

Code-switching は何ですか。(What is code-switching?)

B. Greg Dunne

Associate professor

Osaka Shoin Women's University

Introduction

As language teachers, language learners and applied linguists, we invariably become accustomed to operating in a field laden with non-finite quests. No matter how adept a language learner becomes there will always be something more to learn. No matter how extensive a researcher's understanding of language becomes there will always be something more to understand. No matter how effective a teaching approach proves to be there will always be a tweak to be made. Such a sense of endlessness brings to mind the study of code-switching (CS). In defiance of the regular trend, our understanding of CS would seem to have attained closure on two levels. Firstly, the perception of CS among applied linguists appears to have achieved irrevocable status as a communicative virtue, shedding its former widespread status of a linguistic shortcoming forever. Secondly, all endeavours to explain the motivations and causes that activate instances of CS seem to have been conclusively encapsulated in Myers-Scotton's (1993) 'markedness model'. Accordingly, the purposes of this paper are to; i) provide a thumbnail outline of CS and ii) confirm that no major developments have occurred in regard to CS that would supplant Myers-Scotton's contribution.

Code-switching: An Abridged Outline

Code-switching is the term that applied linguists attribute to the act of alternating between two or more languages. The ubiquitously cited, "Sometimes I will start a sentence in English *y termino en espanol*", first coined by Poplack (1980) illustrates a common CS formulation, albeit in a tongue-in-cheek way. In English, the sentence would translate to, "Sometimes I will start a sentence in English *and finish*

it in Spanish.” Some applied linguists prefer to label this practice as code-mixing. Nonetheless, over time these two labels have essentially become interchangeable.

Although predominantly studied as a facet of oral communication it should be noted that written forms of CS also exist, in instances such as the understudied print media of countries such as the Philippines.

The dawning of a pro-CS era

Throughout the majority of the 20th century, CS was frowned upon by most applied linguists, usually being dismissed as the interference of one language with another. Labov (1972) declared that any attempts to favourably account for linguistic variation in a community up to that time had been unconvincing. Weinreich (1953) described CS as “*deviating from the norms of either language*” (p.73). Elaborating further, Weinreich outlined the rules and conventions he believed would disqualify code-switchers from being considered ideal bilingual speakers.

The ideal bilingual switches from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in the speech situation (interlocutors, topics, etc.), but not in an unchanged speech situation, and certainly not within a single sentence (Weinreich, 1953, p.73).

Tarone, Cohen & Dumas (1983) regarded CS an “*avoidance strategy*”. Faerch & Kasper (1983) deemed it to be “*a compensatory strategy*”. Considering the timing of Blom & Gumperz’ (1972) seminal pro-CS study, it is suffice to say that these latter two studies even encroached into what was evolving into a pro-CS era.

Subsequently, Poplack (1980) became a major influence in furthering the valorisation of CS. Contrary to the aforementioned declaration of Weinreich (1953) that to switch codes within a single sentence was not something the ideal bilingual would do, Poplack (1980) legitimised such utterances, labelling them as ‘intrasentential switches’. The next and arguably final sociolinguistic milestone in CS research was the unveiling of Myers-Scotton’s (1993) ‘markedness model’, which would prove thoroughly convincing in its encapsulation of all motivations underlying CS instances. Since then, studies which frown upon the use of CS have for all intents and purposes reached extinction.

Linguistic and sociolinguist approaches to CS research

Since the dawn of the pro-CS era, most studies of CS have fallen into either of two categories. Whereas some studies have focused more closely on the linguistic norms and nature of CS, others have been primarily concerned with its sociolinguistic issues. In other words, whereas the former are related to the ‘syntactical-hows’ the latter are more concerned with the ‘motivational-whys’ of CS.

Linguistic insights into CS. Linguistic approaches have generally sought to construct a model constituting a universal set of syntactic rules and constraints in the quest for descriptive, if not prescriptive, accounts for all instances of CS. Poplack (1980) proposed the ‘free-morpheme constraint’, claiming that “*a switch may not occur between a bound morpheme and a lexical form unless the lexical form has been phonologically integrated into the language of the morpheme.*” For the most part this means it would be incongruous to find word stems from one language combined with prefixes or suffixes from another language. However, numerous subsequent studies have shown that although this seems to hold true in CS involving English and Spanish, which were the two languages examined by Poplack, it does not hold true for many other language combinations. MacSwann (2004:286) cites five studies whereby the free-morpheme constraint was shown to be flouted.

At the sentence level Poplack (1980) also proposed the ‘equivalence constraint’, which states that “*a switch could only occur when the syntax on either side of the CS remained unviolated in terms of the respective syntax for each language involved in the switch.*” Excluding simple borrowing of individual words from another language, the equivalence constraint describes how the most frequent instances of CS are formulated. Yet, as is the case with the free-morpheme constraint there are numerous recorded instances whereby the equivalence constraint has similarly been flouted, including five studies from the 1990s cited in MacSwann (2004). For instances of constraint-flouting in an English-Japanese context, see Fotos (1990). So in spite of her successful quest to muster widespread endorsement for the practice of CS, Poplack has nevertheless been heavily criticised for claiming both constraints to not merely be descriptive of CS but hold status as actual linguistic principles (MacSwann, 2004).

One aspect of the linguistic dimension to CS that is regarded with widespread acceptance is the categorisation of CS types. Four kinds of CS are generally considered to exist; Inter-sentential, Intra-sentential, Tag and Intra-word.

Inter-sentential switching. Occurs within a sentence or clause. In Japanese-English switching one could say, “*Nani o tabetai no.* Tell me now?” (“*What do you want to eat? Tell me now?*”).

Intra-sentential switching. Occurs at sentence or clause boundaries. In Japanese-English switching one could say, “*Nan de love me desu ka.*” (“*Why do you love me?*”).

Tag switching. Involves asking a question in one language before adding a tag question phrase from another? In English-Japanese switching one could say, “You agree with me, *ne.*” (“You agree with me, *don’t you?*”).

Intra-word switching. Occurs within a word itself, such as at a morpheme boundary. In English-Japanese switching one could ask, “Have you *hozon*-ed the file.” (“Have you *saved* the file?”). Such intra-word switches constitute the instances cited in studies that attempt to disprove the infallibility of the free-morpheme constraint.

Evolving from both the classification of these four CS types and the rejection of Poplack’s (1980) constraint-based CS model, Myers-Scotton’s (1993) Matrix Language-Frame (MLF) model became the prevailing model of insertional CS. Succinctly, the MLF model posits that there is a Matrix Language (ML) and an Embedded Language (EL) whereby elements of the EL are inserted into the frame of the dominant ML without violating morphosyntactic logic. However, considerably more significant a contribution than Myers-Scotton’s MLF model was her markedness model, which shall be regarded as the crescendo to all sociolinguistic advancements in CS research.

Sociolinguistic insights into CS. With specific regard to English-Japanese CS, Nishimura (1995) identified a phenomenon she dubbed the portmanteau sentence. Portmanteau is a label coined by the author Lewis Carroll in 1871 for new words formed by the combination of two abbreviated words. Modern-day examples

of portmanteau words include 'Brangelina', which is formed by the combination of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie as well as 'Brexite', which is formed by the combination of Britain and exit. In the context of English-Japanese CS, Nishimura (1995) explained how bilingual Canadian niseis (second generation Japanese immigrants) manipulate the two syntactically different languages at the sentence level without violating the individual structure of either. They did so by merging the SVO (subject-verb-object) form of the English sentence with the SOV (subject-object-verb) form of the Japanese sentence to form an SVOV portmanteau sentence. An example of this would read, "She went to the beach *ni ikimashita*." ("She went to the beach *went to*"). The great sociolinguistic significance here is that the speaker, whether consciously or not, can be seen as reaching out to equally include audiences of both identities. In addition to identifying portmanteau sentences, Nishimura (1995) observed the *niseis* switching codes for affective purposes such as intensifying the involvement between speaker and addressee, calling for confirmation, publicising their assumption that the addressee is in agreement with the speaker and indicating conviction. Non-affective purposes observed included introducing and changing topics. Nishimura (1995) is one of many studies to have elucidated motivations underlying CS within a specific dichotomous cultural or linguistic setting. As previously alluded to, for an all-encompassing encapsulation of CS motivations one must refer to Myers-Scotton's (1993) 'markedness model'.

To paraphrase Myers-Scotton (1993), for each interaction there exists an unconsciously accepted set of social parameters governing the lexis, syntax and prosody allowable. Myers-Scotton calls these 'rights and obligations sets'. Communication within these parameters is considered 'unmarked' and any deviation from these norms is considered 'marked'. Sudden changes in volume, intonation, politeness or code choice exemplify how speakers typically mark their speech. Accordingly, Myers-Scotton's (1993) outlined four types of CS; i) sequential unmarked CS, ii) unmarked CS, iii) marked CS and iv) exploratory CS.

- i) ***Sequential unmarked CS***. In some communities it is the norm to use a vernacular dialect or language in 'low-variety' domains such as family conversation and another dialect or language in 'high-variety' domains such as education. This phenomenon is called a diglossia and CS in

such instances was labelled 'situational switching' by Blom & Gumperz (1972). Myers-Scotton's sequential unmarked CS differs from situational switching only in that it affords the individual greater empowerment in choosing languages.

- ii) **Unmarked CS.** Simply put, sometimes people do or say things for insignificant reasons. When there is more than one socially acceptable way to do or say something it is possible that both switching and not switching may be socially proper. Poplack (1980) argued that the rapid back and forth switching she observed in a New York Puerto Rican community constituted an unmarked form of CS. Similarly, instances where speakers switch in order to fill lexical gaps or communicate something that could not be adequately communicated in the other language would also be considered as unmarked CS.
- iii) **Marked CS.** In most instances, speakers will code-switch for an exhaustive range of affective reasons. Typically, marked CS is used to bond, empathise, exclude, ostracise, assert, demand, request, agree, disagree, confirm, publicise, claim ownership and so on. Myers-Scotton (1993) subsumes this entire range of CS motivations as negotiating a change in social distance between interlocutors. Marked CS is often accompanied by prosodic features such as pauses or metacommentary.
- iv) **Exploratory CS.** - When the unmarked choice is unclear, speakers may use CS in an exploratory way in order to establish the favoured social balance.

The markedness model is a closed system. In mathematical terms it is a 'universal set' that encompasses all possible subsets. Speakers either switch to another language to negotiate a change in social distance from their interlocutor or they do not ... or somewhere in between. Such is the enigma of the Myers-Scotton's (1993) 'markedness model' that it categorises everything and/or nothing.

Conclusion

This paper has posited that sociolinguistic investigation of CS is but a closed case on two macro-levels. Firstly, in regard to acceptance, one can be confident that

CS has attained irrevocable status as a communicative virtue. Credible detraction has not been seen in the field for over 30 years. As Nguyen (2015) summates,

For a long time, code switching has been (sic.) considered as a lack of linguistic competence since it was taken as evidence that bilinguals are not able to acquire two languages or keep them apart properly ... Consequently, there was lack of interest in studying this phenomenon until the 1970ies (sic) ... Nowadays it is the common belief that code switching is grammatically structured and systematic ... (Nguyen, 2015, p.1).

Likewise, Myers-Scotton's (1993) 'markedness model' remains free of credible criticism. Current sociolinguistic investigations of CS, for instance Moody's (2014) study of identity and humor in the international workplace and Vickers, Goble & Deckert's (2015) study of CS in a medical context; appear confined to the purpose of sharing descriptions of how the markedness model applies in specific cultural or social situations.

References

- Blom, J. & Gumperz, J. (1972). Social meaning in structure: Code-switching in Norway. In J. J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics* (pp. 407-434). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Faerch, C. & Kasper, G. (1983). Plans and strategies in foreign language communication. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 20-60). New York, NY: Longman.
- Fotos, S. (1990). Japanese-English code switching in bilingual children. *JALT Journal*, 12, 1, 75-98.
- Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.
- MacSwann, J. (2004). Code switching and grammatical theory. In T. K. Bhatia & W. C. Ritchie (Eds.), *The handbook of bilingualism* (pp. 283-311). Carlton, Australia: Blackwell Publishing.
- Moody, S. J. (2014). “Well, I’m a *Gaijin*”: Constructing identity through English and humor in the international workplace. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 60, 75–88.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for code switching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nishimura, M. (1995). A functional analysis of Japanese/English code-switching. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 23, 157-181.
- Nguyen, T. (2015). *Code switching – A sociolinguistic perspective*. Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing.

- Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English y termino en Espanol: Toward a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics 18*, 581-618.
- Tarone, E., Cohen, A. & Dumas, G. (1983). A closer look at some interlanguage terminology: a framework for communication strategies. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication* (pp. 4-14). New York, NY: Longman.
- Vickers, C. H., Goble, R. & Deckert, S. K. (2015). Third party interaction in the medical context: CS and control, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *84*, 154–171.
- Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in contact*. The Hague: Mouton.