DISCOURSE FUNCTIONS OF CODE-SWITCHING AMONG NORMAL KANNADA-ENGLISH & MALAYALAM-ENGLISH BILINGUALS – A PILOT STUDY

*Medha Hegde, **Deepthi Alva, ***Susan G. Oommen, & ****Sapna Bhat

Abstract

Code-switching is a complete shift to other language for a word, a phrase, a sentence and an utterance or borrowing a word from the other language and integrating it into the base language. Munhoa (1997) studied pragmatic functions among normal Basque-Spanish bilinguals and concluded that Basque-Spanish bilinguals use code-switching for a wide variety of purposes, from the need to fill lexical gaps to more complex discourse-level functions. There are no studies reported on pragmatic functions of code-switching in Indian languages. Present study focuses to look at: the discourse functions of code-switching among normal Kannada-English & Malayalam-English bilingual adults. 6 Kannada-English & 6 Malayalam-English bilingual speakers were taken. Speech samples were recorded, transcribed and studied for the presence of different code-switching patterns such as; inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching, tag switching and borrowing. Results revealed subjects with Malayalam as their L1 showed intra-sentential code switching for about 82 times, borrowing occurred 16 times, inter-sentential code switching was observed 4 times and tag switching occurred only once. Similarly, in subjects with Kannada as their L1, intra-sentential code-switching was seen 100 times, borrowing occurred 14 times and tag switching 4 times. Inter-sentential code switching was absent. Intra-sentential code-switching is commonly seen among the subjects followed by borrowing, tag-switching and inter-sentential switching. These types of switching to L2 could be due to the English educational background of subjects, linguistic motivation, lack of technical terms in native languages, also the fact that English might express the message better. Hence, present study contributes to a better understanding of code-switching as a bilingual phenomenon in general and also gives an overview of Kannada-English & Malayalam-English bilingualism. In order to validate these results, more number of bilinguals has to be studied across various Indian languages.

Key Words: Inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching, tag switching and borrowing.

Code-switching is mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech events (Bokamba 1989). It has been estimated that over half of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual (Romaine, 1989), with one-third speaking English as a first or second language or learning it as a foreign language (Crystal, 1985). A non-normative or "quaint" linguistic behavior of bilinguals or developing bilinguals is code-switching. Code-switching is the use of two languages simultaneously or interchangeably (Valdes-Fallis, 1977). It implies some degree of competence in the two languages even if bilingual fluency is not yet stable. Code-switching may be used to achieve two things: (a) fill a linguistic/conceptual gap, or (b) for other multiple communicative purposes (Gysels, 1992). While in some places and cases, code switching is the exception in many multilingual and bilingual communities, it is and should be seen as the norm (Swigart, 1992; Goyvaerts & Zembele, 1992). It appears that where code-switching is the norm it is perceived as fluid, unmarked and uneventful and where it is the exception, it will be perceived as

*Student, Dr. M. V. Shetty College of Speech & Hearing, (MVSCSH) Vidyanagar, Mangalore, e-mail: medhaslp@gmail.com, **Student, MVSCSH, Mangalore, e-mail: Deepu27feb@yahoo.co.in, ***Student, MVSCSH, Mangalore, e-mail: Susangoommen@gmail.com, & ****Consultant Speech Therapist, Copenhagen, Denmark, e-mail: dr.sapna.bhat@gmail.com*

marked, purposeful, emphasis-oriented and strange. Woolford (1983) views code-switched sentences as resulting from a mixture of phrase structure rules extracted from the two languages. She argues that phrase structure rules of two languages can be freely mixed in the construction of the phrase structures of code-switched sentences.

A particular language is a set of parameter values over the range of variations permitted by universal grammar and code switching involves the mixing of discrete languages. Hence positing a constraint or other principle which explicitly refers to code switching suggests that particular languages are primitives in syntactic theory, leading to an ordering paradox. Thus principles or constraints on code switching should not refer to the phenomenon of code switching itself but should rather appeal to independently motivated principles of linguistic theory. Code switching is universally constrained by the government relation holding between sentence constituents.

Sridhar and Sridhar (1980) assume that there is a basic language bilingual discourse and propose the terminology of guest and host languages to describe code-switched utterances. They argue that intra-sentential code-switching is a case where guest elements, which have their own internal structure, occur in the sentences of the host language, obeying the placement rules of the host language or the matrix language (at least as they saw it in the study of Kannada/English mix). Chana (1984) describes code-switching as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. The items are tied together prosodically as well as by semantic and syntactic relations equivalent to those that join passages in a single language. Heller (1992) stated that "The absence of code-switching can be as significant as the presence of it". If it is something which happens naturally in the schema of bilinguality, it must serve important functions for the language learner or user. This natural language function is in direct conflict with normative or conventional forms and attitudes about what is "Good Language" and thus, it is not appreciated or supported.

Grosjean (1982) & Sanchez (1983) agree that code-switching seems to be the norm rather than the exception in the bilingual speech mode. Studies have shown that code-switching is a rule governed phenomenon. On the functional level, it is often used as a communicative strategy and therefore, can express several and different functions within the discourse. On the structural level, several studies provide evidence that certain linguistic constraints govern code switching. Several studies have shown that intra-sentential code switching is a very common phenomenon in communication among bilinguals.

Two main lines of research on code-switching have developed. The first is "Linguistic" research on the syntactic nature of the switch. Such research examines the part of speech which is switched, usually in relation to the speaker's linguistic proficiency and also investigates the type of constraints on switching which function to maintain grammaticality during the switch. The general conclusion is that code-switching is almost always grammatical (Myers-Scotton, 1993b) therefore; its nature is determined by the individual's fluency in two languages. Less-proficient bilinguals tend to switch single items, such as, nouns or idioms because such switches are structurally less integrated into the discourse and do not require much proficiency (McClure, 1977; Poplack, 1980). On the other hand, proficient bilinguals are able to switch grammatically at the sentence level or even within a sentence. In general, though, it has been found that nouns and other single-item switches tend to be the most common, regardless of the languages used or the proficiency of the speakers (Meisel, 1994).

In contrast to the historical view of code-switching as ungrammatical and haphazard, switching is now acknowledged to be so grammatical that it has become an important research tool for investigating rules of syntax i.e., pronoun placement in different languages (Jake, 1994). Code-switching is also used to study principles of Universal Grammar, particularly grammatical constraints (Belazi, Rubin & Torivio, 1994 & Meisel, 1994). Several specific constraints on switching have been found (Belazi, Rubin & Torivio, 1994 & Myers-Scotton, 1993b). One is the free morpheme constraint, which states that a switch cannot occur between a lexical item and a bound morpheme like "-ing" or the past tense "-ed". Second is the equivalency constraint, which states that there should be the same type of word order around the switch in both languages. Although these constraints were found to hold in switches of syntactically similar languages such as Spanish and English (Poplack,1980;1981),studies of syntactically

dissimilar language switching show that these and other local constraints are not always observed (Myers-Scotton, 1992b, 1993b). However, switching always remains within the framework of Government and Binding, constrained by the operation of Universal Grammar (Belazi, Rubin & Toribio, 1994)

The second line of research on code-switching studies the "Sociolinguistic Function" performed by the switch. At the group level, such research investigates switching for the establishment and maintenance of social relationships. This is called "Situational Code-switching" (Dabne & Billiez, 1986; McClure & McClure, 1988; Myers-Scotton, 1992a; 1993a) and it is often analyzed through Speech Accommodation Theory (Genesee & Bourhis, 1982). Situational switching depends on the setting and the roles and relationships of the people involved. In some contexts, switching is normal and expected and a phrase from linguistics is used to describe it: switching is "Unmarked". In other contexts, switching is unusual and unexpected and it is "Marked" (Myers-Scotton, 1992). In this case, the switch is deliberately used to send messages about social membership, status and power..

Switching can be used to call attention to and dramatize key words during the course of a conversation (Auer, 1988; McClure, 1981; Valdes, 1981) and it can also be used to emphasize a statement by repeating important items in the other language. Bilinguals can use code-switching for clarification by switching and elaborating on a confusing statement in the second language. Switches can also be used to set off reported speech, while code-switched discourse markers can be used to attract and hold attention during speech in other language.

There are few studies done on the functional aspects of code-switching. Research regarding the pragmatic constraints on code-switching has differed in the extent to which they are prepared to assign a specific meaning to every instance of code-switching (Romaine, 1989). Poplack (1980) regards 'true' code-switching as essentially void of pragmatic significance. Blom & Gumperz (1972) introduced the concepts of transactional and metaphorical switching (also referred to as situational & non-situational code-switching). Transactional code-switching under the heading of the type of switching most commonly described as being controlled by components of the

speech event such as topic and participants. On the other hand metaphorical switching concerns the communicative effect, the speaker intends to convey (Eg. reported speech or quotations, to mark interjections or to serve as sentence fillers, to reiterate what has just been said in order to clarify or emphasize a message etc.). Gumperz (1982) suggests that linguists look at code-switching as a discourse mode or a communicative option which is available to a bilingual member of a speech community on the same basis as switching between styles or dialects is an option for the monolingual speaker. Switching in both cases would serve as an expressive function and have pragmatic meaning.

There have been researches done which have studied the specific functions of code-switching in bilingual discourse. Analysis of the functions and the relationship between code-switching and different speech acts and styles in the Chicano community in the Southwest has been carried out and it is noted that switches are triggered by different speech acts (challenge, requests, agreement etc) different styles (Evaluative vs. Narrative) and differences at connotational level, Sanchez (1983). Similar uses of code-switching among English-Japanese and Hebrew-English bilinguals has been reported respectively by Nishimura (1995) and Maschler (1991, 1994).

Study of the Pragmatic/Discourse aspects of code-switching includes different types of research. For example Blom & Gumperz, (1972); Sanchez, (1983) & others tried to assign specific functions to code-switches whereas, Heller (1992) viewed code-switching and language choice as a political strategy. In between these two extremes, studies done by Mc Convell, (1988); Myers-Scotton, (1993b) & Scotton & Ury, (1977) take in to account both the specific functions of switches within the discourse (i.e. to express anger, authority, emphasis etc.) and also the role of code-switching within the more general patterns of language choice within the community (i.e. is Code-switching the expected choice for the situation under study or not?). Munhoa (1997) studied the pragmatic functions among normal Basque-Spanish bilinguals and concluded that Basque-Spanish bilinguals use code switching for a wide variety of purposes, from the need to fill lexical gaps to more complex discourse-level functions. There are no studies reported on pragmatic functions of code-

switching and the various types of switching (inter-sentential, intra-sentential, tag switching, etc) in Indian languages. The present study tries to fill a gap by conducting a pilot study among Kannada-English and Malayalam-English normal bilingual adults.

Aims

Present study focuses to look at;

Ø The discourse functions of code-switching among normal Kannada-English bilingual adults.

Ø The discourse functions of code-switching among normal Malayalam-English bilingual adults.

Method

Subjects

12 neurologically normal subjects of the age range 19-23 years participated in the study. Six Kannada-English bilingual speakers (3 males & 3 females) & six Malayalam-English bilingual speakers (3 males & 3 females) were taken. For all six bilingual speakers of Kannada- English, Kannada was the mother tongue (L1) and English was the second language (L2). For all six bilingual speakers of Malayalam-English, Malayalam was the mother tongue (L1) and English was the second language (L2). Both the groups learnt their second language, English from at least at 6 years of age in the formal setting at school. Language Experience Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q) (Marian, Blumenfeld & Koushanskaya, 2007) was administered to check their language proficiency.

All subjects would have completed all or part of their higher education in English.

Procedure

Speech samples were collected for 8 minutes. Subjects were instructed to speak in a language they are comfortable with, either L1 or L2. Two tasks were given. The tasks carried out were general conversation, monologue. The task of general conversation included subject's name, place and hobbies, about family and friends, routine activities, personal experiences, their school and college life etc. For the task of monologue, topic of their own interest was allowed to narrate. Speech recording with each subject for both the tasks followed the similar pattern. The obtained data of 8 minutes were transcribed using standard IPA symbols for the further analysis.

A quite sound treated room was selected for recording purpose. The subjects were seated comfortably on the chair at a distance of 1 feet from the laptop placed on the table. Each subject's speech was recorded individually using a standard laptop computer with inbuilt microphone with the help of PRAAT voice recording and analysis software 5.1 Version, (Boersma & Weenick, 2009). Sampling rate was 44100 Hz and quantization level was set at 16 bits.

Results

Analysis was carried out to study the different code-switching patterns such as, inter-sentential code-switching (at sentence level), intra-sentential code-switching (at constituent or clause level), emblematic switching (at the level of tags/also known as tag switching) and borrowing (words are borrowed from L2 and used in L1).
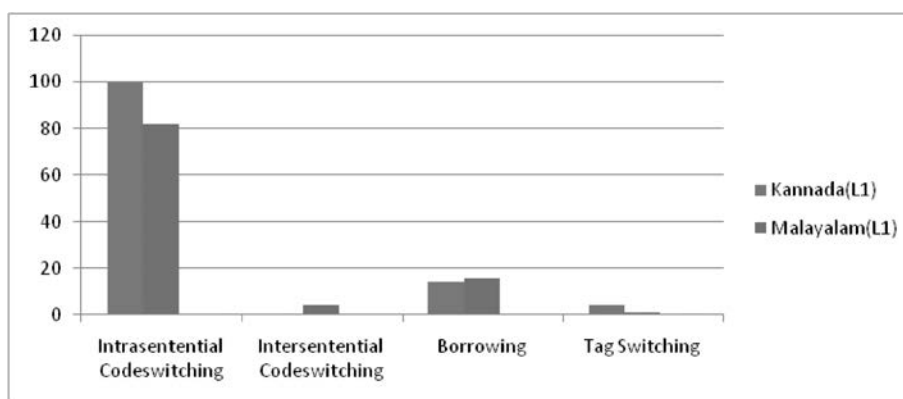

Fig 1: Different Code-switching patterns in Kannada & Malayalam Bilinguals

Tag-Switching was higher among subjects with Kannada as their L1 and occurred only once in subjects who had Malayalam as their L1. Hence, it can be noted that both Kannada-English and Malayalam- English bilinguals used various types of code-switching for variety of purposes.

Thus, findings of the present study are in agreement with the previous findings, Munhoa (1997) where the Basque-Spanish bilinguals used for variety of purposes, from the need to fill lexical gaps, to more complex discourse level functions. The result also supports the notion by Sridhar and Sridhar (1980). This also supports the other studies, Gumperz (1982), Sanchez (1983), Romaine (1989), Maschler (1991; 1994) and Nishimura (1995).

Conclusion

Present study focused on the discourse functions of code switching among two groups of bilinguals (I.e. Kannada-English & Malayalam-English bilinguals) and it is evident that subjects used code switching for various purposes, considering from filling lexical gaps to complex discourse functions. There were variations in the frequency of code switching and not in the type, which supports the universal grammar. Thus, code switching is used as an additional resource to achieve particular conversational goals in interactions with other bilingual speakers. Present study contributes to a better understanding of code-switching as a bilingual phenomenon in general and also gives an overview of Kannada-English & Malayalam-English bilingualism. In order to validate these results, more number of bilinguals has to be studied across Indian languages.

References

Auer, J. (1988). *A Conversational Analytic Approach to Code-Switching and Transfer. Codeswitching: Anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives.* The Hague:Mouton de Gruyter.

Belazi, H., Rubin, E. & Toribio, A. (1994). Code-switching and X-bar theory: The functional head constraint. *Linguistic Inquiry, 25*, 221-237.

Boersma, P. & Weenink,D.(2009). www.praat.org.

Bokamba, E. (1989). Are there syntactic constraints on Code-Mixing? *World Englishes, 8(3)*, 277-292.

Blom, J. P. & Gumperz, J. J. (1972). *Social meaning in linguistic structures: Code-switching in Norway, Directions in Sociolinguistics,* New York, Holt, Reinhart and Winston.

Chana, U. (1984). Evaluative reactions to Punjabi/English Code-switching. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 5 (6)*, 447-473.

Crystal, D. (1985). How many millions? The statistics of English. *English Today, 1*, 7-9.

Dabene, L. & Billiez, J. (1986). Code-switching in the speech of adolescents born of immigrant parents. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 8*, 309-325.

Goyvaerts, D. L. & Zembele, T. (1992) Code-switching in Bukovu. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 13*, 71-82.

Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages: An introduction to Bilingualism.* Cambridge Harvard University Press.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Gysels, M. (1992). French in Urban Lubumbashi Swahile: Code-switching, borrowing or both? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 13*, 41-56.

Heller, M. (1992). The politics of Code-switching and language choice. *Journal of Multilingual Multicultural Development, 13*, 123-142.

Jake, J. (1994). Intra-sentential Code-switching and pronouns: On the categorical status of functional elements. *Linguistics, 32*, 271-298.

Marian,V, Blumenfeld, K. H. & Koushanskaya (2007). The Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q): Assessing Language Profiles in Bilinguals and Multilinguals. *Journal of Speech, Language & Hearing Research, 50*, 940-967.

Maschler, Y. (1991). The Language games bilinguals play: language alternation at language game boundaries. *Language and communication, 11,* 263-89.

McClure, E. (1977). Aspects of Code-switching in the discourse of bilingual Mexican-American. *Latino language and community behavior,* 69-94.

McClure, E. & McClure, (1988). Macro- and micro sociolinguistic dimensions of Codeswitching in Vingard (Romania). In M. Heller (Ed.). *Codeswitching: Anthropological and*

sociolinguistic perspectives (pp.25-52). Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter.

Meisel, J. (1994). Code-switching in young bilingual children: The acquisition of g r a m m a t i c a l constraints. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 16*, 381-412.

Munhoa (1997). *Pragmatic Functions of Code-switching among Basque-Spanish Bilinguals.* University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

Myers-Scotton, C. (1992a). Common and uncommon ground: Social and structural factors in Codeswitching. *Language in Society, 22*, 475-504.

Myers-Scotton, C. (1992b). Comparing Codes-witching and borrowing. In C. Eastman (Ed.). *Codeswitching* (pp. 19-40). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Myers-Scotton, C. (1993a). *Duelling languages: Grammatical structure in Codeswitching.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Myers-Scotton, C. (1993b). *Social motivations for Codeswitching: Evidence from Africa.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nishimura, M. (1995), A functional analysis of Japanese-English Code-switching, *Journal of Pragmatics, 23*, 157-81.

Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en Espanol: Toward a Typology of Code-switching. *Linguistics, 18,* 581-618.

Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism.* Oxford, Blackwell.

Sanchez,R. (1983). *Chicano Discourse.* Rowley, Newbury House.

Sridhar, S. N. & Sridhar, K. K. (1980). The Syntax and Psycholinguistics of Bilingual Code- Mixing. *Studies in the Linguistic Sciences,* 10, 203-215.

Swigart, L. (1992). Two codes or one? The insider view and the description of Code- switching in Dakar. *Journal of Multilingual/Multicultural Development, 13*, 83-102.

Valdes-Fallis, G. (1977). Code-switching among bilingual Mexican-American women: To w a r d s an understanding of sex-related language alternation. International *Journal of the Sociology of Language, 7*, 65-72.

Valdes, G. (1981). Code-switching as deliberate verbal strategy: A microanalysis of direct and indirect requests among bilingual Chicano speakers. In R. Duran (Ed.). *Latino Language and Communicative Behavior* (pp. 95-107). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Woolford, E. (1983). Bilingual Code-switching and syntactic theory. *Linguistic Inquiry, 14*, 520-36.