

CODE-SWITCHING IN MODERN MULTI-LINGUAL AND MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY

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În lumea modernă, comunicarea între oameni, țări și naționalități devine mai intensă. Bilingvismul și multilingvismul au devenit o parte indispensabilă a lumii din prezent și din viitor. În lumea multilingvă oamenii, de obicei, sunt nevoiți să aleagă un cod de vorbire, dar uneori are loc o schimbare a acestui cod sau un amestec de coduri chiar și în enunțuri scurte – ca rezultat este creat un cod nou. Acest proces se numește schimbarea codului (sau code-switching). În același timp poligloții par să fie foarte critici în privința codurilor obținute.

In the modern multicultural world due to huge immigration processes and mixing up of various nations and cultures knowing and using more than one language has become a norm and a necessity. The world becomes more and more shrunk leading to more and more intense communication between common people, countries and nations.

In these circumstances a person, being a product of his own national culture, is to be tolerant towards the other people's opinions and to modify his own ones respectively [1].

That means that a person needs to have skills to negotiate, communicate with people of various ethnic background, race, and religion, and understand originality of their ethnic uniqueness. Linguistic relationships are part of the national relations and affect their formation enormously and knowing foreign languages and thus the cultures is an absolutely necessary element which in addition to it, makes a person's world richer, widens his horizons, gives him a huge spectrum of possibilities of more multilateral and complete cognition of the world [2].

Thus, bilingualism and even multilingualism have become an indispensable part of the present and the future world and a factor of general political and cultural development of a personality [3].

At the same time, it should be mentioned that monolingualism is still widely accepted in so many parts of the Western world that it is often assumed to be a world-wide phenomenon, to the extent that bilingual and multilingual individuals may appear to be “unusual”. Indeed, people have mixed feelings when they discover that someone they meet is fluent in several languages: perhaps a mixture of admiration and envy but also, occasionally, a feeling of superiority in that many such people are not “native” to the culture in which they function. Such people are likely to be immigrants, visitors, or children of “mixed” marriages and in that respect “marked” in some way, and such marking is not always regarded favourably.

Still bilingualism, even multilingualism is the norm for many people throughout the world rather than unilingualism, or monolingualism. A monolingual individual would be regarded as a misfit, lacking an important skill in society, the skill of being able to interact freely with the speakers of other languages with whom regular contact is made in the ordinary business or living.

In many parts of the world it is just a normal requirement of daily living that people speak several languages: perhaps one or two at home, another in the village, still another for purposes of trade, and yet another for contact with the outside world of wider social or political organization. These various languages are usually acquired naturally and unselfconsciously, and the shifts from one to another are made without hesitation.

People who are bilingual or multilingual do not necessarily have exactly the same abilities in the languages (or varieties). According to Sridhar K.K., multilingualism which involves balanced, natively-like command of all the languages is quite uncommon. Typically, multilinguals have varying degrees of command of the languages and this difference in competence might range from command of a few lexical items, basic expressions, such as greetings and rudimentary conversational skills to excellent command of the grammar and vocabulary and specialized register and styles. This can be explained that multilinguals develop competence in each of the languages to the extent that they need it and for the contexts in which each of the languages is used [4].

A particular dialect or language that a person chooses to use on in any occasion is a *code*, a system used for communication between two more parties. The term is useful because it is neutral and is not inclined to arouse emotions like the terms *dialect*, *language*, *style*, *standard language*, *pidgin* and *creole* [5].

In a multilingual world people are usually required to select a certain code whenever they choose to speak, and they may also decide to switch from one code to another or to mix codes even within sometimes very short utterances and thereby create a new code in a process known as **code-switching**. As S. Gal says, “*codeswitching* is a conversational strategy used to establish, cross or destroy boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations” [6].

Code-switching is distinct from borrowings. Borrowing becomes lexicalized and is used consistently. It also becomes adapted to phonotactics and morphology of borrowing language while code-switching doesn't normally violate grammatical restrictions in either language and it usually occurs in discourse in which two languages are liberally used.

Borrowing is eventually used by monolingual individuals lacking knowledge of the donor language; the knowledge of foreign origin disappears and the original choice to borrow is conscious and deliberate. Code-switching, on the other hand, is produced by bilingual speakers, usually those raised bilingually and might be conscious and deliberate or (apparently) unconscious [7].

The ability to shift from one language to another is accepted as quite normal nowadays and what is interesting about it is the factors that govern the choice of a particular code on a particular occasion. The question is why people choose to use one code rather than another, what brings about shifts from one code to another, and why they occasionally prefer to use a code formed from two other codes by switching back and forth between the two or even mixing them. The actual choice of code in a setting clearly marked as bilingual can be a difficult task. It is said that language plays a symbolic role in our lives, and when there's a choice of languages the actual choice may be very important, particularly when there is a concurrent shift in the relationships between the languages [8].

The factors that influence the choice of the code can be attitude, age, sex, intelligence, memory, linguistic distance between the two languages, and context of testing [9] and they can include accommodation to listeners, choice of topic, perceived social and cultural distance. Code choice might even become a form of political expression, a move either to resist some power, or to gain power, to express solidarity, maintain a certain neutrality, express identity etc. The code choice also reflects how one wants to appear to others, i.e., how one wants to express one's identity and /or how one wants others to view him

In other words, the motivation of the speaker is the important consideration in the choice. Moreover, such motivation need not be at all conscious, for apparently many speakers are not aware that they have used one particular variety of a language rather than another or sometimes even that they have switched languages either between or within utterances.

Talking in this instance about code as a language, two kinds of code-switching can be described: *situational* and *metaphorical code-switching*.

Situational code-switching occurs when the languages used change according to the situations in which the conversants find themselves: they speak one language in one situation and another in a different one. No topic is involved. It is often quite sub-conscious: people may not be aware that they have switched or be able to report, following a conversation, which code they used for a particular topic.

When a change of topic requires a change in the language used the *metaphorical code-switching* takes place. It has an affective dimension to it: a person changes the code as he redefines the situation – formal to informal, official to personal, serious to humorous, and politeness to solidarity. The interesting point here is that some topics may be discussed in either code, but the choice of code adds a distinct flavor to what is said about the topic. The choice encodes certain social values and creates certain effects people want to achieve in a particular situation [10].

Susan Beck-Seligson suggests the idea that code-switching can also be classified according to the following *types*:

- Intersentential switching occurs outside the sentence or the clause level (i.e. at sentence or clause boundaries).
- Intra-sentential switching occurs within a sentence or a clause.
- Tag-switching is the switching of either a tag phrase or a word, or both, from language-B to language-A, (common intra-sentential switches).
- Intra-word switching occurs within a word, itself, such as at a morpheme boundary [11].

Code-switching is not a uniform phenomenon., i.e., the norms vary from group to group, even within what might be regarded as a single community.

John J. Gumperz [12] illustrates that by the following situation. In a relatively small Puerto Rican neighbourhood in New Jersey, some members freely used code-switching styles and extreme forms of borrowing both in everyday casual talk and in more formal gatherings. Other local residents were careful to speak only Spanish with a minimum of loans on formal occasions, reserving code-switching styles for informal talk. Others again spoke mainly English, using Spanish or code-switching styles only with small children or with neighbours.

Besides that, each communicating subgroup tends to establish its own conventions with respect to both borrowing and code-switching, and the factors such as region of origin, local residence, social classes, and occupational niche are involved in defining the norms. Moreover, bilinguals in such communities are aware not only of the norms that apply within their own sub-groups but also of some of the norms that other bilinguals observe.

For instance, residents of such large Spanish-English-speaking communities as San Francisco or New York, which include immigrants from many Latin American regions, in fact claim that they can tell much about a person's family background and politics from the way that person code-switches and uses borrowings. What the outsider sees as almost unpredictable variation becomes a communicative recourse for members. Since bilingual usage rules must be learned by living in a group, ability to speak appropriately is a strong indication of shared background assumptions. Bilinguals, in fact, ordinarily do not use code-switching styles in their contact with other bilinguals before they know something about the listener's background and attitudes. To do otherwise would be to risk serious misunderstanding.

Code-switching itself may meet with certain kinds of “resistance”. Numerous instances have been reported of speakers of various languages refusing to allow others to code-switch and instead insisting on using the other's language, even if sometimes such use provided a poorer means of communication.

In colonial times Europeans have been known to use a local language very badly with servants rather than let them use English, French, and so on, in order to maintain social distance. In other circumstances knowledge of the second code must be suppressed, i.e., code-switching is disallowed. Certain social situations may require that one code be used rather than another, even though that second code is known to all participants but the first only to some. For example, a head of state may be required to use the official language of that state when addressing another head of state, at least in public. On many public occasions in Canada it is obligatory for officials to say a few words in the official language that they are not using, i.e. introduce some French sentences into an otherwise all-English speech.

The ability to code-switch may even be regarded with suspicion or disfavour in certain circumstances: speakers of English do not usually give much credit to their fellows who speak “exotic” languages, such ability being regarded quite often as “strange” in some way. As it was mentioned above, many English-speaking societies find difficulty in coming to terms with immigrants who speak other languages, the resulting multilingualism often being viewed as creating “problem” [13].

Monolinguals are likely to be very critical of the new codes that result. They may even use derogatory terms to describe what they hear, for example, *Franglais* (French and English in Quebec), *Fragnoles* (French and Spanish in Argentina), *Spanglish* (Cuban Spanish and English in the USA), and *Tex-Mex* (English and Mexican Spanish in Texas). Such dismissal of the phenomenon demonstrates serious misunderstanding [14].

Code-switching performs the following several **functions and reasons**:

First, people may use code-switching to hide fluency or memory problems in the second language (but this accounts for about only 10 percent of code-switches)

Second, code-switching is used to mark switching from informal situations (using native languages) to formal situations (using second language).

Third, code-switching is used to exert control, especially between parents and children.

Fourth, code-switching is used to align speakers with others in specific situations (e.g. defining oneself as a member of an ethnic group). Code-switching also “functions to announce specific identities, create certain meanings, and facilitate particular interpersonal relationships)

Other reasons for switching include the prestige of knowing the out-group or dominant language, often a language associated with a religion, empire, education, and a wide sphere of operation and interest [15].

Thus, by code-switching in a conversation, a speaker can both access different identities and accommodate to others. Code-switching allows a speaker to meet someone else half-way, establish common ground, and

show flexibility and openness. Such qualities are extremely important in the particular social environment. Multilingualism is an accepted fact of life; it shows one to be a cooperative person, someone who can recognize that everyone does not have the same background. It reduces possibilities of conflict in situations which might be fraught with danger.

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