

Understanding Code-switching & Word Borrowing from a Pluralistic Approach of Multilingualism

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Abstract: This paper reports research findings from multilingual participants' language use paying special attention to the phenomena of code-switching and word borrowing between English and Spanish during formal speeches and informal social interactions with church attendants. Participants were six catholic priests from Central and Western Africa serving in predominantly Hispanic communities in Texas. Data was collected through non-participant observational protocol. Results suggested that in formal settings when using their cognitive academic language proficiency skills during sermons in Spanish and bilingual Masses, participants never code-switched. However, some participants borrowed from a variety of their linguistic and cultural repertoires to effectively convey the meaning of the messages they intended to communicate during sermons in Spanish and bilingual (English-Spanish). The linguistic settings where code-switching and word borrowing are more likely to occur for multilingual working professionals in a predominantly subtractive bilingualism setting are further discussed.

Key words: code-switching, word borrowing, inter-sentential, intra-sentential, multilingual

1. Introduction

The use of more than one language when talking with relatives and friends is one of the most common phenomena among bilingual and multilingual individuals. A distinction is often made between bilingual and multilingual acquisition. In this article, we understand multilingualism as being able to use or mastering more than two languages. In other words, a multilingual individual can be called a polyglot. This definition opposes the definition of bilingual (who is able to use or mastering only two languages).

When a polyglot or a multilingual individual is engaged in conversations with other polyglots who have the

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same linguistic background, it is easy to observe how they switch from one language to another one without or with code-switching. Sometimes they borrow terms from one language to explain concepts in another language. Generally speaking, polyglots do not code-switch when talking to monolinguals.

Code-switching and word borrowing among bilingual individuals have been recently documented (Brown, 2006; De Jong, 2011; Grosjean, 2010). Unfortunately, code-switching and word borrowing have been negatively perceived by advocates of assimilationist or fractionist approach of multilingualism (De Jong, 2011). This partial view of code-switching and word borrowing motivated us to look at this topic based on non-participant observations of bilingual/multilingual professionals from Africa working in predominantly Hispanic communities in Texas from 2009 to 2012.

Moreover, little is known about this topic among multilinguals given the absence of a solid research-based framework in the multilingual-multicultural education from the pluralistic approach. Interests on multilingualism-multiculturalism acquisition are growing among scholars (De Jong, 2011). However, this topic of inquiry exists in only a handful of studies (De Howuwer, 2004; Hoffman, 2001; Maneva, 2004) that has explored the issue of code-switching and borrowing from the dynamics of multilingualism.

Certainly, insights discussed in this paper are informative for multilingual parents, teachers and administrators. The answer to our unique question of inquiry below will evoke professional awareness, spark interest, stimulate thoughts and discussions, and disseminate knowledge needed to effectively overcome the fractionist views on code-switching and word borrowing among multilinguals.

Guided by subtractive multilingualism discourses in communities they live in, many parents of multilingual children are concerned about how to assist their children to overcome the experiences of code-switching and word borrowing. The intent of this article consists of assisting parents of multilingual children (who may or may not be multilingual individuals) to understand the aforementioned phenomena from a pluralist approach of multilingualism by exploring the following question of inquiry: what are the linguistic settings where code-switching and word borrowing are more likely to occur for multilingual working professionals in a predominantly subtractive bilingualism setting?

To help our readers better understand the content of this paper, in the next section we will briefly provide the definitions of assimilationist and pluralistic approaches of multilingualism and the basic features of code-switching and word borrowing before answering our research question.

2. Literature Review

There are two main approaches to understanding multilingualism, namely assimilationist and pluralistic. In assimilationist discourses, linguistic and cultural diversity is restricted due to cultural, political and economic reasons (De Jong, 2011). Proponents of assimilationist viewpoints claim that social cohesion among people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds requires a shared language and common cultural norms (Nieto & Bode, 2011; Wiley, 2000).

The assimilationist viewpoints are advocated by many monolinguals who believe that proficiency in other languages is less important because it hinders educational, economic and political progress. They often use the interference hypothesis as a challenge toward linguistic homogenization. Moreover, the assimilationist discourse pretends to achieve greater societal effectiveness through reduction of diversity. Multilingual individuals have to measure up to the desired monolingual norm set by native English speakers (Marti et al., 2005).

In contrast, pluralistic proponents of multilingualism view linguistic and cultural diversity as a foundation part of an increasingly mobile, global and diverse world. This approach views linguistic pluralism as the social capital (Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2004) that communities should be built upon. It stresses the need to negotiate diversity with respect and fairness to all. In pluralist discourses, multilingualism is valued for individuals, groups and societies. Educators accept linguistic and cultural diversity as the norm and as desirable outcomes for schooling.

Contrary to the assimilationist approach which might yield to cultural identity problems among linguistically and culturally diverse students, this approach considers multilingual-multicultural students as interconnected learners who should form a bond and bridge social capital (Edwards, 2012; Flora, Flora & Fey, 2004; Martinez-Jones, Blackledge & Creese, 2012). This point of view strives to expand societal comparative and/or absolute advantages (Porter, 1980) for the well-being of individuals. Under this viewpoint, code-switching and word borrowing have different connotations.

2.1 Features of Code-switching and Word Borrowing

In bilingual settings, one of the most common phenomena is the use of two languages within a conversation or text. Sometimes when bilingual individuals talk to others, they switch from one language to another. They might switch within phrases (intra sentential) and/or between sentences (inter sentential) (De Jong, 2011; Pagett, 2006). Myers-Scotton (as cited in Bishop & Boveda-Lambie, 2007, p. 235) defined code-switching as the use of any two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation whether they are different languages, styles or dialects.

According to Lowi (2005), it refers to the use of language resources in multilinguals' speech to accomplish interactional goals. Its utilization begins with conceptually activated discourse-level decisions. It might be deliberate/purposeful or subconsciously with the purpose of accommodating the perceived preference of others participating in the oral and/or written conversation (Baker, 2006; Escamilla & Hopewell, 2007).

However, in multilingual practices, code-switching is used not only as a conversational tool, but also as a way to establish, maintain and delineate ethnic boundaries and identities (Lowi, 2005). Baker (2006) argued that code-switching is commonly affected by the language model provided by parents and others in family and community. Children tend to imitate the behavior of people around them. If parents code switch regularly, it is probable that their children will do the same.

For example, in South Texas, our own practices from bilingual pre-service teachers suggest that code-switching is a common practice among first generations of Spanish-speaking college students. Thus, family and community are key factors that influence code-switching development. Moreover, presence of code-switching among first generations of immigrants is a predictor of the loss of potential heritage language in the second or third generations (De Jong, 2011). Nowadays, it is common to find the use of code-switching by advertisers in some U.S. communities to reach bilingual clients (Bishop & Boveda-Lambie, 2007).

According to the aforementioned scholars, one important characteristic is the direction of code switching that refers to the ability to make certain information salient or stand out. The information that stands out is the one which is spoken in the language that is alternated to. A holistic view of bilingualism approaches code-switching as normal bilingual behavior and explores its diverse linguistic and functional characteristics (De Jong, 2011).

Sanchez (2005) established the difference between informal/unstructured borrowing (code-switching) and the structural borrowing. He argued that multilinguals transfer linguistic features from one language to another in a

systematic way depending on life settings. Borrowing occurs when these features are accepted and adopted by speakers of the transferred language.

Some linguistic, non-linguistic and social characteristics of borrowing should be met for its occurrence. These are described below: (1) **Linguistic:** making use of similar structures in both languages, being fluent in the borrowing and borrowed languages; feeling the needs of expanding the expressive and communicative powers of one language (Imm, 2009); (2) **Non-linguistic:** having ample knowledge of other cognitive and behavioral phenomena and cultures such as proverbs, funds of knowledge (Granja, 2008), possessing a broad cultural view while emulating a dominant group's language (Rosenhouse & Kowner, 2008; Marti, 2011), making inferences from the point above, and considering the borrowing features as a direct way to get into communication with other people (Rosenhouse & Kowner, 2008); (3) **Social:** repetitive and high frequency of the same structures according to the contact situations, having higher education and considering the web as ideal places to expand and gain rapid acceptance (Balteiro, 2012; Marti, 2011; Rosenhouse & Kowner, 2008), sociocultural determinants such as economic development, modernization, prestige, ethnic diversity, nationalism, etc. guide them in practicing borrowing (Rosenhouse & Kowner, 2008). To reach the main purpose of this project, the non-participant observational strategy was adopted to explore this topic of inquiry.

3. Methods

As suggested above, this study is grounded in a qualitative design, especially the non-participant observation strategy which offered the researchers an opportunity to explore new areas of research in a way that brings forth the perspectives of the research participants themselves (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Furthermore, our selected research paradigm allowed us to find the meaning that participants had regarding this topic of inquiry in a natural, formal and informal professional setting.

Observational studies rely less on the experimental elements normally associated with scientific research (reliability, validity and generalizability). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggested that observational inquiry relies more on appearance, verisimilitude and transferability. The non-participant observation is not an arranged setting for the purpose of observing behavior; it is not an artificial setting. This research was conducted in natural professional settings where behavior occurred normally. Researchers did not have contact or interact with participants and were unable to build rapport or ask questions as new information came up.

Unlike random sampling, purposeful sampling allows the researchers to choose participants who meet the selected criteria. For this study, we selected six catholic priests from Central and Western Africa serving in predominantly Hispanic communities. The theoretical sampling criteria included the following: participants had to be: (1) multilingual proficient in minimum three languages including English and Spanish, (2) serving in catholic parishes celebrating at least one Mass in Spanish and another in a bilingual setting (English-Spanish) each weekend, (3) residing in communities where the majority of parishioners were first/second or third generations of Mexican and Mexican-Americans, (4) serving in their current positions as pastor and/or parochial vicar in the United States for a minimum of three years, (5) partially completed their theological studies in Africa and/or United States, and (6) learned English as a second language in the United States after completing their philosophical studies and/or a minimum of one year of theological training in Africa. Background information suggested that all participants were male with an average of 5 to 16 years of priesthood and pastoral experiences. All participants were proficient in French, English, Spanish and at least two to four African languages. That is, all participants were multilinguals.

Considering the nature of non-participant observation research, data was collected by the Principal Investigator (PI) and one associate research staff trained by the PI through mere observational sessions using non-participant observation protocol. Participants were observed in formal and informal settings. Each researcher attended Masses celebrated by each priest for four times (2 in Spanish and 2 in bilingual English-Spanish settings) from 2009 to 2012 and used a non-participant observational protocol (see Appendix 1) to record data. Each observational session lasted approximately 70 to 85 minutes.

Generally speaking, we formally observed each participant when celebrating Masses in Spanish and/or in bilingual settings (English-Spanish). Through attendance, data collectors paid close attention to the frequency of code-switching (English-Spanish) and borrowing when preaching after the proclamation of the Gospel (approximately 10–15 minutes of preaching). Moreover, participants were briefly observed in informal settings for 10 to 15 minutes when interacting with their parishioners at the end of each Mass. We were also interested in observing how each participant communicated with some church attendants who usually code-switch when talking to each other. It is worthwhile to underline that participants were not aware of being observed to assure the naturalness of their behaviour. Each data collector used two different observation protocols to record data: one for formal observation during the spiritual sermons and another one for informal observation after each Mass. Data analysis consisted in comparing numerical data included in formal and informal observational protocol using descriptive statistics.

Trustworthiness of the findings was addressed through: (1) triangulation among the two data collectors, (2) the amount of time spending during the data collection process, (3) sharing emerging themes with participants once the conceptual frame was developed, and (4) inter-observer reliability which consisted of determining the degree to which the two observers agreed on observation frequency. To ensure high inter-observer reliability, the PI trained two observers (data collectors) with observational research techniques, provided them with clear definitions (behavior/events), and used the reliability formula described below to calculate the percentage of observer reliability:

$$\frac{\text{Number of times the 2 observers agree}}{\text{Number of opportunities to agree}} \times 100$$

In this study, the two observers had 96 observations that needed to be agreed. And 94 of the 96 observations, the observers checked the same category. Therefore, the percent of agreement was 98%. It means the scores of the observers were close during the observations, and the assessment obtained inter-observer reliability.

4. Findings

This section reports the findings of non-participant observation of language use paying special attention to the phenomena of code-switching and word borrowing between English and Spanish during formal speech event of services and informal social interactions with church attendants. To help our readers better understand findings discussed in this section, we first presented the raw observational data before analysing them.

4.1 Data from Non-participant Observation Protocol

#1 & #2: Spanish Mass. #3 & #4: Bilingual Mass. DC = Data collector. RP = Research Participant. C-S = Code-switching

RP #1

DC #1		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	X	0
	#2	0	X	X	0
	#3	0	X	X	0
	#4	0	X	X	0

Condition of C-S (intra or inter sentence): answer parishioners who address to him using English-Spanish C-S intra- sentences (inter sentence)

Condition of Borrowing: in Spanish and bilingual masses, used chunk of the gospel in English to better explain the content in Spanish several times

DC #2		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	X	0
	#2	0	X	X	0
	#3	0	X	X	0
	#4	0	X	X	0

Condition of C-S: yes, after mass with some community members using intra- or inter sentence C-S (Inter sentences)

Condition of Borrowing: in one Spanish mass explained a chunk of sermon in Spanish in English for some English — only parishioners who attended it. In the two bilingual masses I attended, the priest read the gospel in Spanish, started the sermon in Spanish and then translated the same content in English. When preaching in one language, he never used words from the other. He had great linguistic commands of both languages. Interlocutors (mostly women from second or third generation of Hispanic) often code-switches when talking after masses

RP #2

DC #1		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	X	0
	#2	0	0	X	0
	#3	0	0	X	0
	#4	0	0	X	0

Condition of C-S: after mass with some community members (English-Spanish) (Inter sentences)

Condition of Borrowing: None

DC #2		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	X	0
	#2	0	X	X	0
	#3	0	0	X	0
	#4	0	0	X	0

Condition of C-S: yes, after mass with some community members (English-Spanish intra-sentence) (Inter sentence)

Condition of Borrowing: In one Spanish mass, discussed 2 sentences in English and then translated in Spanish

RP #3

DC #1		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	X	0
	#2	0	0	X	0
	#3	0	0	X	0
	#4	0	X	X	0

Condition of C-S: none

Condition of Borrowing: used one example — sentence in French to convey meaning for the specific topic in the sermon in the bilingual mass (in Spanish and English)

DC #2		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	X	0
	#2	0	0	X	0
	#3	0	0	X	0
	#4	0	0	X	0

Condition of C-S: Yes, a little with some community members (who C-S too) after mass (Inter sentence)

Condition of Borrowing: Impressive great preacher, He had excellent commands of both languages.

RP #4

DC #1		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	0	0
	#2	0	0	0	0
	#3	0	X	0	0
	#4	0	X	0	0

Condition of C-S: usually responded according to each linguistic context after mass (Inter sentence)

Condition of Borrowing: not really borrowed words from one language to another. Instead, moved back and forth in translating the same sermon content from Spanish to English vice versa

DC #2		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	0	0
	#2	0	0	0	0
	#3	0	X	0	0
	#4	0	X	0	0

Condition of C-S: none

Condition of Borrowing: Good translator without borrowing. Explain paragraph in one language (English) and later discuss it in Spanish vice versa

RP #5

DC #1		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	X	0
	#2	0	0	X	0
	#3	0	0	X	0
	#4	0	0	X	0

Condition of C-S: C-S laughing and joking when answering to one parishioner (Inter sentence)

Condition of Borrowing: none

DC #2		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	X	0
	#2	0	0	X	0
	#3	0	0	X	0
	#4	0	0	X	0

Condition of C-S: yes, Inter sentence

Condition of Borrowing: none

RP #6

DC #1		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	0	0
	#2	0	0	0	0
	#3	0	0	0	0
	#4	0	X	0	0

Condition of C-S: Not at all; answered using correct language in English or Spanish to those who code-switch

Condition of Borrowing: sang a chorus of an African song at the beginning of the sermon during one bilingual mass and immediately provided translation in English and Spanish respectively

DC #2		# C-S Preaching	# Borrowing Preaching	# C-S after Mass	# Borrowing after Mass
	#1	0	0	0	0
	#2	0	0	0	0
	#3	0	0	0	0
	#4	0	X	0	0

Condition of C-S:

Condition of Borrowing: Use examples from native language (African) and translate them to English and/or Spanish when preaching. Nice use of his multilinguistic skills.

4.2 Analysis of Data from Non-participant Observation Protocol

It does follow from the above observational data that code-switching is a conscious and unconscious process among bilingual or multilingual working professionals. Observational data suggested that in formal settings when using their cognitive academic language proficiency during sermons in Spanish and bilingual Masses, participants never code-switched. However, some participants borrowed from a variety of their linguistic and cultural repertoires to effectively convey the meaning of the messages they intended to communicate during sermons in Spanish and bilingual (English-Spanish) speech events.

For example, in a Spanish Mass, one participant discussed two sentences in English and then translated them into Spanish to explicate important points. In addition, in a bilingual Mass, another participant read the Gospel in Spanish, preach a sermon in Spanish, and then translated the same content into English for English-only parishioners. Therefore, English-only parishioners may know the exact meaning and understand the situations. Albakry & Ofori's

(2011) findings revealed similar instances; speakers repeated one linguistic code in different linguistic code in order to reach all of their audiences. As pointed out by Chen & Jing (2008), code-switching could be used as an effective social tool for communicative purposes, including avoiding misunderstanding and enhancing personal relationships. Thus, code-switching is not an interference to language but rather a verbal mechanism of presenting an individual's social standing with regard to particular conversational participant" (Skiba, 2003, p. 3).

Outside of the formal speech event, observational data suggested that participants consciously or unconsciously used inter-sentential code-switching instead of intra-sentential code-switching to answer inquiries from community members who usually addressed them using intra and inter code-switching forms. In other words, some participants used inter-sentence code-switching when using their basic interpersonal communication skills to interact with community members. In addition, participants never borrowed words from one language to other languages. As addressed previously, analysis of non-participant observation data indicated a high percentage of inter-reliability between the two observers that further confirmed the above findings.

5. Conclusions

This research project has looked at how Catholic priests used languages during preaching and interpersonal interaction after it. Findings indicate that the phenomena of code-switching did not occur in formal Spanish and bilingual speech event of services (when using their cognitive academic language proficiency. However, in informal interactions, many participants (67%) switched one language to another language (when using their BICS). Regarding word borrowing, participants borrowed words from one language to another language when the Masses were conducted in Spanish and bilingual in order to effectively convey the meaning of the messages. In addition, participants may think that the equivalent words are better or more prestigious than another language (Sichyova, 2005). Language choice is more common in bilingual speech events than in Spanish speech events. On the other hand, the borrowing words between two languages did not appear in informal social interactions.

It is clear that switching codes or borrowing words between two languages in bilingual or multilingual settings depends on the speakers, audiences, purposes of communications, and contexts (Albakry & Ofori, 2011; Chen & Jing; Jieanu, 2010; Pagett, 2006). According to Gumperz (1982), "code-switching and code-mixing signal a change in topic, attitude, or interest since each one of the various languages within multilingual societies has its specific identity and function" (as cited in Albakry & Ofori, 2011, p. 519). Similarly, Sichyova (2005) argues that "the speech situation can change or be unchangeable depending on the topic, social status of the speaker and the place of communication" (p. 488).

Based on the findings, the researchers identified the linguistic settings where code-switching and word borrowing are more likely to occur for multilingual working professionals in a predominantly subtractive bilingualism setting. Among these contexts and situations are the following:

- (1) To involve in conversations with bilingual or multilingual interlocutors.
- (2) To signal parishioners for important messages.
- (3) To reduce parishioners' comprehension burden.
- (4) To express themselves effectively.

From data analysis, the researchers hypothesized based on the two observers' perceptions. Code-switching:

- (1) is a result of vocabulary shortage among bilinguals in a predominantly subtractive bilingualism setting.
- (2) is more frequent among bilinguals from second or third generations of immigrants.

(3) is more frequent in ethnic groups when language shift to the majority language is more likely to happen in the second and third generation.

(4) is more likely to occur in settings misled by assimilationist misconception.

(5) is seldom in multilinguals who use their full-range multilingualistic repertoires for daily professional purposes. That is to say that they consciously have knowledge of the daily professional context of each language.

(6) is seldom in multilinguals when using their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979)

(7) is often in multilinguals when talking to another bilingual or multilingual person who usually move from one language to another (when using their basic interpersonal skills — BICS) (Cummins, 1979).

Although this project provides important insights regarding code-switching and word borrowing among Catholic priests, the generalizations that the researchers made should be considered with caution because this study involved only six participants. More studies should be conducted inviting more participants, for example Catholic priests with different ethnic backgrounds or who service in different class churches. In addition, Further research is needed involving other settings, such as online settings. As suggested by Jieanu (2010), “Before the internet era, code-switching was mainly used in its spoken form, but, with so many informal interaction settings, such as chats, forums, blogs and web sites, code switching is used more and more in written forms” (p. 32).

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