

## Behavioral Aspects of Code-Switching

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**ABSTRACT:** *A number of different frameworks of investigation and analysis have been used in code-switching research carried out within a vast range of linguistic contexts. While socio-pragmatic approaches try to illustrate the different functions of code-switching (CS) and code-mixing (CM), structural/linguistic approaches concentrate on the grammar or the structure and lexicon of bilinguals' language production. The present research will, therefore, review a number of theoretical aspects which have been developed for the investigation of a variety of functions fulfilled by code-switching behavior.*

**Keywords:** *code-switching; code-mixing, markedness; bivalency; sociolinguistic*

### 1. Discourse Analysis and Code-Switching

Sociolinguistic research examining the meanings conveyed by CS was mainly pioneered by Gumperz who investigate code-switching from an interactional perspective and introduced the use of multiple languages in the same interaction as a 'communicative resource' rather than a 'communicative deficit' (Gumperz, 1982: 89; Shin & Milroy, 2000: 352). According to Gumperz (1982: 89), though CS can be influenced by various syntactic constraints, but data suggest that such syntactic constraints are prompted by underlying factors that are contingent on particular aspects of surface form or on pragmatics than on structural or syntactic characteristics. Gumperz (1982: 61) states that in conversation, bilingual speakers are very concerned with the communicative impact and consequences of their utterances and they try to convey metaphoric information about how their words should be interpreted. Gumperz (1982: 131) suggests the notion of 'contextualization cues' for code-switching practices; contextualization cues are simply defined as 'surface features of message form' which function as 'the means by which speakers can signal and listeners can interpret what the activity is, how semantic content is to be realized and how each sentence is related to what precedes or follows'. Like some other actions such as prosody or gestures, code-switching, thus, functions as a significant meaningful signalling device which can help bilingual speakers to convey meaning and as well it can help listeners to perceive the intended meaning (Shin and Milroy, 2000: 352). In his investigation of conversational CS, Gumperz (1982: 66) draws attentions on the concept of identity; he distinguishes between 'we codes', which are typically presented by the ethnic minority language and depicted in-group

solidarity, and 'they codes' which generally include the dominant and more formal majority language.

A further distinction has been made between 'situational switching' and 'metaphorical switching' (Gumperz, 1982: 98). Within a speech community a number of activities or even circumstances may become associated with specific codes and consequently the switch to a certain code can indicate 'the enactment of these activities even possibly in the absence of other apparent contextual cues.' Metaphorical switching is closely associated with its context and it regularly occurs when bilinguals code-switch, for instance, to give emphasis to their utterances, to quote or to joke (Auer, 1984: 4). This kind of CS has also been described as an attempt by bilingual speakers to establish 'a typical socially pre-determined 'flavor' to their discourse' (Esdahl, 2003:78). The meaning conveyed by metaphorical code-switching is greatly dependent on the 'societal evaluation' of the different languages and whether they mostly act as 'we codes' or 'they codes' (Esdahl, 2003:78). Gumperz's 'we code/they code' differentiation is based on the presumption that bilinguals connect different languages with different identities, ethnic; and it originates from the view that language can reflect society in a direct manner (Gafaranga, 2005: 284). This approach to code-switching, nevertheless, has disadvantages, since an apparent distinction between 'we codes' and 'they codes' in a given speech community can be an oversimplification (Gafaranga, 2005: 290). In a study of code-switching among British-born Caribbeans living in London, Sebba and Wootton (1998: 264) argue that the difficulties which researchers may face when attempting to demonstrate which codes function as 'we codes' and 'they codes' in a specific speech community. Their data prove that both London Jamaican and London English can function as 'we codes' at various levels in an interaction. Therefore, Sebba and Wootton (1998: 275) conclude that 'it is impossible to make a priori and theoretical assumptions about which code carries the putative 'we' functions and which the putative 'they' functions'. These perceptions can only be obtained if researchers do not presume that there is a fixed relationship between a particular social identity and a specific language. To be able to address the intricate relationship between language and identity, Sebba and Wootton combined an ethnographic research of the target community with a conversation analysis method enabling them to depict how the relation between language and social identity can be constructed in context.

Despite a number of particular limits to his framework, Gumperz's preoccupation with the communicative effect of CS offered the foundation for the improvement of two more important frameworks of research on conversational CS, which include Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model and Auer's sequential approach to language alternation.

## 2. Markedness Model

Gumperz introduced the notion of code-switching as an interactional strategy, and it was adapted by Myers-Scotton in her Markedness Model (Shin and Milroy, 2000: 352). Along

with the Gumperz's explanation of code-switching as being a contextualization cue, Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1999: 1260) is greatly determined by Rational Choice Models. Elster (1989: 22) explains the essence of Rational Choice or Rational Actor Models as follows: 'When encountered with various courses of activities, individuals often do what exactly they think is probably to have the best overall outcome'. The idea underlying Rational Choice or Rational Actor models comes from sociology and as well as economics. Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model is specially affected by the work of the philosophers such as Jon Elster (1989) who argues that individuals' activities are filtered by two distinct processes before they happen (Myers-Scotton, 1999: 1260). During the first filter the speaker's opportunity set is formed. The second filter makes the moment in time where the individual consciously selects between various options. Both filters and as well as related terms are described in more details below.

The first filter includes so-called structural constraint which, for instance, is composed of social factors such as the participants' social identity characteristics (e.g. sex, age, ethnicity and socioeconomic status) or the feature of the discourse situation (e.g. topic, setting) (Myers-Scotton, 1998). Myers-Scotton (1999: 1260) claims that 'surface discourse structural characteristics are a further type of structural constraints. This kind of constraint consists of 'structural features that organize discourse, especially those having to do with sequential organization' (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 34). For instance, whether a specific utterance illustrates the first or the second part of a contiguity pair can influence its content or form (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 34). A number of these discourse structural constraints have originated from the work accomplished in conversation analysis (CA). The various kinds of constraints that constitute the basis of this first filter are 'external', since the speakers do not have any direct control over them (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 34).

These discourse structural and social factors affect the speaker's 'opportunity set' that can be defined as the speaker's linguistic repertoire. This repertoire consists of the different languages or dialects which the speakers are able to use. Discourse strategies such as minimal responses and turn-taking are as well parts of the individuals' linguistic repertoire or opportunity set (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 207). Once the structural constraints of the first filter have functioned and the speaker's opportunity set has been created, the speaker ultimately can obtain control over the interaction and also is able to make conscious and mindful choices about which codes to use. In other words, the first filter produces a set of feasible choices from which the speaker is able to choose during the second filter.

The second filter suggested in Elster's Rational Choice or Rational Actor models encompasses the mechanisms which permit speakers to consciously select a particular outcome among the several different options provided by the opportunity set (formed during the first filter) (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 34). Rationality is the essential factor in the second filter. At this

stage the speakers consciously deal with a cost-benefit analysis and they prefer and opt the choice that can offer the best overall outcome regarding interpersonal relationships.

Myers-Scotton (2001: 5) uses this theory for the analysis of CS in conversation and argues that ‘speakers are reasonable in the sense that their choices are mostly based on assessments of possible options in regards to a cost-benefit analysis which considers their own subjective motivations and their objective opportunities’. This particular notion illustrates the intricate interaction of people’s prior attitudes, beliefs and values on the one hand and their temporary goals and desires in a given interaction on the other hand (Myers-Scotton, 1999: 1261). In fact, speakers think about their possibilities and rationally opt for the choice which enables them to carry out their temporary goals without diminishing their prior beliefs.

Myers-Scotton (1998: 22) mentions that all speakers possess a ‘markedness evaluator’ that includes a cognitive capacity to assess markedness. The markedness evaluator is regarded as an additional filter that can occur in between the first filter’s structural constraints and the second filter’s rationality (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 34). To become capable of deciding which code can have the best overall result or outcome in a specific situation (second filter), a speaker should first recognize whether the code is marked or unmarked (markedness evaluator). According to Myers-Scotton (1998: 34) the markedness evaluator further influences ‘the selection of alternatives from the initial, structurally determined opportunity set, this time regarding “successes” or “failures” depending on the actor’s former factual experience, facts previously classified in an unconscious cost-benefit analysis’. Unmarked alternatives continue to be undetected in a conversation since they act according to the social expectations attached to the different codes. Marked choices, however, violate these kinds of social expectations and can, consequently, be used strategically by speakers (Milroy and Gordon, 2006: 213).

Quantitatively demonstrating which codes are marked or unmarked is a vital step in an analysis of code-switching based on the Markedness Model. Simple frequency counts can be used to describe the less frequently-used language as the marked code and the more-frequently used language as the unmarked code or choice (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 206). The use of the marked code depends on the speaker’s rational decision to use this code so that fulfills a particular goal in a specific interaction (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 218). Therefore, in order to analyze the meaning of the use of various codes the researcher should, first clearly describe which codes s/he thinks are marked or unmarked in a given interaction?

This quantification of marked and unmarked codes can be represented by Myers-Scotton’s (2002: 209). She analyzed English-Chichewa code-switching in a Malawi family living in the United States. Chichewa is usually considered as the parents’ unmarked code during home interactions as it makes the most frequently-spoken language by the parents. Only 6 percent of the father’s and 7 percent of the mother’s utterances are English-only (Myers-Scotton, 2002b:210). Myers-Scotton (2002: 210) points out that this recognition of Chichewa as the

unmarked code depending on basic frequency counts is supported by the parents' language attitudes, which were evaluated in a follow-up interview.

The parents explained their conscious attempts to talk in Chichewa at home with their children so that to maintain their indigenous language. The children, however, mostly speak English at home since approximately 70 percent of their utterances are English-only. Myers-Scotton (2002: 210) points out that the identification of English as the children's unmarked code is not only supported and affirmed by these frequency counts but also by the children's attitudes towards English as the language awarding them independency from their parents. However, both children equally switch to Chichewa at different points during family interaction to be able to fulfill short-term objectives. For instance, during a disagreement between the two children, one of them addresses their father in Chichewa, the father's unmarked code and preferred language of conversation, when seeking support from the father. This temporary switch to the marked code provide a good example of a speaker abandoning their former attitudes (i.e. preference for English) to be able to attain a temporary objective (i.e. receiving support).

Socio-psychological aspects such as language attitudes and speaker identity are integrated in the Markedness Model. Li Wei (2005: 377) points out a shortcoming for Myers-Scotton's analysis and mentions that the Markedness Model can only work if the researcher presumes that each individual will act rationally on all occasions. In addition, the Markedness Model is based on the presumption that all speakers have an intrinsic 'markedness evaluator' that permits them to assess which codes are marked and which codes are unmarked in any given interaction. Both Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model and Gumperz's distinction between 'we codes' and 'they codes' in bilingual communication constitute a part of what Cashman (2008: 276) terms the 'symbolic approach' to language alternation.

Symbolic strategies make use of speakers' macro-level identities in order to reveal and describe language choices. Macro-level identities can be defined as the speaker's 'membership in social categories, for example sex-based, racial or ethnic groups' (Cashman, 2008: 284). Cashman (2008: 276) depicts that symbolic approaches are based on the concept that speakers make use of the social connotations attached to the different codes to make meaning in interaction. The subsequent section represents the sequential method to CS. Researchers utilizing this alternative method to code-switching avoid to base any kind of interpretations regarding multilingual language behavior on socio-psychological factors including identity and attitudes on theoretical constructs like rationality.

### **3. Bivalency, Code-Switching and Borrowing**

#### **3.1 Bivalency**

Woolard (1999) challenges the possibility of attributing linguistic structures to distinct and separate languages and suggests another categorization of bilingual interaction phenomena

in line with the Bakhtinian notion of ‘simultaneity’. According to Woolard (1999: 4), Bakhtin does not consider language forms as ‘a mere wavering between two mutually exclusive possibilities but as a real simultaneity of contrasting elements in tension’. Bakhtin’s view of simultaneity casts uncertainties on the possibility of demarcating distinct codes in multilingual utterances and Woolard (1999: 5) prompts researchers to view linguistic structures as ‘fluid’ and mutually comprehensive. In response to these criticisms regarding the existence of distinct identifiable linguistic codes, Woolard (1999) draws attention on the notion of bivalency, which is defined as ‘the use of words or segments, which could “belong equally, descriptively or even prescriptively to both codes’ (Woolard, 1999: 5). These kinds of bivalent forms and structures do not simply form a methodological trouble for the analyst but they should be considered as a speaker’s means to convey sociolinguistic meaning (Woolard, 1999: 8).

By employing bivalent structures speakers make it complicated and difficult for their interlocutors or audiences to recognize or identify which language they are speaking. Woolard (1999: 7) gives the example of a Catalan comedian who was well-known in the 1980s, since individuals found it difficult to tell whether he was talking in Catalan or Castilian. This comedian usually began his jokes with the phrase ‘El saben aquel...’ (‘Do you know the one...’). The verb ‘saben’ is considered as an example of bivalency since it varies in the two languages just by the quality of the second vowel. While this vowel is a closed mid-front vowel /e/ in Castilian, it is a schwa in Catalan. Woolard (1999: 7) explains that the comedian’s usage of the verb ‘saben’ as bivalent because the vowel quality is different in various tokens uttered by the comedian and it, thus, became formidable for the audiences or analysts to attribute particular tokens of ‘saben’ to either Castilian or Catalan. This specific usage of bivalency represents how speakers are able to project various identities at the same time and as well the approaches in which they assure that they are not observed to commit entirely to any particular linguistic code (Woolard, 1999: 10). Woolard’s view of bivalency deals with a frequent matter in bilingualism and multilingualism study, specifically the formidable and complicated process of assigning individual words to separate languages (Angermeyer, 2006: 33).

### 3.2 Codes-switching and Borrowing

One of the most broadly mentioned classification difficulties is the distinction between code-switching and borrowing. Borrowing is usually described as merely applying to single words while code-switching is referred to as a broader phenomenon (Gardner-Chloros, 2008: 60).

However, the difference between borrowing and code-switching is far more complicated. The term borrowing is generally used to indicate foreign loan words or phrases not part of the spoken language that has become an integral part of the recipient language (Baker, 2008). This can be described as the insertion of lexical items which are not a part of Matrix Language but are included to convey particular meaning. Without such kind of borrowings,

certain concepts cannot be conveyed. Therefore, it is a normal process for languages to borrow words or phrases when they come into contact with another language.

Lately, a number of sociolinguists, specially Myers-Scotton (1993) and Bentahila and Davies (2008), claim against distinguishing of borrowing and code-switching, while others have differentiate between them by labeling those which carry social meanings constitute code-switching and those which do not as “borrowings” (Boumans, 1988). Boumans (1988) also considered the level of integration and frequency to distinguish between code-switching and borrowing. Sridhar (1980) differentiates the phenomenon of borrowing which integrates the linguistic items into the “host system” as appose to the code-switching.

Loan words are usually identified through two factors. First, loan words are usually seen to fill a lexical gap in the borrowing language (Gardner-Chloros, 2008: 60). This kind of loan is known as a ‘cultural loan’. Cultural loans happen when speakers are encountered with a demand to express a concept or notion in one language that has no equivalent in another language, for instance, in the case of the Spanish word ‘paella’ which has been taken over by English (Gardner Chloros, 2008: 61).

Gardner-Chloros (2008: 61) states that borrowing can also include ‘core loans’ that are lexical items which can be expressed by an indigenous term in the borrowing language. The existence of core loans, as a result, undermines the definition of borrowing as a means to fill a lexical gap. Another criterion for the recognition of loans and code-switches can be represented by the presumption that loan words are morphologically and phonologically integrated into the surrounding language, while the code-switched items do not assimilate to the surrounding language (Gardner-Chloros, 2008: 60).

Besides the above-mentioned criteria for the distinguishing code-switches from borrowings, researchers can get more information by investigating the particular context in which the data were collected. According to Gardner-Chloros (2008: 60) ‘it is the nature or the characteristics of the sociolinguistic contact which usually dominates at the time when an item is switched or borrowed that decides in what manner it is altered or adapted ‘.

The significance of considering context in the examining of code-switches and borrowings is also stressed in Grosjean’s (1998: 136) monolingual-bilingual mode continuum. The ‘mode’, defined as ‘the state of activation of the bilingual’s languages’, can be affected by the topic, the situation, the bilingual speaker’s interlocutor (Grosjean, 1998: 136). At the monolingual end of the continuum, bilinguals just interact with monolinguals of one or the other of the languages which they know. Borrowing and code-switching particularly occur at the bilingual end of the continuum, i.e. when a bilingual is communicating with a speaker who shares the same two languages. Though both languages are activated at this end of the continuum, language A is particularly more active than language B. Because of this higher level

of activation, language A functions as the base language. Language B, however, is employed in the form of code-switches and borrowings. Nevertheless, the monolingual-bilingual mode continuum is flexible in nature and therefore speakers are able to position themselves anywhere between the monolingual and bilingual extremes of the continuum.

Myers-Scotton (1993) furthermore depicted another way of differentiation of code-switching and borrowing, mentioning that in contrast to borrowing, which necessarily does not involve bilingualism; code-switching essentially involves and entails bilingualism. She depicts this specifically with reference to the single insertions. She claims that if an insertion carries a particular social meaning which is just accessible to the bilingual register, then it can be identified as a code-switch.

#### 4. Conclusion

The present article reviewed a number of theoretical aspects which have been developed for the investigation of a variety of functions fulfilled by code-switching behavior; such as: Discourse Analysis and Code-Switching, Markedness Model, Bivalency, Code-Switching and Borrowing.

As Gumperz (1982: 89) asserts, although CS can be affected by different syntactic constraints, but syntactic constraints can also be motivated by underlying factors that are dependent on specific facets of pragmatics than merely on structural or syntactic characteristics.

The Markedness Model (MM) is based on the premise that both speakers and analysts can easily identify and differentiate between marked and unmarked codes or choices. In order to be able to conceive markedness speakers have to develop two abilities: (1) The ability to identify that linguistic alternatives or choices fall along a multidimensional continuum from more unmarked to more marked and that their ordering will be different, according to the particular discourse type; (2) The ability to recognize that marked choices will receive various receptions from unmarked choices (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 22). Speakers acquire these kinds of abilities as a result of contact with both marked and unmarked codes (Myers-Scotton, 1998: 22). Consequently, speakers are required to be exposed to the use of marked and unmarked codes in community or group discourse so that they can learn which codes are expected to be employed under which circumstances.

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