CODE-SWITCHING

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Contents

Summary

Code-switching, as one of the most intriguing language contact phenomena, has been the focus of research for many disciplines from sociolinguistics and linguistics, through to anthropology, discourse and conversational analysis, and pragmatics, ethnography and anthropology. In light of its very complex nature and the various interdisciplinary approaches used for its investigation, it is not surprising that there is no complete consensus among scholars as to its definition and related terminology. The most relevant definitions, as well as the terminology of competing theoretical models of code-switching, are thus compared in order to help readers form not only a clear picture of the current state of affairs in the field, but an idea of how the concept has evolved until now. This is followed by an extensive section on the two most common approaches to studying code-switching. The first approach focuses on the sociolinguistic, pragmatic and conversational dimensions of code-switching. It explores the impact of extralinguistic factors on the linguistic behavior of bilingual speakers, particularly in terms of the language choices that they make as they alternate between different codes. The social meaning attributed to code-switching as well as social and psychological motivations for its occurrence are investigated both on micro- and macro-levels, providing interesting insights into the links between the speakers' language use and their identity. The second approach is quite different and is concerned primarily with the structural and linguistic dimensions of code-switching. Its main preoccupation is to explain the linguistic rules that govern code-switching, to identify the formal constraints that either allow or prevent code switches from occurring at certain points and to establish to what extent these are language-specific or universally applicable.

Finally, the attitudes toward code-switching are discussed.

1. Introduction

The second half of the 20th century and the past few decades in particular have seen an increased interest in the study of bilingualism/multilingualism and all phenomena related to it. The definition of bilingualism has evolved greatly from the narrow beginnings, when it applied only to speakers with native-like fluency in two languages. Much progress has been made since then and scholars have widened the scope of bilingualism to include those individuals whose competence in two languages may be far from balanced, those who use one of the languages on an irregular basis only or just in certain domains, but not in others. By the same token, code-switching as one of the most typical forms of bilingual discourse is now defined in more flexible terms than it was in 1953, when the pioneer of contact linguistics, Uriel Weinreich held the view that the ideal bilingual switched between languages in accordance with appropriate changes in the speech situation, but never in an unchanged speech situation, and definitely not within a single sentence. Code-switching today is mostly defined as the alternate use of more than one code (i.e. language, dialect, speech variety) in the same conversation or verbal interaction. As will be pointed out in the *Definitions and terminology* chapter, not all authors view code-switching in the same way and they do not always agree in as far as the terminology and the nature of the phenomenon is concerned; nevertheless, code-switching remains one the most common conversation strategies employed by bilingual speakers and as such a topic of fascination for all those who realize the importance and pervasiveness of bilingualism in today's world. This is indeed widespread: it certainly applies to the speakers in neighboring areas between different countries, to various immigrant settings and, with the growing mobility of the globalization era, no doubt to many others as well. Wherever there is language contact, there is bound to be some form of code-switching as well. Continuous exploration of various facets of code switching thus comes as no surprise, as it has much more than just (socio)linguistic, anthropological and psychological implications. In the sense that the way people speak is an expression of their personal, social, cultural and other identities it is not an overstatement to say that it actually touches the majority of the world's population and, while it has been frequently considered a stigmatized form of bilingual discourse, there can be no doubt that learning more about the underlying rules of code-switching can only contribute to a greater awareness and understanding among speakers of different languages.

2. Definitions and terminology

Even though *code switching* is the most common term for the alternate use of two linguistic systems within the same conversation, other terms have been used as well. They include terms such as *code-mixing, code-shifting, code-changing, code-alteration, language-mixing* and *borrowing*. Different authors have defined it in different ways. The definitions range from the fairly simple to the more sophisticated, depending on whether researchers perceive code switching as a random or rule-governed phenomenon and also on the perspectives from which they approach its study. Some focus on its social and pragmatic characteristics, while others are more interested in its structural aspects. The differences thus stem from competing theories and models briefly

discussed in this chapter, and from the fact that the same terms used by different authors often refer to quite different concepts.

On the one hand, we find very broad definitions of code-switching that cover more or less all forms of language contact phenomena (linguistic borrowing, insertion, transference, convergence, importation and the like), on the other those that narrow code switches to more discrete categories that exclude certain types of bilingual discourse. Among those who use code-switching as an umbrella term we find Bentahila and Davis (1983), Myers-Scotton (1993) and others. These authors are the ones that distinguish between *intra-sentential* and *inter-sentential* switches, the former occurring within a single sentence (at the level of a phrase, clause or even word), and the latter over a longer chunk of discourse, i.e. between sentences. Some others (Shridar and Shridar 1980, Kachru 1983, Singh 1985) use the term code switching exclusively for inter-sentential switches and refer to intra-sentential switches as *code-mixing*, as only this last term requires the integration or the mixing of the rules of the two codes involved. It seems that the two most important dichotomies therefore exist between code switching and borrowing on the one hand, and between code-switching and code-mixing on the other.

2.1 Code-switching vs. borrowing

According to Poplack (1978, 1980, 1981), code-switching differs from borrowing in that it involves the alternation of two codes in discourse stretches that are longer than a word, while borrowings refers to the importation of lone lexical items. In borrowing, the mixing of the two codes thus occurs on the level of a single lexical item. This is taken from the donor language and combines with bound morphemes from the recipient language. The result is a phonologically, morphologically and syntactically adapted word which is treated as part of the recipient or base language and not as an instance of code-switching. Her three criteria for the identification of borrowings, which she established on the basis of her study of the Puerto Rican community in New York City, turned out to be too rigid for some other researchers looking into the language behavior of other bilingual communities. While morphological integration remains a necessary condition for an item to be classified as a borrowing, phonological integration or lack of it has been rejected as not reliable enough because the inaccurate pronunciation could very well be just the result of the poor/variable productive competence on the part of bilingual speakers. Also, others such as Pfaff (1979) insist on sociolinguistic rather than syntactic integration, claiming that only those items that do not have lexical equivalents in L1 and that are recognized as borrowings by the majority of the speech community qualify as borrowings. In the opposite case they are considered to be code-switches. Similarly, Myers-Scotton considers as borrowings only items with no lexical equivalents in L1. She terms them *cultural borrowings* as opposed to *core borrowings*. These have equivalents in L1 and may be analyzed either as borrowings or code switches; in essence, however, the distinction between borrowing and code switching is irrelevant to her analysis.

2.2 Code-switching vs. code-mixing

For some authors, code mixing corresponds to borrowing (Fasold 1984, Wardhaugh

1986). For others, however, code mixing goes beyond the mixing on the level of a single lexeme and is only used for intra-sentential code-switching (Bokamba 1990). Inter-sentential code-switching remains a separate category, as it does not involve the mixing of two sets of grammatical rules, but rather has each sentence comply with the grammatical rules of the language in which it occurs. Yet, others have a completely different view of code-mixing. A good example is Muysken (1995, 2000), who avoids the term code-switching altogether and prefers to use code-mixing as a cover term for both intra-sentential code-switching and borrowing. He speaks of three different types of code-mixing: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. *Insertion* is most often the occurrence of a single lexical item such as a nominal phrase from one language into the structure of another language. In his extensive work, Muysken deals with the differences between such constituent insertions and lexical borrowings, a well as with the concept of a base language into which the constituent is inserted. *Alternation* refers to instances of one language being replaced by the other in the middle of the sentence and is mostly, but not always, associated with longer stretches of code-switching. *Congruent lexicalization* is a situation, where the two languages share a grammatical structure, while lexical elements come from either language. This last concept is somewhat similar to Michael Clyne's idea of *lexical triggering*. The perceived similarity of the two languages in contact is the reason that a word used in one language may very easily trigger the use of other words in the same language, either in anticipation of that word or subsequently. Owing to the ambiguous affiliation of these words belonging to either of the speaker's two languages, a degree of transference and convergence is likely to occur as well.

The concept of *base* or *matrix language* is at the heart of another model of code switching that has gained prominence lately. This is the *Matrix Language Frame model* developed by Myers-Scotton and her associates. She understands code-switching as an asymmetrical process in which the two languages play unequal roles. In several revised versions of the model she defines the base or *matrix language* (ML) on the one hand and the *embedded language* (EL) on the other. It is the matrix language that plays the main role in generating code switches and determining the grammar of the entire utterance. The principles of the matrix language dominating the embedded language will be discussed in more detail in the section dealing with structural constraints.

The competing definitions and theoretical models as well as rather confusing and often overlapping terminology presented in this section make it clear that code-switching is far from a clear-cut category. It is a rather fuzzy area with little consensus among its investigators, which is why anybody interested in studying a particular approach should always make sure that they know which particular type of code alternation is used by a particular author and what exactly that type subsumes.

Before moving on to the discussion of the various approaches to code-switching, another term should be discussed, that of *diglossia*. It was introduced by Charles Ferguson (1959) and refers to a strictly compartmentalized use of the so called *High* (H) and *Low* (L) varieties of a language (e.g. Literary Arabic vs. Moroccan Arabic) in separate domains. Later, scholars such as Gumperz and Fishman have extended the meaning of the term to include multilingual situations as well. Typical example of different languages being used in functionally distinct ways are Spanish (H) and

Guarani (L) in Paraguay, and English (H) and Yoruba (L) in Nigeria. Diglossia allows for no alternation within the same speech event, which is why most scholars consider it a category separate from code-switching.

And finally, a note on some popular names used for code-switched linguistic varieties by non-linguists. They include terms such as *Spanglish* (Spanish + English), *Japlish* (Japanese + English), *Franglais* (Francais + Anglais), *Singlish* (Singaporean + English), *Chinglish* (Chinese + English), *Tex-Mex* (Texan + Mexican) and many others. One such term is *half pa pu* for a mixture of Slovene and English (Šabec 1995) and originates from the English word *half* and the Slovene dialectal equivalent for *and half.* These terms may be used as neutral non-technical terms, but more often than not (depending on the situation and the speaker) they are used pejoratively, which will be discussed in more detail in the last section of this article.

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[This is a classic book that sets the ground for contact linguistics.]

Winford, Donald (2003). *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford. [This book is a very comprehensive survey of language contact phenomena from both linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives.]

Biographical Sketch

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- 1981-82: teacher of English in elementary schools and in language courses for adults, Kranj, Ljubljana, Slovenia
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AWARDS, GRANTS, PROJECTS
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MAIN AREAS OF RESEARCH
Sociolinguistics, contact linguistics, language and culture

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP
- EUROSLA (European Second Language Association)
- TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)
- SSS (Society for Slovene Studies, affiliated with AAASS - American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies)
- Slovene Society for American Studies
- Slovene Society for the Study of English - affiliated with ESSE
- Applied Linguistics Association of Slovenia
- Interpretors' and Translators' Association of Slovenia
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