

Does switching between two languages have any value or purpose

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Submission date: 26-Mar-2023 11:18AM (UTC+0100)

Submission ID: 200532983

File name:

41627_Chundai_Qiao_Does_switching_between_two_languages_have_any_value_or_purpose_474830_1645844029.docx
(29.88K)

Word count: 2889

Character count: 17577

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Introduction

In the context of globalization, more and more people have bilingual or multilingual backgrounds. Some studies estimated that nearly 70% of the world's population is bilingual and lives in a bilingual environment (Trask, 1999, p.76). Code-switching is a phenomenon when two or more languages exist in a community, and it makes speakers frequently switch from one language to another (Hornberger & McKay, 2010, p.131). Does switching between two languages have any value or purpose? The response is undoubtedly positive, although there is still some debate. This essay agrees with Baker's statement that "switching has a purpose" when both parties to the conversation can understand their languages (Baker, 2014, p.95).



Background reading

However, there is still much controversy in the linguistic field about the definition of code-switching. The narrower sense of code-switching includes only transitions between sentences, while the broader meaning includes both inter-sentence and intra-sentence transitions. Baker suggests codeswitching occurs "between or within sentences" (Baker, 2014, p.95). Another controversy is whether it makes sense to distinguish between the terms code-switching and code-mixing. Code mixing occurs mainly in informal interactions (Nababan, 1993, p.7). Primarily, this refers to early bilingual infants' indiscriminate use of both languages (Baker, 2014, p.95). Meisel offers a functional definition of code-switching in children. He uses language mixing to refer to the coexistence of two languages in the same discourse, whether inter-sentence or intra-sentence. Code-switching, on the other hand, is defined by him as a particular pragmatic conversational skill of bilingual children, which demonstrates the ability of bilingual children to conform to the grammatical rules of both languages and to mix languages in a rational sequence within the context of specific psycholinguistic rules (Meisel, 1994, p.417).

Code-switching and code-mixing often occur together in the conversations of bilinguals; however, the contexts in which they are utilized may vary. Some scholars argue that analyzing a discourse too narrowly into whether it is code-switching or code-mixing can lead to a loss of intuitive and comprehensive judgement (Tay, 1989, p.409). On the other hand, we need more than fragmenting the whole discourse to understand the speaker's linguistic choices and the self-expressive purposes of code-switching. Some researchers insist that the subdivision of code-switching and code-mixing is significant, as they have different linguistic and psychological orientations (Kachru, 1978, p.109). Bokamba argues that code-mixing primarily reflects a user's bilingual proficiency, as it requires the ability to process the grammatical rules of two different languages simultaneously in the same sentence (Bokamba, 1989, p.287). More recently, some researchers have made a finer distinction between mixed coding and code-switching. That is, a distinction is made between the use of two or more languages at the discourse level and switching within clauses/words. Although there still needs to be a consensus on code-mixing and code-switching, their research and thoughtful process provide the information and approaches needed for future research

into the purpose and value of code-mixing and code-switching.

application of theory.

Purpose and Value of Code-switching

Gumperz and Blom (1982) classified code-switching into situational switching and conversation switching according to functional categories. Some researchers consider most of her children's code-switching to be situational code-switching, motivated mainly by a change in the object of conversation and the context of the conversation. Although they distinguish between an object and referential code-switching, it occurs less frequently (Genishi, 1981, p.112). They tend to believe that children's code-switching is much more arbitrary than adult code-switching and that most are "a slip of the tongue behaviour" due to their linguistic habits. Thus, the functional purpose is not apparent and considerable since their second language level is much lower than their mother tongue. They must turn to their mother tongue for help when they have difficulties using it in practice (Cheng & Butler, 1989, p.302; Kwan-Terry, 1992, p.247). Some scholars even suggest that code-switching's primary purpose or function for bilingual children is for immediate need or attention rather than an expression of social identity or social role.

Analytical discussion

Although children's code-switching is more complex than adults, a large body of empirical research suggests that children's code-switching is a good indicator of their bilingual ability to change roles and their awareness of their cross-cultural background (Byers-Heinlein, 2013, p.38). Some researchers suggested that children's code-switching is similar to that of adults and that it is a regular subjective linguistic phenomenon that reflects the bilingualism and personal purpose of the speakers (Cantone, 2007, p.75). There is also growing research that "bilingual children (as young as two years old) notice two different languages depending on who is talking, where and when" (Baker, 2014, p.96). Code-switching is, therefore, a valuable and purposeful communication strategy for both children and adults. Drawing on Baker's Major Uses of Code-switching (2014) and Appel & Muysken's (1987) Six Classifications of Code-switching Functions, this essay briefly discusses the purpose and value of code-switching for children.

From my observations with my bilingual children, I have found that the directive function is an essential function of code-switching for children. The main target of this function is the listener, and the aim is to convey information to a specific audience. This is very similar to Gumperz's list of "listener characteristics". This function has two primary purposes: on the one hand, the bilingual can invite a specific audience (usually monolingual speakers) to join the conversation by switching codes; on the other hand, bilinguals can switch languages in order to exclude non-similar listeners. Baker also gives a fascinating example of how two ladies in a London theatre could exclude the professor by converting English to Welsh (Baker, 2014, p.97).

The second purpose of code-switching is a phatic purpose or function (Appel & Muysken, 1987), which indicates that the talker actively wants to change the style or subtlety of the current communication. Alternatively, he or she perceives a change in style and atmosphere and uses code-switching to respond to it. This was further

clarified and discussed by Baker. He argues that language transcoding can also promote friendship. Switching from a common majority language to a minority language that the listener and the speaker can understand is respectful to the other party. Language transcoding demonstrates a desire for acceptance and a need for a shared sense of belonging, thus fostering friendship (Baker,2014,p.97). On the other hand, code-switching is also a communication strategy. Strategies have been analyzed as having a more or less direct effect on children's code-switching behaviour (Houwer, 1999, p.78). Dina Belyayeva proposes "the Model of Conceptual Structure Mapping", which considers code-switching as a problem of representational strategy (Belyayeva,1998,p.347). Baker illustrates it in two ways. For example, when reporting a real-life event, the direct use of the person's language increases the authenticity and credibility of the report. In addition, code-switching can also be "a way of the interjection", which avoids embarrassment and facilitates the achievement of one's linguistic goals by changing the language as opposed to interrupting directly. Therefore, code-switching is the "third subtle language that bilinguals use to a clever effect" (Baker,2014,p.98). application of theory.

The third purpose of transcoding is to indicate variation in social distance. This is more noticeable in the case of first-time bilingual children. Using a sample of my two children, I have observed over time that they unconsciously use the common majority language, English, when communicating with their newfound classmates. After a month, when they interacted with their more close classmates, they unconsciously used some of their friends' language. Baker's study also confirms this. The change to a regional language in communication may indicate that boundaries between speakers are being broken down, and this shift indicates solidarity and increasing integration (Baker,2014,p.97).

The fourth purpose of code-switching, aims to interpret, emphasize, or repeat. This is very similar to Appel & Muysken's meta-linguistic function. It means that the interlocutor interprets or comments directly or indirectly on one of the currently used languages by switching language forms. When discussing scientific concepts or related topics with their peers, bilingual children may draw on their mother tongue to express themselves fully, especially in more specialist areas, such as computing and medicine. Likewise, teachers use different language coding in the classroom to deepen their students' impressions (Baker,2014,p.97). However, there are cases where the speaker does not need to interpret any situation or emphasize the message through repetition in conversation; instead, he or she consciously switches codes in line with the unfolding of the discourse in a semantically paraconsistent relationship, and therefore it is more reasonable to classify this as a purpose of information confirmation.

Last but not the least, codeswitching may also be used to ease the mood and relieve pressure on the speaker (Baker,2014,p.97). Puns, humour and proverbs can often only express the speaker's intentions more subtly under the conditions of the source language. This is because the humorous or punning element embedded in the source language may not be conveyed by using a standard language translation. Appel & Muysken et al. define this as a poetic function. At the same time, humour can also serve the purpose of "directing the hearer's attention to itself" (Jakobson,1960,p.353).

The essay disputes the view of some scholars that children need contextual insight and therefore need the ability to transcode language to achieve humour. Children's innocent humour can often make adults laugh, embarrassed, cry, or even helpless in everyday life. This can also be achieved by code-switching. The reasons for this are to be found in the specific environment in which children grow up, including all aspects of the objective world in which they live, from the political system, ethnicity, social structure, and class status to the family and the natural environment in which they live. The environment in which a child lives gradually contributes to the child's cognitive context, which results from the objective world being generalized, abstracted and systematized in the human brain. Thus, "Context is right in your mind" (Van Dijk, 1980,p.132). Therefore, this paper is more inclined to acknowledge that children and adults differ in the content and manner of transcoding but that both can achieve similar transcoding purposes and values.

However, another essential purpose of code-switching is not addressed in Baker's response: the expression of self-identity. Bilinguals mix two or more languages within the same discourse to express their cross-cultural, multilingual background and multiple social identities. Some scholars have conducted similar analyses of code-switching in role-play by Spanish-English bilingual children. It has been suggested that the code-switching that occurs in the role-playing of bilingual children reflects the gradual construction of their bilingual identity. This code-switching results from the interchange between the children's native culture and the formal language and culture of the social environment where they live(Orellana, 1994,p.15). [comprehensive.](#)

Some Advice for parents on children's code-switching

A growing number of studies have confirmed the value of code-switching for children and adolescents. Children's code-switching is influenced by external environmental factors, including the place, the person they are talking to, the topic of the conversation, and the mother's language habits. It is also influenced by internal factors such as the child's age, gender, language level, cognitive ability and psychological factors. This suggests that code-switching is not just linguistic; it indicates meaningful social and power relationships (Baker,2014,p.97). Based on the factors influencing children's code-switching, this essay offers the following suggestions for bilingual parents. [Background reading](#)

Firstly, parents are expected to develop appropriate code-switching attitudes and to provide their children with more opportunities to communicate bilingually. Parents' language choice habits and attitudes to code-switching play a crucial role in the learning and development of children in foreign countries where the mother tongue is not the dominant language. Therefore, first of all, it is suggested that parents adopt an objective attitude towards code-switching and discard any bias or negative attitudes towards it. We must see suitable switching between two languages as effective child communication((Baker,2014,p.94). Some studies have indicated that bilingual children's code-switching, whether in terms of word or phrase choice, nodes of

switching or overall style of intra- or inter-sentence code-switching, frequently occurs due to adult language modelling. In other words, they argue that children's code-switching mainly involves imitating their parents' language habits. Therefore, parents are expected to take all necessary steps to ensure that their children are actively exposed to both languages for a sustained period each day (Fred Genesee). For example, parents should encourage their children to increase the frequency of code-switching in their daily communication to improve their vocabulary. Long-term exposure to code-switching may prepare children to handle bilingual input (Orena & Polka, 2019, p.2493). Some studies have also suggested that linguistic transcoding scaffolds bilingual vocabulary acquisition. In other words, the more frequently parents switch codes in discourse, the greater the child's adequate vocabulary. Moreover, this essay suggests that parents who consciously try to create a bilingual environment for their children slightly above their current language level will be more conducive to their children's bilingual progress. According to Krashen's hypothesis, when a learner receives "input" in a second language that is one level above his or her current level of language proficiency, he or she will progress in a "natural order" (Ricardo, 1998, p.231).



However, even if parents can provide an excellent bilingual environment for their children at home, the external environment is beyond their control. It is a big challenge for parents to motivate their children to code-switch when the external environment is not bilingual (Genesee, 1998, p.169). Therefore, parents are encouraged to adopt positive strategies and proactive interventions to promote bilingual communication or code-switching. Firstly, parents are supposed to help their children understand the value of code-switching in their daily interaction. If children do not appreciate the value of language code-switching, they may have low motivation to do it. According to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis theory, learners with high motivation, self-confidence, low levels of anxiety and extraversion will be more successful in second language acquisition (Ricardo, 1998, p.246). Parents should encourage and positively assess their children's code-switching by evaluating the effectiveness of their communication. Children's use of situational and conversational code-switching also indicates their bilingualism. When code-switching is applied to maximize communication effectiveness, it should be seen as a bilingual ability rather than a language deficit. Secondly, parents could inspire their children to code-switch by referring to exciting topics. It is essential to be aware of the differences between children's and adults' topics of conversation. Children's conversations are more homogeneous than those of adults, and they tend to switch codes when talking about school life or about specific local cultures, such as festivals, food, and specific events. Conversely, they may lose confidence and even suffer from anxiety if they are constantly involved in unfamiliar or uninteresting topics.

Additionally, parents should improve their code-switching identification skills and understand their child's intentions from their child's code-switching. Children's code-switching between different talkers indicates their awareness and sensitivity to the linguistic background of the talker (Genesee, 1998, p.169). They are more likely to switch codes in order to convey their communication intentions in some way.

Sometimes they passively code-switched under a norm to be shared by all parties in the conversation, including the peripheral environment. Sometimes they actively used code-switching to establish new conversational structures and relationships. As a parent, it is easier to gain insight into your child's mood changes and offer some strategies if you recognize the purpose of their code-switching.



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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

80/100

Instructor

This is an exceptional discussion of what the general bilingualism effects are , the dynamics of code-switching and you have consistently referred to your own experience to support the points you make, which makes for interesting and relevant reading.

Part Two of the assignment is well covered and well expressed.

This is a very competent discussion of how parents can help their children as well as what they should know.

What would have improved your report is the use of a voice speaking directly to parents, as well as the use of bullet points, numbering, section subtitles, and bold print to highlight the important information - the reasons, the benefits, the positive effects.

Some or many parents may need convincing. How could you have presented for instance the skills in creativity and communication that bilingualism brings in order to appeal to parents and convince them of the advantages of bilingualism?

The point you make about belonging is a good one - real life examples that people can relate realistically to are always going to

be stronger and more attractive.

However, what you present here is all valid, relevant and very insightful. It is also extremely well organised and well expressed. Excellent use of resources and command of the literature which demonstrates in depth and independent thinking.

Well done.

PAGE 1



Comment 1

Excellent very detailed response.

QM

Background reading

Evidence of wide reading

PAGE 2

QM

application of theory.

Appropriate application of theory.

QM

Analytical discussion

Useful analytical comment, critical evaluation and independent discussion.

PAGE 3

QM

application of theory.

Appropriate application of theory.

PAGE 4

QM

comprehensive.

comprehensive coverage of content and theory.

QM

Background reading

Evidence of wide reading

PAGE 5



Comment 2

Exceptionally well presented,, illustrated work.

PAGE 6



Comment 3

Excellent your work displays mastery of concepts and theories. Full use of relevant literature to deveop your ideas - well done.

PAGE 7
