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A trois de la clocke apres noone. *On writer's language use in some multilingual letters*

Switching between languages is a frequent discourse strategy of bilingual speakers: the number of empirical studies and theoretical models with different approaches – structural[1], functional[2] and sociolinguistic[3] – confirms the relevance of the phenomenon. The growing number of studies in Contact Linguistics has favored a new perspective of analysis of multilingual documentation of the past; this has been considered as an evidence of writers' bilingual ability and a likely reflection of their multilingual community, rather than a proof of their imperfect languages competence. Therefore, the presence of code switching and mixing phenomena in multilingual texts has encouraged a partial application of theories and models of Contact Linguistics, creating a new line of research, Historical Code Switching (HCS)[4] within the Historical Sociolinguistics framework. Therefore, in this place I consider intra-writer variation as writer's language choice and use within his/her multilingual repertoire. I examine the multilingual context of Medieval England: the high number of studies on English multilingual texts belonging to different textual genres within HCS framework does not lack of generalizations and approximations and makes this choice necessary. I analyze some *ego* documents, particularly the multilingual letters of the Welsh rebellion written by Richard Kyngeston, Archdeacon of Herford to king Henry IV in 1403, even though these letters were analyzed by Schendl (2002) within HCS framework. However, the reason of my choice lies in the fact that in Schendl's analysis contact phenomena are not fully individuated and examined according to Contact Linguistics models, making confusion between structural and functional approaches as well. Therefore, on the basis of the results I try to confirm the possibility to apply either internal or external approaches to contact phenomena to some particular multilingual texts of the past, even reflecting on the possibility of considering mixed language texts as a testing ground of Contact Linguistics theories.

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[1] Cf. Matrix Language Framework (Myers-Scotton 2002), and generative models (MacSwan 2009).

[2] Cf. Auer 1999.

[3] For sociolinguistic implications see Bullock / Toribio 2009: 14–17.

[4] One of the first collections of HCS studies on Multilingual texts of Medieval Britain is Schendl / Wright (2011) (eds).

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