
Ethnolinguistic Profile of the Canadian Metis (hereafter EPCM) is part of the Mercury Series produced by the Canadian National Museum of Man and distributed (most of them free of charge(!)) by the National Museums of Canada. The series consists of a number of valuable volumes dealing with various aspects of Canadian ethnography and native linguistics, and EPCM is no exception. A revised version of Douaud's 1982 Ph.D. dissertation (University of Alberta), EPCM provides a study of one Metis ("halfbreed") community in Alberta within the framework and methodology of ethnolinguistics.

Douaud chose as the object of his study a small Metis community of some 75 people centered around the Notre-Dame-des-Victoires Mission of the Oblate Order in the Lac La Biche area of Alberta. This was an especially fortuitous choice, for the community is characterized by a "triadic linguistic economy" — to use Douaud's terminology — involving English, French, and Cree, hence clearly of interest from a linguistic standpoint, and at the same time "is a closely bounded ethnographic unit with a known history" (p. 5). The community thus lends itself well to study from an ethnolinguistic perspective, in which the analyst is interested in linguistic usage as a reflection of ethnicity, perceived or real, and in ethnographically valid linguistic categories.

Douaud presents first a brief ethnohistorical sketch of the Metis people in Canada followed by more specific details on the Mission Metis community. The purely linguistic side of the Mission Metis multilingualism is then surveyed, and students of language-contact phenomena should take note of the interesting data here. The youngest speakers (ages 30-) are monolingual in English, although with some limited understanding of French and Cree, but all other generations show bi- and even tri-lingualism. The age 50-80 generation is the most fully multilingual, since the majority of such speakers (including all the males) have a good command of Cree, French, and English. Although Douaud observes (p. 46) that all three languages are of "roughly equivalent status" in the minds of the Mission Metis speakers, he contends (p. 29) that "Cree is the cement of this triadic [linguistic] economy," supporting this claim with the observation that "Cree is the historical source of some grammatical peculiarities of Metis French and English and tends to assimilate the structures of these languages to its own while each component of the triad keeps its autonomy for functional reasons." In the intermingling of these individual language systems, Douaud notes (p. 31), "French and English borrowings into Cree were largely lexical, whereas the Cree contribution was mainly phonological and morpho-syntactic." Thus the former influence, he notes, is essentially "speech interferences" while the latter is
"language interference" (using the terminology of Weinreich 1953).

Four key features showing this latter type of interference are identified: the palatalization of dental stops, the raising of mid vowels to high vowels, the treatment of gender, and the expression of possession. In the first two, illustrated by such Metis French pronunciations as [dzʁ əv] for de l'eau of water, or [tsʁ dzʁ] for tu dis you say, Douaud suggests that dialectal French processes of palatalization and vowel raising (i.e., found to a certain extent in non-Metis French dialects, e.g., in Canada) were reinforced in the French of the Metis by the occurrence of similar processes in the Cree of the Metis speakers. This hypothesis gains plausibility from the fact that Metis French shows a form of these features, e.g., symmetrical raising of [e] and [o] not found in other dialects (where, e.g., raising of the back vowel is more common than of the front vowel) but is found in Northern Albertan Cree.

In the latter two features, the interference from Cree is morphosyntactic in nature. Cree does not distinguish grammatical gender along the same features as French or English, having what is sometimes referred to as a [+/-animate] distinction, instead of a sex-based classification or a purely arbitrary one, and in particular has, corresponding to French il/elle or English he/she/it, but a single third person pronoun ([wiːya] in Plains Cree). Consequently, one finds Metis speakers using il and elle interchangeably referring to males or females, and similar mixing of the English forms. Finally, Douaud reports (p. 41) that Cree possessive patterns involving third person possession "as in ki-kosis o-masinahikan 'your son's book' (lit.: 'your-son his-book') . . . [have] been superimposed on the French and English regular word orders," giving, e.g., ma femme son père my wife's father (literally: my wife his [= her] father) or my sister, his boy my sister's boy.

These typical Metis features are at the basis of various stereotyping of the Metis in general, and continuing on in a more ethnographic vein, Douaud explores next the social context in which such stereotypes have arisen, discussing the patterns of multilingualism found in the Mission community, and working ultimately towards a consideration of how the linguistic multiplicity bears on the question of Metis identity. Multilingualism for the Metis is functional, "having long been indispensable to the survival of Metis communities" (p. 53). Moreover, the long division between Metis and non-Metis is reinforced by a "split between two cultural categories" which Douaud, following Scollon and Scollon (1979), calls "bush consciousness" and "modern consciousness". Both of these "world-views" can be found among the Mission Metis, but only the former is associated with multilingualism while the latter, evident especially among the younger generation, is associated with the discarding of "the traditional [linguistic] triad for a more obtrusive, style-conscious, one-coded repertoire based on English alone" (p. 53). Ultimately Douaud argues (p. 58) that the "fluidity of code use
[among the Metis] is necessarily accompanied by fluidity of identity," so that multilingualism is a vital part of the Metis self-image; Mission Metis identity, therefore, is something that is likely to die as such when the various institutions that have had a part in defining this micro-ethnic group, including both the Mission itself and multilingualism, cease to be functional.

Douaud has included two very useful appendices to this work. The first, eight case histories from among the primary informants in the study, yields a most interesting view of the people in the community and their attitudes. In the second, six texts — four narratives and two songs — are given, providing the reader with a first-hand look at the effects of multilingualism and how individual speakers manipulate the three linguistic and cultural systems. For example, in Boniface's narrative, representing a genre "well within the domain of mistapew (spirit helper) and windigo (cannibal spirit) Cree stories" (p. 79), one finds linguistic code-switching between English and French, e.g.: "... Anyway, ils ont mis la petite fille dans le bout du canot, et they pull that little canoe to the ... to the shore . . .".

Douaud's book thus offers a fascinating view of a unique community. At times it seems that more data could have been provided, and also that the analysis could be more objective in nature. For example, Douaud twice appears omniscient in informing the reader (p. 51) why speakers switched to English during the narration of an event that occurred with Anglophones (e.g., "indicating that he recalls the event in its exact context"), even though no independent evidence is given in either case of the speaker's motives in switching. A final disturbing feature, essentially stylistic in nature, is the somewhat scattershot approach to citations from other work of ethnographers and ethnolinguists, with several parallels being drawn, in a rather unsystematic fashion, with situations in rural Ireland, for example. Often, such allusions seem to serve no real purpose in terms of advancing understanding of the Mission Metis.

The book is produced well, with only a few, generally self-correcting typographical errors. Moreover, the photographs of the Mission itself, and of one of the households there give the reader a clear image of the smallness of the community and its position in the bush of Alberta. Despite the few lapses noted above, Douaud is to be commended for providing readers with insights into a remarkable linguistic community, one that is fragile and perhaps not likely to survive in its present form for too much longer.

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WORKS CITED
