CODE-SWITCHING

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- We may ask what happens when people from a multilingual society, people who are themselves multilingual, meet in a ‘foreign’ setting:
    - what language or languages do they use?

- Most speakers command several varieties of any language they speak, and bilingualism, even multilingualism, is the norm for many people throughout the world rather than unilingualism.

What is code-switching ?

- People, then, are usually required to select a particular code whenever they choose to speak.
- They may also decide to switch from one code to another or to mix codes even within sometimes very short utterances and thereby create **a new code** in a process known as **code-switching**.
- Code switching happens when Sociolinguistic varieties are mixed up together in the stretch of speech :

    - a single speaker uses different varieties at different times.

- Tanner (1967) reports on the linguistic usage of a small group of **Indonesian graduate students** and their families living in the United States.

- Among them these students knew nine different languages, with nearly everyone knowing **Indonesian** (Bahasa Indonesia), **Javanese**, **Dutch**, and **English**.

- They tended to discuss their academic work in English but used Indonesian for most other common activities.

- The students also used Dutch, but mainly as a resource, e.g., for vocabulary, or because of the place it necessarily held in certain fields of study, e.g., Indonesian studies.

- Local languages like Javanese tended to be used only with intimates when fine shades of respect or distance were necessary, particularly when in the presence of important older people.

- As Heller (1982) has observed, language plays **a symbolic role** in our lives, and when there is a choice of languages the actual choice may be very important.

- Heller studied the uses of the two languages in a Montreal hospital during the summer of 1977.

- Which language was used varied as circumstances changed.

- What is particularly interesting is that the pattern that has evolved of asking which language someone wishes to use in a public service encounter (‘English or French, Anglais ou Français?’) is not very effective.
- The reason is that too many other factors are involved to make the choice that simple (p. 118).
- The negotiation of language has to do with judgments of personal treatment, that is, how one expects to be treated in such a situation.
- Such judgments are dependent upon social knowledge, knowledge about group relations and boundaries and ways of signalling them, and knowledge about other social differences, e.g., status differences. . . .etc.

- Code-switching can occur in conversation between speakers' turns or within a single speaker's turn.

- In the latter case it can occur between sentences (**intersententially**) or within a single sentence (**intrasententially**).

- Some sociolinguists refer to the latter type as "code-mixing".

- The following are examples of intrasentential switching by bilingual children.

- They involve the incorporation of a single noun, noun phrase, or "routine" (i.e. memorized chunk) from one language into the other.

Navajo - English

The boy → łéécha’í bilanné. [dog with-him-playing] ‘The dog is playing with the boy.’

Table → yaa sidá. [under-it seated] ‘[He] is seated under the table.’

Table → tł’ááhi → dollie → dóó → drum → sinił. [under] [and] [are (in position)] ‘The doll and drum are under the table.’

Chinese - English

- Neige → **fox** → yao chi ta. [that] [want eat him] ‘That fox wants to eat him.’ (Telling a story)

- Ta yong yige → **picture of a fox**. [he use a] ‘He used a picture of a fox.’ (Another child telling the same story)

- **Clean up time** → le. [aspect marker] ‘It’s already clean up time.’

- Example from Moroccan Arabic and French
  - Le Dirham a été devalue hadi juj d l-marrat wlla tlata

    …c’était la faute d-lmudir, huwa lli qal blli…

    (From Sadiqi and Ennaji : 90)

- French sentence dominated by Moroccan Arabic syntax.

- There is a switch word in Arabic which provokes a complete switch.

- When the two languages used in **intrasentential switching** do not share the same word order (grammatical structure), an additional distinction is needed between:

  - **guest (embedded) and**
  - **host (matrix) languages** in an utterance (e.g. Sridhar and Sridhar 1980), in Myers-Scotton's (1993) model.

- The **host or matrix** provides **a frame** into which items from the other language, or languages may be embedded.

- It is the grammar of the matrix language that affects the form of codeswitching. When single words from another language are embedded the **matrix language** word order applies.

- The words from the guest language do not follow its grammar rules :
  - The words are temporarily assigned the grammar of another language.
  - Elements of the **guest or embedded** language are switched into it following systematic rules and constraints.

Example : Moroccan Arabic and French

‘Wash Deposete dose ?’

- Here the speaker is using a mixture of French and Moroccan Arabic words.

- Moroccan Arabic is the host/ matrix language.

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- The French words are **embedded words** as they are from the guest language.
- Moroccan Arabic provides **the frame** into which the French items are embedded.

- It is the grammar of Moroccan Arabic which affects the form of code-switching .

- French items undergo the morphosyntactic rules of Moroccan Arabic

- The French lexical items that are used in Moroccan Arabic while code-switching obey the basic morphosyntactic rules of Moroccan Arabic syntax.

Types of code-switching

- There are two kinds of code-switching:
  - **Situational code-switching**
  - **Metaphorical code-switching**

Situational code-switching

- **Situational code-switching** occurs when the languages used change according to the situations in which the conversants find themselves:

- they speak one language in one situation and another in a different one. **No topic change is involved**.

Navajo (Amerindian language; southwestern USA)

- Within a single conversation, Navajo teachers usually speak English to one another when discussing matters related to school, for instance, but may switch to Navajo to discuss their families, or rodeos and other community activities.

- They may also situationally switch into English if non-Navajo speakers join the conversation, so the new arrivals will not be excluded.

- When a change of topic requires a change in the language used we have **metaphorical code-switching**.

- The interesting point here is that some topics may be discussed in either code

- The choice of code adds a distinct flavor to what is said about the topic.

- The choice encodes certain social values.

- This kind of code-switching is about the way speakers employ particular languages to convey information that goes beyond their actual words, especially to define social situations.

- It occurs within a single situation, but adds meaning to such components as the role-relationships which are being expressed.

- Since speaking different languages is an obvious marker of differential group membership, by switching languages bilinguals often have the option of choosing which group to identify with in a particular situation.

- By doing this, they can convey **the metaphorical meaning** which goes along with such choice as well as whatever denotative meaning is conveyed by the code itself.

- An example of such metaphorical switching was reported by Tuladhar, who described an event which occurred at a border checkpost between India and Nepal.

- A woman was stopped by the guard, accused of carrying too much tea, and threatened with a heavy fine.

- The woman first used Nepali (the official language) to make an appeal to the law, and to argue on legal grounds that she was within her limits of legitimate allowances.

- From the guard's accent in Nepali she inferred he was also a native speaker of Newari and switched into that language to make an entreaty on the grounds of common ethnic identity, an appeal to solidarity.

- She finally switched into English “for formulation of thought above the system,” which was both an implicit attack on the corruption of the system, and an assertion that she belonged to an educated class in society which had no intent or need of “smuggling” across a few packages of tea.

- She consciously used code-switching as a verbal strategy in this instance, and was successful.

- Gumperz (1982a, p. 68) has pointed out, that ‘each communicating subgroup tends to establish its own conventions,’ and that factors such as region of origin, local residence, social class, and occupational niche are involved in defining the norms. Moreover, bilinguals in such communities are aware not only of the norms that apply within their own sub-groups but also of some of the norms that other bilinguals observe.

- Language users are aware that one language expresses:
  - a we-type solidarity among participants, and is therefore deemed suitable for in- group and informal activities.
  - whereas the other language is they-oriented and is considered appropriate to out-group and more formal relationships, particularly of an impersonal kind.

Why do people code-switch ?

- A number of answers have been suggested to account for the use of code-switching, including solidarity, accommodation to listeners, choice of topic, and perceived social and cultural distance.

- It can arise from **individual choice** or be used as **a major identity marker** for a group of speakers who must deal with more than one language in their common pursuits.

- Such behaviour can be explained only by postulating a range of linguistic and social factors such as the following :
  - Speakers cannot express themselves adequately in one language, so switch to the other to make good the deficiency.
  - This may trigger a speaker to continue in the other language for a while.
  - An example from a Spanish/ English study (G. Valdes Fallis, 1976) :
    - Porque alli hay cashews. You don't like them ? (Because here are some cashews…').
    - This tends to happen a great deal when the speaker is upset, tired, or otherwise, distracted.

- Switching to a minority language is very common as a means of expressing **solidarity** with a social group.

- The language change signals to the listener that the speaker is from a certain background ; if the listener responds with a similar switch, a degree of rapport is established.

- The same switch may of course also be used to exclude other people, who do not know the language, from the group.

- Winford (2003, p. 41) says that the ability to code-mix Alsatian and French in Strasbourg symbolizes ethnic identity and solidarity.

- He contrasts Strasbourg with Brussels where, especially among young people, the mixing of French and Dutch is no longer seen as a marker of Brussels identity.

- The switch between languages can signal **the speaker's attitude towards the listener** – friendly, irritated, distant, ironic, jocular, and so on.

- Monolinguals can communicate these effects to some extent by varying the level of formality of their speech ; bilinguals can do it by language switching.

- If two bilinguals normally talk to each other in language X, the choice of Y is bound to create a special effect.

- A common example is for a mother to tell her child to do something in one language, and then, if the child fails to obey, to switch to another language, thereby showing her stronger emphasis or displeasure.

- a speaker may deliberately choose to use a specific language **to assert some kind of 'right**.'

- A bilingual (in French and English) French Canadian may insist on using French to an official of the federal government outside Quebec, a bilingual (Catalan and Spanish) resident of Barcelona may insist on using Catalan, a bilingual (Welsh and English) resident of Wales may insist on using Welsh, and so on.

- In these cases code choice becomes a form of political expression, a move either to resist some other power, or to gain power, or to express solidarity.

- Speakers may seek **to assert their own separate identity**.

- Bailey (2005) describes how Dominican American high-school students in Providence, Rhode Island negotiate their way among other students of different language backgrounds.

- They have developed a code that ‘includes distinctive alternation of forms indexing a Dominican American identity. Most salient of these, perhaps, is the alternation between English and Spanish in code-switching’ (p. 259).

- They actually do use some speech characteristics of the African American students but such use does not make them ‘black’ since their ability to use **Spanish**, their Spanish ethnolinguistic identity, triumphs over any common identity derived from African descent (p. 263).

- While they continue to speak their varieties of Spanish and English, they maintain at least for now their separate identity.

- Code-switching is sometimes used to show **a speaker's identity.**
- Nishimura (1997) reports on the language choices of several Niseis (second- generation Japanese immigrants) living in Toronto as they conversed with a variety of friends in private homes.

- These Niseis spoke Japanese to native Japanese, English to fellow Niseis, and a mixture of Japanese and English to mixed groups of Japanese and Niseis.

- Their Japanese, however,contained some English words – mainly when they did not know the Japanese equivalents – and their English made 'sporadic use of Japanese phrases and sentences symbolizing the speaker's identity as a Nisei' (p. 156).