching, using the particular framework and accompanying descriptive apparatus proposed here, offers information which must be integrated into a more complete analytical perspective.

NOTES

1. A further elaboration of this analytic approach applied to the dialogue of Tolstoy's War and Peace and to other works appears in D. Borke and O. Borke, The Sociostylistics of Literary Communication, ms.

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