

Code-Switching Among Bilinguals

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Abstract

Some linguists estimate that as many as two thirds of the Earth's population falls somewhere in the spectrum of bilingualism. Code-switching is a very complex linguistic tool and phenomena used by bilinguals to enhance communication. Often sub-conscious, the rule-governed behavior of code-switching exists in every bilingual speech community to create and share meaning beyond what is available to a single language. This essay will briefly cover bilingualism before going in-depth to explore code-switching investigating patters, behavior, motivating factors, and models used to analyze code-witching.

Keywords: code-switching, bilingualism, language borrowing

1. Introduction

Code-switching, switching between two or more languages and/or language varieties, often occurs in bi and multilingual communities. Using the assumption that code-switching follows a set of rules, this essay will examine patterns of code-switching, motivating factors behind switching, and will briefly discuss the models used to analyze code-switching among bilingual speakers. Before covering the analysis of code-switching patterns and behavior, this essay will first define bilingualism. It will then explain what code-switching is, the various types of switches that occur, followed by a look at its similarities to and differences from language borrowing.

2. Bilingualism

Before examining code-switching, bilingualism, the context in which it takes place, must be explained first. Crystal (2003) estimates that as many as two-thirds of the world's children are born into bilingual environments. Wei (2006) estimates that nearly one-third of the world regularly uses more than one language for communication. Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2003) estimate that nearly 50% of the world's population has the ability to speak at least two languages, Trask (2007) reports it is as high as 70%, while Baker (2010) places his estimate between these two estimates. But what qualifies an individual to be bilingual? The definition of bilingual is not as straightforward as some may expect. Trask (2007) begins his section on bilingualism with the following definition: "the ability to speak two languages" (p. 31). This answer is far too vague for the

purposes of this essay. Both Crystal (1997) and Baker (2011) point out that the obvious definition of bilingualism is not adequate. For a more accurate description, Grosjean (2010) proposes, "bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives" (p. 4); however, Crystal (1997) poses a number of intriguing questions exposing the vagueness of bilingualism that Grosjean's improved definition still fails to address: does bilingualism include people who use two languages irregularly, or not at all for long periods of time (dormant bilingual), or who have receptive comprehension of a second language, but lack productive skills (passive bilingual), or those who can read and write a second language, but lack oracy comprehension?

If one were to say that bilingualism is fluency in two languages, it would only apply to a small percentage of people (Baker, 2010), as people "who have 'perfect' fluency in two languages... are the exception, not the rule" (Crystal, 1997, p. 364). Crystal (1997) believes there is no clear level of proficiency that one must reach before a speaker can be considered bilingual.

Visualizing bilingualism on a continuum scale is possibly the best way to categorize it. On a continuum scale based on ability, the extreme minimalist end of the continuum would be incipient bilingualism (Baker, 2011). This would include a tourist with a few phrases memorized for travel purposes, or a businessman who knows a few greetings and pleasantries in a second language. The other extreme of this continuum would be perfect fluency in both languages, an idealized point called balanced bilingualism (Baker, 2010; 2011). These two superlative points on the continuum stand the danger of being too inclusive or too exclusive (Baker, 2011). This is one reason why estimates of bilinguals vary so greatly. Baker (2011) admits that defining exactly who is bilingual and who is not is "essentially elusive and ultimately impossible" (p.15).

3. Explanation of Code-Switching

3-1. Code-Switching Defined

Why do so many people use two languages? A possible answer might be: to "communicate with people of a different language background" (Crystal, 1997, p. 364). Similarly, as in the definition of bilingualism, Crystal (1997) emphasizes that this definition is not adequate. Bilingual to monolingual interactions do occur, where a bilingual speaker will use either their L1 or L2. However, interactions of this type are in the minority, as the majority of bilingual interactions occur in a bilingual society or speech community with other bilinguals (Crystal, 1997). Wei (2006) explains that these interactions are far more complex than bilingual/monolingual interactions. Based on a number of factors such as setting, listener, speaker, tone, attitude, and context, bilinguals will use "their different languages in a complex network of interaction" (Crystal, 1997, p. 364). This is where code-switching takes place.

The term *code-switching* was first coined by Einar Haugen (1950) and Uriel Weinreich (1953). It is sometimes referred to as language switching, language mixing (Crystal, 1997), code mixing,

language interlarding, or integration (Kebeya, 2013) and is found wherever bilingual speakers are (Cook, 2008). Kebeya (2013) summarizes Haguen's definition of code-switching as "a linguistic situation where bilinguals introduced a single unassimilated word from one language into another," (p. 225) which is no longer in use today. Weinreich (1953) simply defined code-switching as the practice of shifting between two languages. While this is more accurate to the currently held definition, it needs to be specified further. Beginning with research conducted by John Gumperz (Mahootian 2006), possibly as early as 1972 with Jan Blom (Gross, 2006), scholars currently define code-switching as "the process whereby speakers move from one language to another either within a single utterance or between one utterance and the next in the same interaction" (Bentahila & Davies, 1994, p. 75).

Code-switching consists of a matrix or host language, and an embedded or guest language (Mahootian, 2006). The matrix language provides the grammatical structure and system morphemes while the embedded language provides content morphemes "rather like putting the flesh onto the skeleton" (Cook, 2008, p. 177). However, it is not that clear as Kebeya (2013) found it difficult to differentiate between embedded and matrix language during intrasentential switching (see "Types of Codes-Switching"). Also, similar to code-switching versus borrowing (see "Code-Switching Versus Language Borrowing"), "no feasible criteria have been established that systematically distinguish the matrix language from the embedded language in all instances of code switching" (Mahootian, 2006, p. 514).

Language attrition or weakness has often been linked to code-switching (Mahootian, 2006). Fromkin et al. (2003) writes that in the early studies of bilingualism, code-switching in children "was taken as an indication that the child was confused or having difficulty with the two languages" (p. 375). Today most scholars assert that code-switching is a byproduct natural to language competence of more than one language, a normal part of bilingual language acquisition, and not a sign of language deficit (Mahootian, 2006; Fromkin et al., 2003). Gross (2006) describes code-switching as "a complex, skilled linguistic strategy used by bilinguals to convey important social meaning above and beyond the referential content of an utterance" (p. 509) and Mahootian (2006) writes that it is a "systematic rule-governed linguistic behavior" (p. 512). While code-switching is sometimes a conscious choice performed by design and on purpose, the majority of the time it occurs unplanned on a subconscious level (Mahootian, 2006).

3-2. Types of Code-Switching

Code-switching is often broken down into two main categories, intersentential and intrasentential, with scholars occasionally identifying a third type, tag switches (Mahootian, 2006). Intersentential switches occur when "one sentence will be in one language while the other sentence will be in a totally different language" (Kebeya, 2013, p. 228). Intrasentential switches are far more

complex with switching taking place "within the confines of a single sentence, constituent, or even word" and garner the most interest from linguists (Poplack, 2001, p. 2062). Poplack (2001) claims researchers "are unanimous in the conviction that it [an intrasentential switch] is grammatically constrained" (p. 2062). Bentahila and Davies (1994) report that while there are researchers who "have argued forcefully" (p. 74) for the existence of universal switching constraints (see "Models of Code-Switching"), research has been conducted that cast doubt on such claims.

In linguistics a tag "refers to a question structure usually consisting of an auxiliary verb plus pronoun, attached to the end of a statement" and the intonation of an uttered tag determines between the *asking* and *telling* function (Crystal, 2008, p. 476). Crystal (2008) notes that some grammars allow tag statements. Tag switches are code-switches that occur in the inclusion of tag forms from one language into a sentence of a different language (Mahootian, 2006). Not all scholars consider tag switches a separate category of switching. Bentahila and Davies (1994) consider tag switches as intrasentential switches and count them among fillers and parentheticals. Berk-Seligson (1986) considers them intersentential and counts them along explanations, idioms, and interjections.

Cook (2008) reports the results of one study that found 84% percent of switches are isolated to single words, 10% to phrases, and 6% were whole clauses. However, these numbers seem to vary greatly depending on the languages involved, generation, and age of the bilingual speaker. In the Bentahila and Davies (1994) study of French-Moroccan/Arabic speakers they found a considerable difference between younger and older generations. The most common switch for the older generation was whole clauses consisting of 25.5% of all switches, while the younger generation switched whole clauses only 5.6% of the time observed. The younger generation's most common switch was noun phrases at a 50% switch rate, while this was the older generation's second most common switch at 16.5%.

There is some debate that the use of intersentential and intrasentential switches signify a bilingual speaker's proficiency. Berk-Seligson (1986) and Bentahila and Davies (1994) both write that a number of studies claim and have shown that those with a higher proficiency in both languages tend to use more intrasentential switches while those with less proficient ability use intersentential and tag switches more often. Bentahila and Davies (1994) add that these patterns do not always hold true with all language pairs as they found with their research with French-Moroccan/Arabic speakers. Berk-Seligson (1986) also reports that her research with Hebrew/Spanish speakers showed no correlation between code-switching type and levels of proficiency and concludes that her findings "strongly dispute[s] the currently held notion that the ability to code-switch, particularly at the intrasentential level is a mark of bilingual's high competence in his/her two languages" (pp. 334-335).

3-3. Code-Switching Versus Language Borrowing

It is important to address the issue of code switching versus language borrowing as they are closely related, and in some cases they are inseparable linguistic features of bilingualism. Sufficiently differentiating code-switching from language borrowing is a well-established issue for scholars (Mahootian, 2006) and "most researches seem to agree that code-switching needs to be distinguished from borrowing" (Bentahila & Davies, 1994, p. 76). Even though unnecessary borrowing does occur, necessary borrowing is more frequent and occurs when a word is taken by a monolingual speaker from another language to fill lexical gaps, often occurring in topics such as food, technology, government, and religion (Mahootian, 2006). This essay will cover two types of borrowings common to the context of code-switching, established borrowings and nonce borrowings.

3-3-1. Established Borrowing

Fully integrated borrowings are usually referred to as established borrowings or loanwords (Baker, 2010; Mahootian, 2006). Established loanwords will be widespread among a monolingual speech community, used often and without knowledge of origin, and have been adapted syntactically, morphologically and phonologically to the recipient language (Poplack, 2001; Mahootian 2006). It should be noted here that by proper definition code-switches are not morphologically and phonologically adapted to the host language and typically established borrowings are single words while switches are utterances of longer length (Mahootian, 2006).

With a surface examination it may seem easy to point out a clear difference between code-switching and established borrowings; however, established borrowings do not occur instantaneously. The formation of established loans is a gradual process that begins with the introduction of a new word or phrase by bilinguals that will be adapted phonologically and morphologically into the host language, finally being adapted into monolingual usage (Mahootian, 2006). Other issues arise as well when trying to distinguish the difference between established borrowings and code-switching:

[L]ength of utterance does not offer a clear-cut distinction. Phonological adaptation also fails to be foolproof. For example, if a bilingual speaker has transferred the phonological system of L1 to L2 while acquiring L2 (in other words the speaker has an accent), it will be difficult to evaluate whether word X from L2 has been borrowed into an L1 sentence or if the speaker has code switched into L2. Most researchers acknowledge the shortcoming of using morphological adaptation as a guideline in cases where the switch may be only one word such as an adverb or an uninflected free morpheme. (Mahootian, 2006, p. 514)

3-3-2. Nonce borrowing

Nonce borrowings differ from established borrowings in that their use is spontaneous, not widespread, not recurrent, and used only by bilingual speakers (Poplack, 2001; Mahootian, 2006). Code-switching and nonce borrowings have many commonalities: both are spontaneous, not established, neither are they phonologically adapted to the host language, and there is no guarantee of recurrence (Mahootian, 2006). Mahootian (2006) also notes that while nonce borrowings are usually morphologically adapted to the host language, and code-switches are not, as mentioned earlier, morphological adaptation is not a foolproof criterion to distinguish one from the other.

Poplack (2001) believes that "distinguishing nonce borrowing from single-word [code-switching] is conceptually easy but methodologically difficult" (p. 2063). Baker (2010) suggests there is no clear barrier between code-switching and nonce borrowing as they form a continuum.

4. Analysis of Code-Switching

4-1. Code-Switching Patterns

The patterns of code-switching can be influenced by any number of reasons. Bentahila and Davies (1994) conducted preliminary research comparing language switching between two different generations of French-Moroccan/Arabic speakers. Their findings showed that while the number of code-switches was almost identical, the younger generations switched noun phrases more frequently, while the older generation switched whole clauses and conjunctions more often. Bentahila and Davies (1994) contrasted their data with similar studies and noticed a common pattern emerging, "young children tend to switch predominantly for single words, and in particular nouns" (p. 87) and older bilinguals tend to switch clauses and conjunctions; however, Bentahila and Davies (1994) felt that code-switching research aimed at children "tended to view the phenomenon rather differently from the switching used by adults" (p. 87). Upon conducting further research on young bilingual children, their new data directly contradicted their earlier findings. As a result Bentahila and Davies (1994) refined their conclusions to say that rather than rhetorical functions or structural constraints being the main factors affecting code switching patterns, "the circumstances in which bilinguals have encountered their two languages, the role these languages fulfill in the community and in the individual's lifestyle, the experience they have had of using them and of hearing others use them" (p. 91) are more influential.

4-2. Motivational Factors of Code-switching

Wei (2006) reports that "there is a widespread impression that bilingual speakers code-switch because they cannot express themselves adequately in one language" (p. 6). Code-switching due to a lack of knowledge in one language is indeed a recognized and valid trigger, but only one of many varied factors in a complex system that influences code-switching (Baker, 2010;

Gross, 2006). Code-switching is triggered not by linguistic factors, rather social and psychological factors are the driving force (Baker, 2010). Mahootian (2006) outlines four main types of functions:

Referential switching is motivated by lack of linguistic knowledge, lexical gaps, or fluency deficiency. Expressive switches occur where the switching act is a "comment about the speaker rather than the speech". The motivation behind transactional switching includes variables such as topic and the participants of the communication act. The fourth factor, metaphorical, motivates switching to affect the "extralinguistic message the speaker wishes to express, the effect the speaker wants to have on the hearer" (adapted from Mahhotian, 2006, p. 515).

Baker (2010) details a list of 12 common factors that have been identified to trigger code-switches which has been condensed and adapted into the list below:

1. emphasize a particular word or phrase
 2. a speaker does not know a word or phrase in one language
 3. express a concept without an equivalent in the culture of the other language
 4. reinforce a request
 5. clarify a point
 6. indicate deference, friendship, or family bonding
 7. a method of interjecting into a conversation
 8. ease tension and/or inject humor into a conversation
 9. reflect a change of attitude or relationship
 10. indicate the speaker's wish to elevate status, create a distance from the listener, or establish a more formal business relationship
 11. to exclude people from a conversation
 12. when certain topics are introduced
- (adapted from Baker, 2010, pp. 56-57)

Gross (2006) feels even seemingly thorough lists such as these are useful and a good place to start, but "these types of lists fail to answer the question of what motivates speakers to make the choices they do" (p. 508). Reviewing research by Howard Giles, Peter Auer, and Carol Myers-Scotton, Gross (2006) details three different approaches used to analyze and explain the motivations triggering code-switching beyond the ability of static lists. One approach postulates that "speakers are motivated by their desire for approval vis-a-vis their desire to disassociate themselves from the hearer" (Gross, 2006, p. 509). Speech convergence or divergence is used to either

increase or decrease social distance (Gross, 2006). Another theory states that the motivation behind code-switching is created by the speaker based on preceding and following turns in discourse. In this approach "social meaning is constituted locally rather than at societal level" (Gross, 2006, p. 509). Gross (2006) points out that, contrary to this approach, most scholars subscribe to the notion that the languages available in bilingual speech communities hold specific social and interactional meanings that participants consistently use to influence language choice. In the third approach Gross (2006) explains that code-switching is triggered by the speaker's desire to optimize the outcome of participation in a conversation by minimizing costs and maximizing rewards based on the code or language selection. These choices exist on a continuum with the two ends being either marked, unexpected or strange for the interaction, or unmarked, which would be expected language choices that meet the social norms for the particular interaction (Gross, 2006).

4-3. Models of Code-switching

Cook (2008) details two theories that attempt to explain the restrictions on where code-switching can occur, equivalence of structure constraint, or equivalence constraint, and the free morpheme constraint. In her study of Spanish/Hebrew bilingual speakers, Berk-Seligson (1986) details an additional constraint, size-of-constituent.

Equivalence of structure constraint states that:

Code-switches will tend to occur at points in discourse where juxtaposition of L[1], and L2 elements does not violate a syntactic rule of either language, i.e., at points around which the surface structures of the two languages map onto each other. According to this simple constraint, a switch is inhibited from occurring within a constituent generated by a rule from one language which is not shared by the other. (Poplack, 1980, p. 586)

According to the free morpheme constraint theory "code-switching is prohibited between a free and a bound morpheme" (Berk-Seligson, 1986, p.314). In other words a switch cannot take place "between a word and its endings unless the word is pronounced as if it were in the language of the ending" (Cook, 2008, p. 176). The size-of-constituent constraint says that "higher-level constituents, that is major constituents (e.g., sentences, clauses) tend to be switched more frequently than lower-level constituents, or smaller ones" (Berk-Seligson, 1986, p. 314). Berk-Seligson (1986) notes that a common exception to this constraint is the noun.

Based on Berk-Seligson's (1986) study, she concluded that neither the equivalence nor size-of-constituent constraint can be postulated as a universal model in their present form. Berk-Seligson (1986) remarks that the size-of-constituent or the equivalence constraint "must be restricted

to use in describing the code-switching of languages that are syntactically similar or else it must be modified, to a weaker formulation" (p. 334).

5. Conclusion

Code switching and bilingualism are without a doubt very complex linguistic phenomena that cannot exist without each other. Even though billions of bilinguals inhabit this earth, no single, solid, and precise definition of bilingualism can be agreed upon to more precisely estimate the number of bilingual speakers. Bilingualism, more specifically code-switching, is a powerful linguistic tool used to enhance communication. Code-switching, the often subconscious, rule-governed behavior, is a common, yet elaborate linguistic strategy that exists in every bilingual speech community to create and share meaning beyond that available to a single language, all the while triggered by any number of motivational factors.

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バイリンガル話者のコードスイッチング

ダイクス・ロバート

言語学者らによると、地球上の人口の3分の1が何らかの形でバイリンガリズムのスペクトラムに属するという。コードスイッチングはバイリンガル話者がコミュニケーションを向上させるために使う非常に複雑な言語のツール、またはメカニズムである。多くの場合は無意識的に行われるが、どのバイリンガル話者のコミュニティーにおいても一言語で表現できること以上の意味を表現するための規則的なコードスイッチングの行動がみられる。本論ではまず、簡単にバイリンガリズムについてふれた後、コードスイッチングのパターン、ふるまい、動機、そして、コードスイッチングの分析に使われるモデルについて深く考察していく。

キーワード：コードスイッチング、バイリンガリズム、言語の借入