Non-native Language as the Unmarked Code in Bilingual Utterances of Libyan Children in USA

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Spring 2013

Abstract

This paper investigates the effect of multiple cultures and languages on the bilingual utterances of Libyan children who live in the United States and who have acquired English after they arrived there at ages from 3 to 5. Data analysis is based on the Markedness Model (Myers-Scotton, 1993) in order to determine which language is the unmarked code and which language is the marked one. According to Myers-Scotton, the unmarked code is mostly the native language, which is also supposed to be the dominant language. The bilingual utterances in this study are analyzed in terms of subjects' responses to the interviewer and the culture-specific topic under discussion; some of the responses are made in a code different from the one in which the question was asked; others are culture-related. The results show that it is the dominant language (not necessarily the native language) that is most likely the unmarked code, and the less dominant language is the marked code which is chosen more consciously.

Introduction

Code Switching (CS) can be defined as the alternation of more than one code or varieties of a code in order to accommodate to a specific grammatical or sociopragmatic reason(s). In this sense, CS is viewed as a functional process rather than a result of an imperfect linguistic knowledge of one of the codes involved. Social factors can have a great impact on the utterances of bilingual speakers; different contexts and change of topic in addition to other factors can be the main reason behind switching codes. Such social factors are seen as the motivation of all kinds of CS, including intersentential and intrasentential CS (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Apparently the choice of a particular code to be the Matrix Language (i.e. the one that forms the main grammatical framework of an utterance or series of utterances) and another one to be the Embedded Language (i.e. the one that surfaces within the Matrix Language framework) is motivated by sociopragmatic factors which differ in different communities and therefore result in various types and patterns of CS. Jagero and Ondongo (2011) argue that interlocutors are usually unaware which language is being used; i.e., CS is more of an unconscious behavior in which code selection is an automatic process which is almost unpredictable.

CS serves different purposes including minimizing costs and maximizing rewards. Perhaps the identity function of CS is the most widely explored one. Many studies have focused on the relationship between the linguistic behavior in a particular setting and establishing a specific identity. This relationship is viewed from different dimensions such as ethnicity, race, class, etc. For example, Rampton's (1995) study of language behavior of Afro-Caribbean, Asian, and Anglo adults in Ashmead, UK focuses on the relationship between CS and ethnicity. Rampton argued that those individuals practice a type of CS referred to as *crossing* (a mixed code that belongs to the speakers' ingroup), which served a number of functions. Those adolescent speakers used Panjabi, Creole, and stylized Asian English in order to forge a common group, resist widespread stereotypes, and dissociate from the older generation (Nilep, 2006).

Migge (2007) worked on the patterns of CS between different varieties of Creole in the Eastern Maroon community “French Guiana”. The findings show that CS is used to establish a new identity, affirm self-representation and reinforce relationships with other interlocutors. According to Migge, formal relationships and positional identities are established by using Lesipeki Taki (the prestige variety in the Maroon community). Those bilinguals switch languages in order to be viewed as non-traditional individuals who are leading a modern life in an urban world. On the other hand, friendship-type “less formal” identities are constructed by using Sranan Tongo (an urban Creole variety). It follows that codes are associated with different socio-cultural meanings; therefore, CS serves to establish different identities to fulfill the requirements of different social interactions. This results in negotiating interpersonal meanings, and therefore identities, beyond such interactions. Auer (2005, p. 405) emphasizes these findings by stating that “[s]peaking a particular languages is seen as an index of membership in a particular social (including ethnic) group”.

. There is some disagreement on the deterministic nature of CS. Muthwii (1986) studied CS behavior is suburban Kenya among English, Kalenjin, and Kiswahili and found that it was almost impossible to predict what code to choose in different conversational events at interactional and interpersonal levels. Most research, however, shows that there is a relationship between the setting and the linguistic form; i.e. CS depends largely on the degree of ‘formality’ that the situation requires. A great deal of research has been conducted in bilingual communities with a focus on the various languages/dialects and the different purposes they serve. Gumperz (1985) for example, conducted a study on languages spoken in northern India: standard Hindi, village dialect, and regional dialect, each of which serves a different purpose. The results show that local residents used village dialect and regional dialect in less formal settings and among each other at home. Standard Hindi, on the other hand, is spoken at work and with people from outside groups in the village. Barker’s (1947) analysis of CS among Mexican Americans who live in Tucson, Arizona shows that while Spanish is spoken in informal settings among family and friends, English is the language used in more formal contexts with Anglo-Americans or even

with interlocutors who understand Spanish. Barkers also noticed that CS was likely to occur among younger individuals than older ones. Moreover, CS can result from negotiating power and prestige among the "ingroup" individuals. Alvarez (1989) conducted a study on CS among Puerto-Ricans in New York, and found that Spanish is considered the "majority code" and is regarded as the prestige variety. This function of CS serves "to offer the bilingual a chance to increase his or her status by using the 'prestige' code in conversations with other bilinguals" (Halmari & Smith, 1993, p.428).

The Markedness Model

Based on the above, it is clear that CS is not a purposeless act. Auer (1991) states that CS in bilingual conversations is the discourse marker through which marked choices of a specific code become more significant than other linguistic items from the other code(s). Myers-Scotton (1993) views CS as a skillful performance which is motivated by social parameters that differ cross-linguistically. These parameters may result in shifting the code or changing the linguistic characteristics of the utterance; consequently, unexpected choices (marked codes) are likely to occur in order to fill the requirements of the current conversational events. This process of functional CS is elaborated into "the Markedness Model" proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993). A goal-oriented model which is based on the social motivations for CS with regard to the social markedness indexed in different codes used in some interactions in order to meet certain social characteristics. This is supported by Migge (2007, p. 56) who states that "each code indexes a specific kind of social relationship, including participants' attitudes and expectations to each other".

Research on CS indicates that in bilingual communities, individuals' bilingual utterances include a set of linguistic elements which are characterized by being more or less marked (Gross, 2000). Greenberg (1966; cited in Gross, 2000) also suggests that CS is not based on the presence or absence of certain properties, but to the frequency of occurrence of a certain code; i.e. the increasing frequency of a given code or variety labels it as the unmarked code. In this sense, the unmarked choice in bilingual

utterances represents the expected code or variety; therefore, it is used as the Matrix (dominant) language in that specific context (Barnes, 2012). This model also shows CS to be a strategic, dynamic, and purposeful act in which bilingual speakers are viewed as rational agents who act in such a way in order to maximize rewards and minimize costs. For example, Gross (2000) investigates the informal dialogues in the works of Luis Valdes among Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans. He finds that marked CS is used by low-status individuals as a face-threatening act to empower them and assure their control of social interactions with Anglo Americans who represent the majority and powerful group which mostly uses the unmarked code. Gross further argues that this minority group's use of the marked CS is a purposeful and intentional act in order to negotiate a new social role implying a new set, even moving in the direction of establishing a new unmarked code (p. 1299).

In the Markedness Model, utterances are produced in a specific code or variety in order to express the speaker's intentions towards a specific audience with whom a mutual understanding of that variety is shared; i.e. the listeners make inferences and predictions about the intentions of choosing a particular code by speakers who activate the premise with which their intentions are expected to be decoded (Gross, 2000). This speaker/listener relationship structures the premise of the Markedness Model, which examines the social meaning of utterances (intentionality of the codes chosen). In this sense, the Markedness Model is limited to two domains: first, it is based heavily on external knowledge of conversational language use. Second, it depends largely on the analyst's (usually the listener's or addressee's) assumptions and expectations of speaker intentions and knowledge of the RO set which is negotiated to match the needs of the current exchange (Nilep, 2006). For example, the choice of some forms expected in certain communities, e.g. *tu/vous* in French depends largely on parameters such as power and status; i.e. (*tu*) is used with family and friends, whereas (*vous*) is used more formally to address individuals of higher status and power. In other words, (*vous*) is unmarked in formal interactions, and (*tu*) is unmarked in less formal ones (Burt, 2002).

The Markedness Model's focus on the interpretation of bilingual utterances with reference to their social meaning is defined by Su (2009, p. 374) as "a comprehensive theory seeking to account for social motivations of code-switching cross-culturally". The model involves the selection of certain linguistic items on the basis of variables such as speakers' relationships, topic, purpose, etc (Gross, 2000). As Myers-Scotton (1993) states, languages in multilingual communities are associated with social roles and functions which can be different regarding the codes or varieties involved. (Myers-Scotton, 2006). Accordingly, choosing a particular code reflects the bilingual speakers' understanding of the social context and consequently calls for negotiations over the most relevant RO set(s) (Nilep, 2006; Goldbarg, 2009); in other word, bilinguals seek the appropriate RO set in order to "negotiate new identities or multiply exciting ones" (Myers-Scotton, 2002, p. 206). Myers-Scotton (1993) refers to this process as the "negotiation principle" (p.478); the choice of a specific code is based on the speaker's motivations and desires to use a particular code as long as meanings are constrained to references of linguistic components shared by the interlocutors in a speech community, the code chosen indexes the RO set required for the current situation. Therefore, speaking is viewed as an interactional and rational behavior which involves negotiation. Accordingly, the negotiation principle expresses the attempt to make a shift in the nature of bilingual interactions by changing their linguistic forms (Burt, 2002). The negotiation over the RO set and the choice of one specific code over the other(s) requires a mutual understanding of the social role of RO sets and the codes in which they are reflected; otherwise, there will be a break down in the flow of communication among interlocutors. As Jagero and Odongo (2011, p.3) state, the negotiation principle governs the conversational exchange in which interlocutors make decisions regarding which code to choose in order to negotiate their social identities.

Generally speaking, bilingual speakers switch languages for a number of reasons which vary cross-culturally, the shift can be from the unmarked code to the marked code or vise versa. The marked code can play a major role in shifting the topic and intentions of the interlocutors in that it has control over the outcomes of the interactions. The bilingual speaker acts consciously and intentionally in order to increase

the benefits and decrease the costs of the bilingual interaction; this means that the speaker's personal goals are crucial and paramount in making expectations about code choices (Myers-Scotton, 2002). As a result, the speakers can have certain control over the social distance between the interlocutors. As social factors motivate the choice of a particular code; they are also involved in assigning the ML in the bilingual CP; and consequently, help identifying the unmarked code (the code that is the most expectedly to use). It thereby follows that the premise of the markedness model is based on the goals of the conversation as it recognizes what individuals obtain by making different choices.

Purpose of the study

According to Myers-Scotton (1993) the bilingual's first language is most likely to be the unmarked choice, even though the second language can be used as the unmarked choice in more formal contexts. This means that code choice is not unsystematic; rather, it is an intentional and purposeful behavior which is motivated by psychological and social factors (Gross, 2000). The argument here is that the unmarked code in a given bilingual utterance is typically the ML in that utterance. Myers-Scotton (1993) claims that the bilingual's native language is normally the ML; and consequently, the unmarked code.

The purpose of the study is to show that the unmarked choice of a particular code does not necessarily come from the native language of the bilingual speaker; and that if the unmarked code is the second language, it does not have to occur in formal contexts. It is hypothesized that the unmarked choice can possibly be the second language in bilingual children's utterances.

Methodology

The current paper applies the Markedness Model to the bilingual utterances of Libyan children who live in USA. The participants (9 females and 7 males) speak Libyan Arabic (a variety of standard Arabic) and have only learned English when they came to USA at the age of two and above. They lived the first two years (or more) of their lives in Libya, and only learned English when they came to USA. The children included in the study originally came to a small lower Midwestern city because their fathers are graduate students at a large university there. Table (1) illustrates the age distribution of the participants.

#	*Name*	*Gender*	*Age of arrival in The USA*	*Period of residency in USA by year*	*Current age*
1	Ab	M	6	2	8
2	Ad	M	2	4	6
3	Al	F	5	5	10
4	Ay	F	3	4	7
5	Ba	M	4	4	8
6	Fa	F	6	5	11
7	Ha	M	4	5	9
8	Ky	F	2	3	5
9	Md	M	7	2	9
10	Ma	M	1	4	5
11	Mr	F	7	4	11
12	My	F	2	3	5

13	Na	M	6	4	10
14	Ra	F	1	4	5
15	Re	F	3	4	7
16	Sa	F	2	4	6

Table 1, Age distribution of participants

Those children go to Elementary school, where they speak English only, from Monday to Friday. After school, the children go to a Family Resource Center , where they speak English only, from Monday to Friday, from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. Every Sunday they go to Arabic School at a mosque, where they speak Arabic most of the time. The parents confirm that the language spoken at home is mostly Arabic, with English being used as well, only less frequently. Those families intend to go back to their home country upon the fathers' graduation from the university.

Data Collection:

This paper focuses on CS (from and into Libyan Arabic and English) in bilingual utterances of Libyan children in order to determine the unmarked code. The children were interviewed separately by the researcher; each interview session was audio-taped and lasted from 6 to 8 minutes. The researcher discussed topics with the participants related to their everyday life, events and activities (e.g. activities at school with friends and at home with the family). Except for the interviewer's choice of language and topic in certain parts of these interviews, the interactions were not scripped in advance so they had the character of natural spontaneous conversations; in other words, they provide a non-formal context. The participants were interviewed by having open conversations in a natural setting in which English and Libyan Arabic were used. The researcher asked questions in both English and Arabic, and the children answered by using the two languages as well. In the pre-planned parts of the interviews, the researcher asked the children some questions about different events and activities at home and at schools. The

pattern of the questions was manipulated so that some questions about Libyan activities and events were asked in English and some in Arabic, and some questions about American activities and events were asked in Arabic and in English. As the participants were talking, the researcher used backchannels (e.g. umm, uha, mm) in order to avoid choosing a code that may affect the code pattern chosen by the participants. The purpose is to see if the language of the question has a stronger influence on the language of the response than the cultural association of the topic.

Analysis and Discussion

Data analysis in this study is based on the assumption that CS in the children's responses is largely affected by two aspects: the nature of the topic under discussion, and the language chosen by the interviewer to ask the questions. In addition, the analysis investigates the selection of the languages as unmarked vs. marked codes based on the argument that the native language is not necessarily the unmarked code as Myers-Scotton (1993) claims.

The effect of the language of the questions on responding with a specific code

Table 2 shows the overall variation in languages of the questions and their responses in these conversations. It is clear that the number of answers is signiuficantly larger than the number of the questions. Answers were classified into two types: the first one includes answers to the reseacher's questions and follow-up questions, the second is the responses to the reseacher's backchannels. The researcher altered codes when asking about American and Libyan events in order to see if the children's responses would be affected by the language used to ask the question or by the topic under discussion. Backchannels (e.g. umm, uha, mm, aha) were used to see if the children would keep using the code they first chose to answer the question(s) or if they would alter to another code. The children tended to elaborate on their answers whenever the researcher used these backchannels, and sometimes there was a shift in the topic after these backchannels were used; therefore, counting the answers is not based on code alternation; rather, it is based on the number of times the child talked between the researcher's utterance of backchannels and follow-up questions. In other words, if backchannels were used by the researcher two times during the child's answers, that counts as two answers by the child. For example, the answers in (1) are counted as two answers because the child elaborated on her answer and shifted the topic after the researcher used the backchannel (aha). Also example (2) includes three utterances by the child as she responded to the researcher's backchannel "uhm" and phrase "I see".

(1) RESEARCHER: shin tder-o fi al-weekend?

What do-you(PLU) in the-weekend?

'What do you do in the weekend?

KY: mshin-a l-Oklahoma, mshina l-l-mata'am, mshina l-Aldi (*answer# 1*)

went-we to-(Oklahoma City), went-we to-the-restaurant, went-we to-Aldi

'We went to Oklahoma City, we went to the restaurant, we went to Aldi.'

RESEARCHER: aha!

KY: wa mama b-temshi l-doctor godwa ashan baby b-t-akhd-o ala June thirty (*answer # 2*)

And mommy will-go to-doctor tomorrow because baby will-she-take-him on June thity.

'and mommy will go too the doctor tomorrow because she is having a baby on June thirty.'

(2) RESEARCHER: Wa el- FRC?

And the-FRC?

'What about the FRC?'

RE: Ehne fi el-program wa sometimes ehne nemsh-o barra to play outside. (*answer #1*)

We in the-program and sometimes we go-we out to play outside.

'We have a prgram sometimes we go out to play outside'

RESEARCHER: uhm.

RE: wa ehne nder-o activities. (*answer # 2*)

And we do-we activities.

'and we do activites'

RESEACHER: I see.

RE: huwwa different every time. (*answer # 3*)

It different every time.

'It is different every tome.'

Questions				Answers			
English		Arabic		English		Arabic	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
110	50	110	50	333	83	69	17
Tottal: 220				Tottal: 402			

Table 2. the variation of languages used in questions and responses

As table 2 shows, the questions asked in Arabic and English were perfectly balanced, but the majority of the responses were in English. Nevertheless, the language of the question had an effect on the children's language choices, Table 3 presents these data in more details; it shows the variation of codes chosen in the responses to the questions asked in Arabic and in English separately.

Answers in English				Answers in Arabic			
N		%		N		%	
333		83		69		17	
Answers to questions asked in English		Answers to questions asked in Arabic		Answers to questions asked in English		Answers to questions asked in Arabic	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
309	93	24	7	32	46	37	54

Table 3. Code variation in the subject's answers to questions in Arabic and English

Table 3 shows that the language used to ask the questions can have an influence on the selection of the responses language(s). Figure 1 illustrates this variation. Although English dominates the sinteractions overall (as shown in Table 2), English is very rarely used in response to questions framed in Arabic (N=13, 7%) while Arabic is frequently used in response to questions asked in English (N=25, 54%). This odd imbalance makes strong claims about the dominant language in these interviews somewhat problematic.

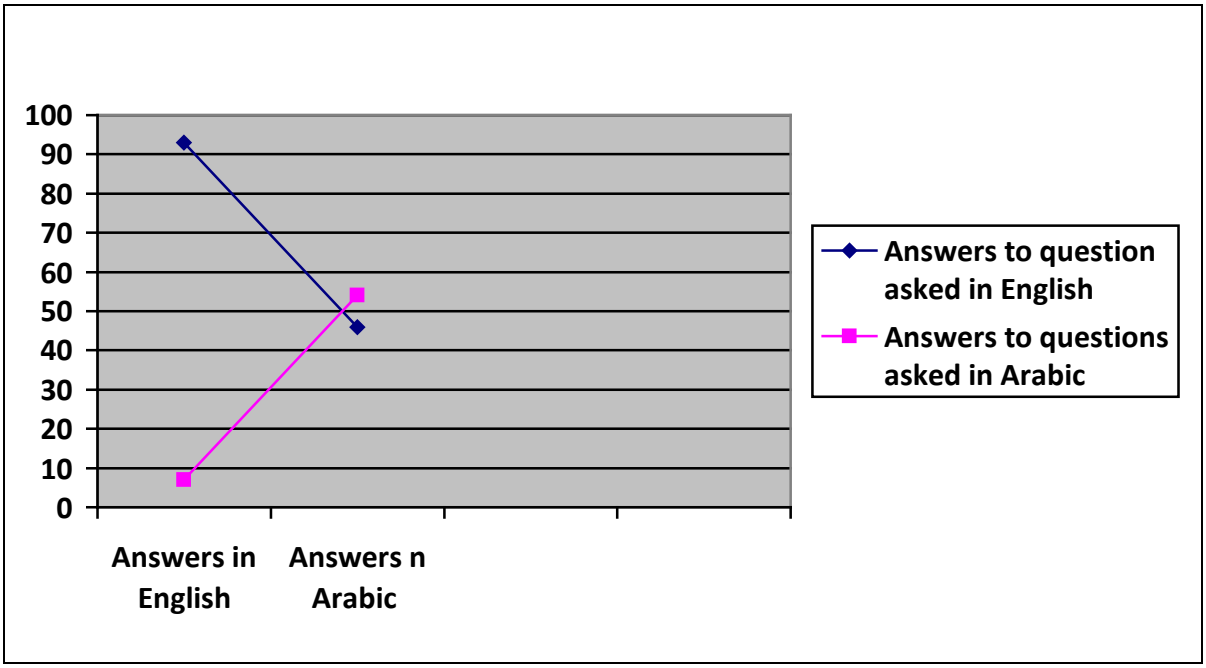

Fig. 1, Code variation in the subject's answers to questions in Arabic and English (in percentage).

The follwing examples show the details of classification for these responses. In examples (3), (4) and (5), the researcher asked the children questions in English, and the children responded in English as well.

(3) RESEARCER: when you go to the mosque, what do you do?

KY: Oh, we don't go to the mosque anymore.

(4) RESEARCHER: what is your favorite food?

BA: Bananas and apples!

(5) RESEARCHER: which one do you like more, school or the FRC?

SA: I like both of them.

In (6), the researcher asked the question in Arabic, but the child answered in English. This shows the influence of the second language on the children's bilingual utterances. Notice, however, that an EL item

"Joma'a" is used in the child's response. The topic here is about Friday prayer; accordingly, the child used this item to refer to the prayer, but the effect of the topic on the language of the response will be discussed in more detail below. In this case, since the interviewer use the lexical item in questions, the EL usage could be considered echoic. In (7), the researcher asked a question about the special dishes cooked during Ramadan. The child responded in English even though the question was asked in Arabic about an Islamic event.

(6) RESEARCHER: T-emsh-o l-joma'a?
You-go- PLU SUF to-joma'a (Friday Prayer).
'Do you go to the Friday prayer?'
SA: sometimes every Friday we go to the joma'a

(7) RESEARCHER: Fi Ramadan shin akter haja omo-k tabakhe-t-ha?
In Ramadan what most thing mother-your cook-SUB FEM- OBJ FEM?
'What did your mother cook most of all during Ramadan?'
AL: I'm thinking, I don't know, she cooked a lot of stuff.

Interestingly, in (8) the researcher asked the first question in Arabic, and the second question in English, but the responses to the two questions were in English. The use of the Arabic EL "dars" (lessons) in the second response can be attributed to the fact that the conversation was about activites at home where Arabic is the dominant languagel that is spoken most of the time; however, English seems to be the dominant language in the child's responses to the questions asked in both Arabic and English.

(8) RESEARCHER: w ente leesh tta'ark-ee ma'a khoo-k?
And you(FEM) why fight-SUB (FEM) with brother-your?
'And why do you fight with your brother?'
AL: I try to be nice to him, but he makes me like I want to punsh him.

RESEARCHER: And what does your mother do?

AL: She gives me a lot of *dars* as punishment.

The case is not the same in example (9) where the language used to ask the question affects the code chosen to respond to that question. The researcher asked the first question in English and the child responded in English as well: when the researcher asked the next question in Arabic, the child responded in Arabic.

(9) RESEARCHER: What do you like your mother to cook for you for lunch?

BA: Like rice.

RESEARCHER: w shin tanee?
And what also?
'And what else?'

BA: Makarona
Pasta

In example (10), the child used an EL "that guy he speaks" in his response to the question asked in Arabic. The reason the English phrase is classified as the EL is that the child uses the system morpheme "fi" in Arabic; according to the MLF model (Myers-Scotton, 1993), all the system morphemes come from the Matrix Language. The second question is asked in Arabic and the child responded in Arabic as well.

(10) RESEARCHER: Lamma temsh-o l-e-jame'a yom el-joma'a shin tder-o?
When go-you(PLU) to-the-mosque day the-Friday what do-you(PLU)?
'When you go to the mosque on Friday what do you do?'

HA: gady that guy he speaks ba'aden ehnee nsall-o fi joma'a
There that guy he speaks then we pray-we(PLU) in Friday prayer.
'There that guy he speaks then we pray the Friday prayer'.

RESEARCHER: ba'ad e-sala?

After the-prayer?

'After the prayer?'

HA: anee n-emshi l-l-hosh

I I(SUB)-go to-the-home

'I go home'.

The sentence in (11) also includes an EL 'two weeks ago' in the child's response to the question which is asked in Arabic. An English EL also occurs in (12) in an answer to a question asked in Arabic.

(11) RESEARCHER:Okht-k gale-t heya theb al-bazeen, w enta theb-a?

Sister-your said-FEM SING she like the-bazeen, and you(MASC) like-it?

'Your sister said she likes Bazeen, do you?'

HA: Mama heya darat-a two weeks ago.

Mammy she did-it two weeks ago

'mammy made it two weeks ago'.

(12) RESEARCHER: Temsh-o l-e-jama'a?

Go-you(PLU) to-the-mosque?

'Do you go to the mosque?'

SA: aha, yeah and Friday be-jee ehne taw nemsh-o l-e-jam'a

Aha, yeah and Friday is-come we just we(SUB)-go-we to-the-mosque

'Aha, yeah and Friday is coming we will go to the mosque'.

In other words, most answers to questtions (asked in Arabiic and English) are in English. Moreover, answers in Arabic are most likely to include English ELs; this supports the argument presented in the paper which states that English (which is the second language) is the subjects' unmarked code; i.e. te dominant language. The examples in (13) and (14) add support to the argument that English is the

subjects' dominant language. In these examples the researcher asked the questions in Arabic, and the subjects' responses came in English.

(13) RESEARCHER: Theb otlat nehayat al-asboo'a?
Love holiday end the-week?
'Do you like weekends?'
NA: Sometimes I don't like it.

(14) RESEARCHER: Hasett-y roh-ek estafad-ty?
Felt-you(FEM) self-you(FEM) benitiftted-you(FEM)?
'Did you feel you benifitted from that?
MR: A little bit.

The effect of the topic on responding with a specific code

The linguistic choice of the questioner, however and the apparent dominance of English were not the only factors involved in the children's code choices. The topics discussed in the interviews included events related to Islamic Libyan culture and American culture. The researcher used both English and Arabic to ask about these events. The questions were manipulated so that some Islamic Libyan events are asked about in English and Arabic, and some American events are asked about in Arabic and English. The purpose is to find out if the topic under discussion has an influence on the code(s) chosen for the response. Table 4 displays the variation of response codes in accordance to the topic in the current interact.

American cultural topics				**Libyan cultural topics**			
Asked in English		**Asked in Arabic**		**Asked in English**		**Asked in Arabic**	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
61	55	49	45	49	45	61	55

Answers in English		Answers in Arabic		**Answers in English**		**Answers in Arabic**		Answers in English		Answers in Arabic		Answers in English		Answers in Arabic	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
161	93	13	7	141	88	20	12	22	48	24	52	9	43	12	57

Table 4. Code variation in the subject's answers to questions about American and Libyan cultural topics

As table 4 shows, English continues to be resorted to more than Arabic; in other words, even with topic mismatches, English is the dominant language in the subjects' bilingual interactions most of the time.. The subjects used English to answer questions about Islamic Libyan events as well as American cultural topics. There are instances in which Arabic is used more than English (e.g. when answering quesings about Libyan events); however, as shown in Table 4, the difference between choosing Arabic vs. English in these instances is not great. Figure 2 shows these findings.

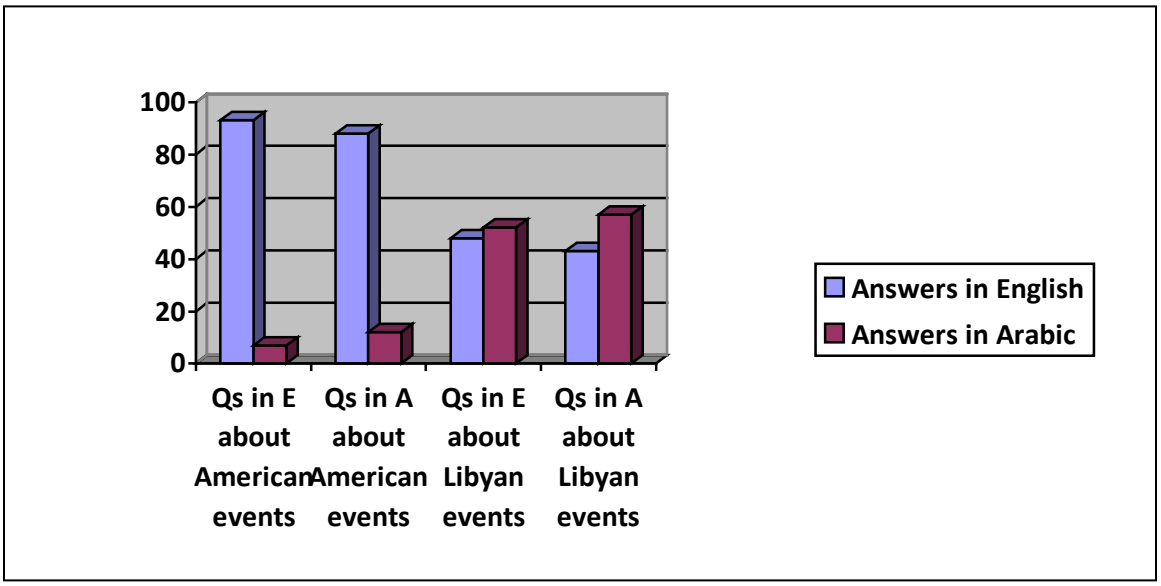

Fig. 2. Variation of codes chosen in answers about American and Libyan cultural events

The example in (15) shows how the child's response was affected by the topic under discussion in the current situation. The discussion was about how the child spent her time with her siblings during Friday prayer time at the mosque. The researcher asked the first question in Arabic and the child responded in Arabic with two English ELs included in the response; a behavior that reflects the

dominance of English over Arabic in these utterances. The child gave a similar response to the second question which was asked in Arabic.

(15) RESEARCHER: shin tder-o yom el-joma'a
What do-you(PLU) day the-Friday?
'What do you do on Friday?
RE: Ehny mashi-na l-e-jama'a fi al-Friday wa mashi-na fi al-playground.
We went-we(SUB) to-the-mosque in the-Friday and went-we(SUB) in the-playground.
'We went to the mosque on Friday and went to the playground'.

RESEARCHER: What did you do?

RE: Ehne klee-na wa la'ab-na fi al-playground.
We ate-we(SUB) and play-we(SUB) in the-playground.
'We eat and play in the playground'.

In (16) the child responded to answers asked in Arabic and English by using Arabic and English as well. Also, the child used Arabic ELs and English ELs in her response. The Arabic EL 'suraz' is a bare form "ill-form" which consist of a noun (sura "a chapter in Quran") + the English plural suffix 's' (pronounced /z/); in other words, this bare form includes a root in Arabic and a suffix in English. This Arabic EL in also included in the English response to the third question as a singular noun. The child's English response to the first question included other Arabic ELs (alef 'A'), and (baa 'B'). Interestingly, the second question was asked in Arabic and the response came completely in English with no ELs involved.

(16) RESEARCHER: What do you learn at the Arabic school?
AY: They teach us Arabic and a lot of sura-z and some people don't know the alef and baa
RESEARCHER: wen wasalt-o fi el-horoof?
Where reached-you(PLU) in the-letters?

‘Where did you reach in the alphabet?’

AY: I know all of them.

RESEARCHER: t-agder-y t-agr-y aiy haja be-el-arabi?
You(FEM)-can-you(FEM) you(FEM)-read-you(FEM) any thing in-the-Arabic?
‘Can you read anything in Arabic?’

AY: A little sura

In (17) the researcher asked the child questions about her activities during the weekend. The child replied that she went to Chuck E Cheese. The researcher then asked about Chuck E Cheese in Arabic (a question about an American cultural event in Arabic). As shown in (17), while the child responded to the second and forth questions in English only, she used Arabic to answer the third question in which she included the English EL (Pizza). Arabic is used here to answer a question about an American cultural topic, which apparently did not have a great impact on the child’s code choice in this specific example.

(17) RESEARCHER: kef tfawet fi wagt-ek fi otlat nehayet al-osbooa?
How spend in time-your in holiday end the-week?
‘How do you spend your time in the weekend?’

AL: I do my Arabic homework, sometimes we go to Chuck E Cheese.

RESEARCHER: Helwa Chuck E Cheese?
Nice Chuck E Cheese?
Is Chuck E Cheese nice?

AL: Yeah, I like it.

RESEACHER: Shin fee-ha hajat?
What in-it things?
‘what things are there?’

AL: al-hajat lea’aba-t w n-akel Pizza.
The-things game-s(FEM PLU) and I-eat Pizza.
‘There are games and I eat Pizza.’

RESEARCHER: w be-tmsh-o l- Chuck E Cheese yom wahed?
And will-go-you(PLU) to- Chuck E Cheese day one?
'and are you going to Chuck E Cheese for one day?'

AL: I think on Monday.

Contrary to (17), (18) shows how the topic under discussion can have an effect on the choice of a specific code for the answer. The researcher asked about the child's school (an American topic) in English and the response was in English as well. Although the second question was asked in Arabic as an attempt to manipulate the pattern of the conversation, the child continued to answer in English.

(18) RESEARCHER: Which one do you like more, school or the FRC (Family Resource Center)?

SA: Both of them.

RESEARCHER: lesh?
Why?

SA: we get to play and color.

The example in (19) includes an answer in English to a question about an American cultural event (spring break). An Arabic EL is included in the response as a discourse marker (I don't know) at the beginning of the sentence. In (20) an English EL occurs in the answer to the question about an Islamic cultural topic (Friday prayer). Interestingly in (21) Arabic is used as the ML to answer the question about the city of Stillwater (American cultural topic), and an English EL occurs in the answer.

(19) RESEARCHER: shin tdeer-o tany fi Spring Break?
What do-you(PLU) also in Spring Break?
'What else do you do in Spring Break?'

HA: n-a'aref-esh, stay in my house and play and sometimes go outside.
I-know-not, stay in my house and play and sometimes go outside.
'I don't know, stay in my house and play and sometimes go outside.'

(20) RESEARCHER: Lesh ma'ash temsh-o l-e-jama'a?

Why not go-you(PLU) to-the-mosque?
'Why don't you go to the mosque?'

AL: le'an mama got tired.
'Because mommy got tired.'

(21) RESEARCHER: Lesh theb-y Stillwater?
Why love-you(FEM) Stillwater?
'Why do you love Stillwater?'
RA: End-hom drivers
Have-they drivers.
'They have drivers.'

One interesting type of code switching involves dishes and food in both American culture and Libyan culture. The subjects responded differently to questions about food; names of some dishes were given in Arabic and English, while names of some other kinds of food were given in English (as English ELs in ML Arabic sentences) only due to the possibility that they are likely 'borrowed' words from English. In (22) and (23) the researcher asked questions about a gathering that took place at the FRC (Family Resource Center). The responses to the questions about this American event were in Arabic (since the questions were asked in Arabic). However, two English ELs were included (Donuts, coffee) in answers produced in Arabic. The answer in (24) also includes an English EL (donuts) to answer a question about favorite food in Ramadan (an Islamic cultural event).

(22) RESEARCHER: shin tder-o fi al-FRC?
What do-you(PLU) in the-FRC?
'What do you do at the FRC?'
MR: N-med-o l-l-nas al-donuts wa al-coffee wa kol shai.
We-give-we(SUF) to-the-people the-donuts and the-coffee and every thing.
'We give the people donuts and coffee and everything'.
(23) RESERCHER: khabr-ny a'an al-gathering.

Tell-me about the gathering.

'Tell me about the gathering.'

NA: y-jeeb-o hekky zay al-donuts w y-hott-o feeh a'a-a-tawla.

They-bring-them that like the-donuts and they-put-them it on-the-table.

'They bring, like, donuts and put them on the table'.

(24) RESEARCHER: shin heya al-akla al-mofadala ende-k fi Ramadan?

What it the-food the-favorite for-you in Ramadan?

'What is your favorite food in Ramadan?

BA: Donuts.

The NP (pizza) is similar to (donuts) in these interactions. In (25) the subject used the NP (pizza) which is an English word that does not have an equivalent in Arabic; therefore, it is used as a borrowed word from English. On the other hand, the NP (rice) has a corresponding word in Arabic (rozz); accordingly, the NP (rice) is used as a response in English to a question about a Libyan cultural event. More research on EL borrowed words is required in order to support this argument.

(25) RESEARCHER: Shin theb-e?

What like-you(FEM)?

'What do you like?'

RA: Pizza.

RESEARCHER: Wa shin tany?

And what other?

'And what else?'

RA: Rice.

By examining the examples above, we notice that English serves as the dominant language in the subjects' bilingual utterances. In other words, English is the unmarked code in these utterances whereas Arabic is the marked one. The use of ELs in the subjects' utterances support this argument; English ELs are used considerably more than Arabic ELs.

Arabic ELs in Answers in English		English ELs in Answers in Arabic	
N	%	N	%
19	10	173	90
Total: 192/ 100%			

Table 5, EL variation in the subjects' bilingual utterances.

Table 5 shows that while 90% of the ELs come from English, only 10% are Arabic. These findings show that English, which is the subjects' second language, is the unmarked code (the dominant language) in those bilingual utterances. This argument contrasts with Myers-Scotton's (1993) theory which states that the unmarked code is most likely the native language. Moreover, Myers-Scotton states that the non-native language can be the unmarked choice in certain formal contexts. The data analyzed in this paper are taken from natural conversations between the subjects and the researcher who is also a friend of those subjects' families. The conversations included topics about activities that those children do at school and at home with their families. Accordingly, the interviews were about non-formal situations and the subjects were in fact acquainted with the interviewer; a fact that can be a major factor of the casual nature of the interviews from which data in this paper are collected.

Conclusion

Code switching is a natural linguistic behavior which occurs in the speech of bilingual children as well as adults. The classification of one of the languages involved in the process of code switching as a dominant “unmarked” code can be attributed to factors that are not necessarily related to language acquisition and development. In the case of sequential bilingualism among children, the second language can serve as the Matrix language supplying the system morphemes and the discourse features while the native language plays a less dominant role despite the fact that the two languages may not be fully mastered.

The switch from one code to another is affected by such factors as the nature of the topic under discussion, and the language used to ask the questions in the current interaction. It is revealed from the results that the choice of a certain code over another is cultural-specific; the cultural event underlying the point of discussion will be considered when selecting one code over the other(s). Topics related to American culture are mostly discussed in English, whereas Islamic-related topics are dealt with in Arabic. The dominant language tends to be involved in most of the responses as ELs even in those produced by the less dominant one. This paper shows that English is the dominant language “the unmarked code” in the speech of bilingual Libyan children who live in the Midwest university community in USA, and Arabic (their native language) is the marked code which is chosen more consciously.

The results also show that certain words such as food-related names can be confusing in attempting to classify them as switched words or borrowed words. More research is required in this regard with extra data collected from the speech of monolingual Libyan individuals in other to find out if these words are borrowed words or if they are used by the children due to their insufficient knowledge of some Arabic/English vocabulary.

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