

Development of Code-Switching:

A Case Study on a Turkish/ English/Arabic Multilingual Child

Mehmet TUNAZ

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Erciyes University

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the early code switching patterns of a simultaneous multilingual subject (Aris) in accordance with Muysken's (2000) code switching typology: insertion and alternation. Firstly, the records of naturalistic spontaneous conversations were obtained from the parents via e-mail, phone calls and researcher's interval observation sessions. After a detailed revision of the records, code switching samples were categorized into two groups: insertion and alternation. Then, the code switching samples performed by the subject were ordered chronologically. It was found that the insertion type of code switching occurs at the earlier stages of multilingual development whereas the alternation type of code switching comes out later. This case indicated that the form of code switching gets more complex and intentional as linguistic competence and awareness enhance. The results are consistent with the explanations of MacSwan (2000) and Koike (1987) who emphasized that code switching develops in parallel with linguistic ability, and it should not be assumed as a deficit in the early simultaneous multilingual development. The study is a considerable case analysis in terms of including Turkish, English, and Arabic in a multilingual context.

Keywords: code switching, insertion, alternation, multilingual, Turkish, English, Arabic

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English, which is accepted as “*the international*” language, has gained importance steadily over the last few decades, driven by the changes in the political, technological and economical fields. Sports, science, the internet, news or education etc.; countless reasons have brought people together to communicate, and there is now no doubt that English has won the followers to serve this function as *the* international language. As this is the case globally, educational reforms have been renovated accordingly to include more extended and detailed language involvement into school programs. Moreover, some bilingual parents have started to speak two or more languages intentionally following the birth to grow their children up to be bilingual by adopting various approaches such as one-person-one-language, the home immersion strategy or what is called the “mixed strategy” (Weatherford, 2002).

Growing children up bilingual has been a salient trend for bilingual parents since knowing more than one language has many advantages over being monolingual. Whereas growing up bilingual may occur naturally in some multicultural environments or migration circumstances, some bilingual parents try to grow children up bilingual purposefully. Cognitive and linguistic developments of such children have been investigated via many researches, but there is still a huge gap in the literature as to various aspects of bilingual development, one of which is certainly code-switching.

Code-switching, as defined by Poplack (1980), is the alternation between two languages within a single discourse or constituent. Although code-switching has been investigated in language classes or bicultural contexts very commonly, only some case studies, which are usually small-scale regional studies such as English/Italian or English/ Japanese bilinguals, have focused on code-switching. Even in such studies, there have been different assumptions regarding the leading causes of blending two or more languages in the process of cognitive and linguistic development.

Purpose of the Study

The leading question behind this research is whether proficiency level in two or more languages affects code-switching, as claimed by Macswan (2000) who stated that code-switching is a prestigious indicator of language talent. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the code-switching patterns of a Turkish/ English/ Arabic multilingual subject, Aris, depending on reports provided by the parents. More specifically, the

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motive behind conducting this research is to explain how code-switching is associated with language proficiency in bilingual development. In this sense, the main tendency of the subject to different switching patterns is explained according to Muysken's (2000) code-switching typology.

Review of Literature

Code switching is described as "the ability to alternate between languages in an unchanged setting" by Bullock and Toribio (2009, p.2). As noted in Hoffman (1991), there is a distinction between code switching and code mixing, which is based on the assumption that code mixing occurs as *intra-sentential* whereas code switching is performed as *inter-sentential*. Also, in some studies code switching has been used to cover both cases, and the term "code-mixing" has been ignored since it has a negative association (Taura, 1996). Nevertheless, Poplack's (2001) description of code switching as "mixing, by bilinguals, two or more languages in discourse without changing topic or interlocutor" (p. 1) is more comprehensive than the earlier descriptions.

Code Switching Patterns

According to Muysken's (2000) bilingual speech typology, there are three kinds of code switching, which are insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization respectively. Insertion includes incorporation of lexical items of whole units from one language into a structure of another language (Moyer, 2002). This type of switching might rank from a single switch from a noun to an entire noun phrases or full determiner phrases. Both borrowing and nonce-borrowing proposed by Poplack (2001) are included in the insertion type of switching, and as Muysken (2000) stated, there is no need for Poplack's distinction between borrowing and nonce-borrowing since both of the terms can be considered as examples of insertion (Moyer, 2002). Insertion can be exemplified as:

"Yo anduve *in a state of shock* por dos dias."

"I walked in a state of shock for two days." (Muysken, 2000)

A second typology of code switching suggested by Muysken (2000) is "alternation" which refers to the switching between structures from separate languages. The structures would be a clause, a discourse marker or tag form. In alternation, the elements of separate languages keep their own grammatical structures autonomous and independent; that is, two different structures are used according to their own language rules although one

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might be more dominant than the other. As explained by Moyer (2002), alternation corresponds with the term “inter-sentential code switching” which refers to the case where a bilingual speaker say one sentence in a language and another sentence in other language to the same interlocutor. Bakaeva (2009) cited an example of alternation as:

“Oni ne zamechayut, I don’t know if I will feel the same.”

“They do not notice that, I don’t know if I will feel the same.”

(Muysken, 2000)

The third typology of code switching according to Muysken (2000) is “congruent lexicalization”. In this type of switching, lexical items from different languages are combined within a shared grammatical structure. Indeed, congruent lexicalization is observed only if the languages share similar grammatical and lexical structures, which gives the impression that congruent lexicalization requires languages from the same language families like English/ Dutch or Spanish/ Italian. In this research, the multilingual subject has acquired Turkish, English, and Arabic, all of which are from different language families; therefore, congruent lexicalization was not taken into consideration.

Attitude towards Code Switching

Code switching has drawn the attention of researchers since 1950s, and attitudes toward it have evolved dramatically. The early perception of code switching was rather negative, and it was believed to occur due to the insufficient proficiency in either language (Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986). However, the perception of code switching has evolved with more recent studies. For instance, MacSwan (2000) noted that code switching might be perceived as a prestigious indicator of linguistic ability in many cultures. Moreover, some studies have regarded code switching as a strategy for establishing a social relationship. Koike (1987), for instance, mentioned that code switching is a personal communication device to enrich discourse. To sum up, the general attitude toward code switching has changed in accordance with new research which showed that, contrary to previous claims, code switching is a communication strategy used by bilinguals to increase the quality of discourse.

Methodology

The main purpose of this research has been to investigate early code switching samples of a simultaneous multilingual subject by associating the findings with Muysken’s (2000) code switching typology.

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Accordingly, the core question of this research is whether code switching patterns performed by bilingual children change as they grow and acquire two or more languages simultaneously. Since the research is framed on one multilingual child in a restricted time period, the study is designed as a case study.

Description of the Subject and the Parents

The subject in this research was born in 2010 in Turkey, and has been exposed to three different languages since birth. The subject's father has a high proficiency in English since he lived and had a PhD diploma in Canada on preschool linguistic development. The father and mother are also Arabic/Turkish bilinguals. They planned that the mother would speak only Arabic whereas the father would communicate only in English with the subject, which is actually similar to the one-person-one-language approach. The subject has been exposed to Turkish from his caretaker and other relatives when the parents are at work.

At home, the subject speaks both English and Arabic with his parents, but he has more opportunity to speak Turkish outside of the house. To increase the quantity of contact in all three languages, the parents have maintained various activities in and out of the house. As the father stated, "We have been doing our best to provide as many facilities as we can to make him keep the three languages balanced." Recently, the subject has indeed acquired three languages simultaneously and has a positive attitude towards switching languages depending on the context and interlocutor.

Data Collection

The research is mainly based on the data recorded by the parents. The father purposefully recorded the naturalistic spontaneous conversations to investigate his son's linguistic development since he is an expert on preschool linguistic development. The first words in different languages, dialogues in various contexts, private tape recordings, daily and weekly diaries have been kept regularly in order to trace the linguistic development of the child. The father has also noted specific dialogues which involved examples of code switching, language attitude and language awareness.

Parent observers are sometimes criticized for over-interpreting their children's utterances (Deuchar & Quay, 2001). However, parent observers would be the ones who can interpret the early utterance of their child much better than an outer observer might do. For this reason, their deeper insight into the child's true linguistic development should be appreciated (Weatherford, 2002). Naturally, a child is more accessible for the parents than an investigator who has restricted opportunities to visit and observe the subject in natural contexts.

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Furthermore, parent observers eliminate the issue of *observer's paradox* (the case in which the observed subject does not behave naturally due to the presence of the observer), for the parents already share the natural context with their own children.

Findings

All the data in this research was obtained from the father via e-mail and phone calls. The dialogues and code switching patterns included the samples which were recorded from the time period when the subject was one year and ten months (1; 10) old to two years and nine months (2; 9) old. Thus, the dialogues used in this research were recorded over an 11 month period from when the subject started to utter his first basic sentences. The recordings were scanned and two sets of data were listed according to Muysken's (2000) code switching typology: insertion (intra-sentential) and alternation (inter-sentential).

Samples of Insertion (intra-sentential) Code Switching

The results obtained through scanning the written dialogues indicated that switching samples at early telegraphic stage merely consisted of insertion. For instance, the first switching was performed when the subject was one year and ten months (1; 10) old, and it was like:

- (1) *When he names the objects:*

Father: Aris, what is this?

Subject: This is Mayy. (Mayy (Ar): *water*)

(Aris, 09.12.2011) (1;10)

The shifts at this age were not specific to any language and occurred in all three languages. For instance, when the subject wanted to show and name something, he used the pattern "X over there", and X could be a subject in all three languages (Arabic, Turkish, and English). Similarly, when he asked for something from his mother, he used the pattern "Şiyli X" (Şiyli: 'give' in Arabic), and again, X can be an object in all languages that he speaks. Some of insertions recorded with the exact occurrence dates are given below to provide more examples.

- (2) *When he wants to repeat something*

Subject: Baba, again çorba. (baba (Tr): father, çorba (Tr): soup)

(Aris, 17.12.2011) (1;10)

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(3) *When he points at something*

Subject: Honi ball. Burada ball. (Honi (Ar): Here; burada (Tr): here)

(Aris, 25.01.2012) (1;11)

(4) *When he looks for something*

Subject: Nerdesin, muusa? (nerdesin (Tr): Where are you?, muusa (Ar): pacifier)

Subject: Veyna soccer ball? (Veyna (Ar): Where?)

(Aris, 11.02.2012) (2;0)

Samples of Alteration (inter-sentential) Code Switching

There were not a huge number of alterations performed by the subject in this 11 months because the observation period mostly coincided with the early telegraphic speech. However, there were still examples which are worth mentioning. Considering that this research included the data from 11 months, the subject could perform alternation only after 8 months. Namely, the first alternation occurred when the subject was two years and six months (2; 6) old. The first alternation took place in a conversation with his mother.

(5) *When he was showing a toy cow to his mother*

Subject: Şuuf heyi annem, it is a cow. (şuuf heyi (Ar): look at this, annem (Tr): my mummy)

(Aris, 18.08.2012) (2;6)

In this type of code switching, the subject used two languages by keeping their own grammatical structures autonomous independent. In the example (5), both Arabic and English sentences were used according to their own grammatical and syntactic rules without mixing any items. Another example of alternation was performed along with insertion when the subject was showing a toy cow to his father. It was one of a few rare examples when the subject used insertion and alternation in the same context.

(6) *When he imitates animal sounds*

Subject: Dady, look! Cow moo moo yapıyor. (yap-iyor (Tr): make- pre.cont.)

(Aris, 25.08.2012) (2;6)

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In the example (6), the sentence started in English (Daddy, look), and went on with English words which were uttered in Turkish syntax and finished with a Turkish verb. He preferred “Cow moo moo yapıyor” instead of “cow is making moo moo”.

Another alternation occurred when the subject wanted to state his hunger and asked for something to eat. This time, the first sentence was in Arabic, and then, shifted into Turkish.

(7) *When he is hungry*

Subject: Bedduy yekol nemmuş, acıktım. (Bedduy (Ar): I want, yekol (Ar): eat, Nemmuş (Ar): a kind of Arabic food, acıktım (Tr): I got hungry”

(Aris, 14.11.2012) (2;9)

Discussion and Conclusion

In this research, the findings were categorized according to Muysken’s (2000) code switching typology. The categorization clearly indicated that the subject changed code switching patterns as he gets older and has a higher linguistic awareness. When he was at the telegraphic sentence stage, he could only perform insertion by mixing intra-sentential components. However, through the end of the observation period, the subject started to perform alternation by shifting language at inter sentential level. Namely, the subject changed the code switching pattern as he developed greater linguistic competence, which implies that code switching is an indicator of linguistic ability. In this vein, it seems reasonable to assume that code switching is associated with the level of linguistic competence in bilingual cases.

On the one hand, the results of this research contradict the early description of code switching proposed by Martin- Jones & Romaine (1986), which was rather negative and believed to occur due to the lack of proficiency in either language.

On the other hand, the findings of the research are consistent with the description of code switching proposed by Macswan (2000). According to Macswan (2000), code switching is a certain indicator of linguistic ability and can be used as a strategy for establishing social relationships. Similarly, Koike (1987) cited code switching as a personal communication device to enrich discourse. In the light of the results obtained from the present research, it can be suggested that code switching indeed develops in parallel with linguistic ability, and it should not be assumed as a deficit in the early simultaneous multilingual development.

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Limitations of the Research

In this research, code switching patterns of a multilingual child were analyzed and categorized according to Muysken's (2000) code switching typology. Due to the time constraint, the research focused on only code switching development. This might not reveal all the facts of a subject's linguistic development. Another factor which is worth mentioning is that the data used in this research was recorded and saved by the parents, and that their impressions were supportive but when at variance with the larger picture had no effects on the results.

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