

ANOTHER LANGUAGE

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INTRODUCTION

The multifariousness and diversity of bilingualism (or bilinguality) never ceases to amaze this writer. To be fluent in all four areas of other language use (in speaking, listening, reading & writing) represents the ultimate achievement of the learning and teaching of other languages (or at least, it should!). Sadly, however, the so-called “perfect bilingual” is very rarely found to exist. Indeed, such “animals” are not often located as one of the languages has been found to be the so-called stronger tongue and it often is used in certain skill areas of the bilingual person. That is to say, that certain skill areas are done in one language almost exclusively. This is natural and is the result of many factors of both a linguistic and social nature.

The literature concerned with bilingual ability (of lack thereof) is filled with definitions of bilingualism. These range from ‘able to say a few words and/or phrases in two (or more) languages’ to ‘completely bilingual in all aspects of the languages known and/or used’. As noted previously, the latter is seldom found. Such differences, in terms of ability, are readily discernible to even the layman in bilingual matters.

Early academic bilingual writings dealing with persons able to employ more than one language said that 2 (or more) language ability was a detriment to the child. (A vast majority dealt with child bilingualism although some certainly dealt with the older bilingual). This was most readily apparant in educational matters but often was seen as something that affected social identity as well. (The interested reader is encouraged to find late 1800 or eary 1900 writings concerned with not solely monolingual ability).

Bilingualism (and/or multilingualism) ideas continue to change. In more recent

times, linguistic ability in more than one language has been looked upon in a more positive light. Ideas continue to change. Therefore, it is not really surprising that thoughts about 'code switching' have also changed over time. It is now an area of research in its own right. The use of two languages by bilinguals, able to use both tongues, contains many factors-both linguistically related and socially influenced. It has become more obvious through bilingual studies that language choice (the tongue utilized by bilinguals of the same languages and influenced by similar social factors) affects the conversation in various ways that enhance the communicative act itself. This language selection has resulted in the emergence of "another" language, a mixture of the two tongues. This manifestation of another linguistic code that is used by bilinguals is a combination of the two languages known by the participants in a conversation and is, simply put, a combination or 'mixture'. Certain parts, phrases, and words, coupled with social factors dependent upon shared cultural knowledge are utilized in order for the communicative act (s) to take on new meanings and are only understood by bilinguals with some sort of 'shared experience'.

This brief paper will attempt to direct the reader to important issues in code-switching. Issues that, indeed, influence bilingual interactions. It must be noted, at the start, that this is only intended as an introduction. It, hopefully, will show just how complex and yet, interesting an area this is, in terms of language factors themselves and the vast area of shared social identity.

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"... presumed deviant nature of code-switching and code-mixing judged against the prevalent paradigm of monolingualism and of the ideal speaker-hearer in a homogenous speech community who knows his language perfectly. (Hamers & Blanc Pg.258)"

The above comes from a book concerned with bilingualism. It discusses something against the idea of bilingualism: that is, the ability one may possess in more than one tongue. Noam Chomsky is mainly concerned with ability in one

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language. The preceeding represents this idea which was prevalent in the world (and to some still is).

It was Chomsky, who is, perhaps, most famous for monolingual studies, that first came up with the idea of the "perfect speaker-hearer" concept. Again it must be stressed that Chomsky, himself, was mainly concerned with monolingualism. He is quoted as saying that things bilingual he would leave to others. Chomsky was most concerned with abilities in one language.

In the early days of bilingual and/or bilinguality research code-switching or code-mixing were thought to be representations of incomplete language use because of a lack of ability in one (or both) languages. This 'idea' manifested itself in a predominately 'monolingual' world. Language choice did not enter into this equation.

It is now known (at least recent bilingual research seems to show) that bilingual persons DO use both languages. The reasons why those language codes are used are many-both linguistic and social. Simply put, one language may be used predominately with other words and/or expressions in the other tongue (used and known by the other participants in the conversation) "thrown in" at different junctions in the other tongue. The reasons 'why' this occurs are varied and of both a linguistic and social nature. Such speech actions result in a 'better' understanding on participant part. The communicative actions themselves take on newer dimensions in terms of 'meaning'. In short, they become, in one sense, more communicative in nature and a knowledge of more than one tongue, that is 'shared' by interlocuters becomes essential. This can (and often does) result in the creation of another mode of communication that takes form in another language that is a combination of the linguistic codes. In other words, a 'new' language results that presupposes ability in both (conceivably, "all") languages known by speakers in any given exchange. (The interested reader is encouraged to peruse the bibliography of this paper and read in areas of interest related to such an idea).

Prior to the 1980's it was thought that, in most cases, the phenomenon of code-switching and/or things akin to it (e.g. code-borrowing, usage of two languages in the same utterance and etc.) were the result of 'extra-linguistic factors'. For example, ideological, political, the setting itself, the topic of conversation, the

participants themselves and etc. Such factors were thought to have a great influence on the 'flow' of the conversation. They were thought to dictate language 'choice' between bilinguals.

The often cited study by Gumperz (1972), '... introduced the distinction between 'situational switching' and 'metamphoracal switching'. (Code-switching in conversation: edited by P. Auer, as found in an article written by Li Wei, pg. 156).

The first of these, 'situational', happened because the circumstances concerned with the conversation, 'changed' in some way amongst the participants; while 'metaphorical' situations was mainly concerned with the language(s) used by the participants changing. The reasons for given changes were vast and complex-related to many factors. Something 'had' to change.

The language code employed, that is, which one used, depended upon many things-both linguistic & social. Bilinguals must 'know' which language to use in a certain situation. Various situations would determine 'which' linguistic code (language) was employed in what situation. Auer's 1984a work "Bilingual Conversation" dealt with this. Code-switching study took on a 'new' approach as a result of this work. Auer stated herein that bilingual conversation language choices by a bilingual for his/her conversational turn would affect subsequent language choice. That is, previously utilized linguistic code choices would influence language use in terms of which language code was appropriate for that topic. In short, bilinguals would, through the use of linguistic codes, make a determination about 'how' something 'should' be said in terms beyond the suprasegmental (tone, intonation, etc.) factors to the 'actual' linguistic code used. This language code would greatly influence 'how' the imparted factor would, indeed, could, be interpreted. This interpretation went beyond the use of only one (1) language- to the linguistic code used itself. This code itself would greatly 'influence' how the imparted 'thing' was to be interpreted. Auer wrote that code-choice in terms of 'use' was determined by language (that was ever-fluctuating among bilinguals). This 'choice' in linguistic code choices was determined (and influenced) by preceeding and subsequent language code choices made by participating, conversational interlocuters that were interacting with each other. What Auer wrote (more than 10 years ago) has had a dramatic effect in present-day code-

switching studies.

It has been proposed (see Myers-Scotton-1993) that a 'markedness' model is applicable to the social needs being met by code-switching. She contends that her theory has 'predictive power' in virtually ALL cases of language choice among bilinguals that share same languages. The changing of linguistic codes is determined (she contends) by so-called 'rights-and-obligations' (RO sets). These RO sets are felt by all participants in any interaction. It is her contention that an RO set is very abstract and arises as a result of the situation itself (setting factors). She believes that all bilingual speech communities (monolingual too?) are influenced by these factors, Markedness and unmarkedness indexes affect language choice (and therefore, meaning) in various divergent and complex manners. Indexicality, she writes, it is "... a property of linguistic varieties"... (quoted from Li Wei's article on page 158 of the book entitled 'Code-switching in Conversation'-edited by Auer) Myers-Scotton holds the view that speakers (in bilingual and/or multilingual exchanges wherein a language is shared by participants) have an in-bred knowledge of indexicalty (or mental representations) that affects language choice and the RO sets themselves. In short, language code choices are influenced by numerous and complex factors among multilinguals. Such factors are of both a linguistic and social nature.

It has been said that Myers-Scotton's model to account for code-switching among bilinguals is very much like the distinction (made by Gumperz) between various switches in linguistic codes. Similar (if not the same) rules apply. Myers-Scotton's idea of 'markedness' as a determining factor in linguistic code choice, represents a 'way' for predication and the assignment of social values in a conversation. However, as Li Wei points out, the participants in a linguistic 'verbal' exchange, don't have the 'luxury' of determining social and linguistic meaning behind the codes employed and/or the switches made because of time constraints. In short, conversations happen too quickly.

Switching languages has been called an attempt to 'keep' conversations going (See Li Wei pg.161). Only one code is NOT used in attempts to 'save' verbal interactions (that is, those in danger of stopping). All linguistic codes (languages) known and used by participants are employed for a number of reasons all related

to continuing a verbal exchange. Language choice is a very vital component in this regard even in cases where 'one' of the languages is more applicable (appropriate) for use than another. The switching of linguistic codes in conversation is not primarily related to the value (appropriateness) of any given language but reflects the manner in which participants in an exchange of a linguistic nature wish their utterances to be interpreted. (See Li Wei).

It is vital that code-switching be taken as an important activity in conversations among multilingual persons. Indeed, linguistic code choices, including changes in language at any give level—from words to sentences—have a deep and important meaning for conversations.

The meanings that code-switching has for conversation between bilinguals is of the utmost importance. Auer (1984a) has written that the language choice of bilinguals has a dramatic affect on the subsequent discussions and will greatly influence 'which' linguistic code will be employed in the next utterances. This has a great influence on meaning.

The influence that another model for code-switching, the CA model, represents a way of looking at code switches from the perspectives of relevance, procedures, with a balance between social structure and conversation (See Li Wei, in *Code-switching in Conversation*, pp.162-164).

As has been pointed out, in the writings, there is a bias towards macro-social values that are attributed to code switches. The basic assumption now seems to be that code-switches do not represent a lack of ability in one language and 'force' the bilingual to change verbal linguistic codes but rather code-switching is now being looked at from the point of view that speakers choose which language they will use for many, multifarious reasons that enhance utterance meaning.

The consequences of language choice among bilinguals have tremendous impact. Language choice will (and does indeed) influence conversions. Auer has written that context is not something that is given a priori. It is maintained and changes by the myriad factors involved in conversation, which include the language chosen for communication in verbal exchanges.

The CA approach as an explanation for code-switching is one that has been developed against 'old' views of code switches. There is an ever-growing tendency

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to 'explain' changes in language within the same conversation now as being related to the attribution of specific meaning—a meaning that is best (only?) understood by speakers of same linguistic codes and share a similar social understanding.

In direct contrast to Myers-Scotton's model of 'markedness' (1993), the CA explanation does not have to deal with the fickleness of speculations concerned with speaker motivation in using a certain language code. It is mainly concerned with 'how' and in 'what ways' language choice affect the construction of meaning in a verbal interaction.

The explanation of code change offered by the CA approach does NOT say that code-switching, in a social sense, carries more meaning than gestures and tone or intonational cues in monolingual conversations. It is the opinion of this writer that both perform the same function—the difference being that bilingual interactions have a change in linguistic code AND intonational/prosodic cues. Either (or both) can be utilized in order for bilingual conversations to take on deeper meaning than monolingual verbal interactions.

These facts make conversation between bilinguals 'different' than those among monolinguals. It remains a fact that both ways are all right. Linguistic code choice is NOT NECESSARILY BETTER among bilinguals as opposed to speakers of one language.

CONCLUSION

It is a fact that bilingual (or multilingual) persons DO employ another linguistic code (language). Participants, of a bi—or multilingual conversation use another language to continue verbally exchanging with each other—that 'other' language is, and MUST BE, shared by participants. It represents a combination of the tongues known and used by interlocutors. This reality has become apparent through the study of bilingual conversations.

This was 'hinted' at in the past by virtually all researchers in bilingualism. It also was what virtually all teachers of foreign or second languages did—whether they were conscious or unconscious of it. Hindsight is a tremendous teacher in itself and time has shown this to be truth—it is a fact that ability in more than one (1)

language and experiences in another culture (either experienced first-hand or read about in books, second-hand) led to another way of expression—a way that was (and had to be) shared by participants.

Research in this 'new' linguistic code will continue in the future. Indeed, it is a pre-requisite for true bilingual understanding to occur. Studies of this sort will continue in years to come. Certain questions come readily to mind and, indeed, must be dealt with: What level of ability in another language is necessary for this to be important-and to what extent is this true? Is it necessary for one to have physically lived in another culture and experienced it? If so, to what degree must one be cognizant of the factors of a social nature that affect language understanding? How does this affect the learning and teaching of other languages? Can the understanding of another culture be taught and to what extent is this vital to SLA (Second Language Acquisition?) And maybe most importantly, Can another language be taught successfully without an understanding of the culture in which it arose?

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