

THE CONTINUUM FROM PRAGMATICS TO GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE IN BILINGUAL SPEECH

Carmen Pena Díaz¹
Universidad de Alcalá de Henares (Madrid)

1. Introduction

The juxtaposition of two or more languages in discourse has been one of the most widely studied phenomena in the field of Bilingualism for the past few decades. Various terms, such as code-switching and code-mixing, have been used in order to describe these phenomena and attempts have been made to reach a typology, which distinguishes its various forms. Auer (1998) has proposed a continuum of language alternation phenomena, which spans out between three prototypes: code-switching (CS) and fused lects (FL), which represent the polar extremes of the continuum (pragmatic/discourse and grammatical structure), and language mixing (LM) as a point in between. Auer claims that there is a natural tendency in bilingual communities to evolve from CS to LM and from LM to FL and never the other way around and, therefore, establishes the continuum on the proposal that CS when used very frequently loses its pragmatic force and becomes LM, which starts to integrate changes in the grammar structures and evolves to FL.

The aim of this paper is to study the various forms of code-alternation in data taken from conversations carried out by trilinguals in Spanish, Galician and English from a community of Spanish/Galician immigrants in London to find out about this particular group of speakers' situation with respect to the sociolinguistic correlates of movement on the previously proposed continuum.

The data was analysed and categorised under each of the three prototypes to determine whether the studied participants/community use code-alternation as a contextualization device, if their speech has reached a stage of structural regularities or if it lacks pragmatic function and yet has not reached a sedimented grammatical structure.

¹ Carmen Pena Díaz, Facultad de Filología Moderna, Colegio San José de Caracciolo, C/ Trinidad, 3, 28801 Alcalá de Henares (Madrid), Spain. Telephone: (+34) 918854441; fax: (+34) 918854445, email: carmen.pena@uah.es.

To ascertain which of the feature/s mentioned above is taking place in the juxtaposition of two or more languages we must part from the participants', and not linguists', notions of the different codes. That is, the participants' notion of the difference and distinction between the codes being used.

We will begin by briefly examining the terms used in this paper, to then go on to the data analysis.

2. Revision of terms

2.1. Code switching

CS is the juxtaposition of two codes which is perceived and interpreted as a locally meaningful contextualization strategy with pragmatic force by participants, who interpret CS as a contextualization strategy (a rhetoric/stylistic device for the speaker), one more feature which helps them to convey meaning and mark their interaction as bilingual. It can be used to mark a preference for one of the codes and/or to signal "otherness" and, therefore, can involve the renegotiation of the language of interaction.

Alternational CS usually occurs at clause or sentence level, so it does not introduce many syntactic disruptions and the insertional type of CS which occurs on small constituents does not threaten the language of interaction either.

2.2. Language mixing

LM, as opposed to CS, is only perceived and interpreted as a recurrent pattern and not locally meaningful, although participants are aware of LM. It is functional as a group style.

In LM it is very difficult to say which is the language of interaction, it is the alternation of the different codes which in itself constitutes the language of interaction.

LM is much more intrically linked to syntax, although they do follow some exclusive constraints. They tend to occur in turn-internal language juxtaposition (insertional), but are not only restricted to words.

2.3. Fused lects

The difference between LM and FL is mainly grammatical. None of them are locally meaningful. On surface, they look similar. LM allows variation (languages may be juxtaposed but need not be) whereas the use of one language over the other in FL is

obligatory (it is part of their grammar and speakers have no choice). Structures from language A and B which are more or less equivalent in monolingual language use may develop specialized uses in the fused lect AB. It may also have to develop new structures which do not belong to either A or B to adapt structurally to the combination of elements.

Speakers of FL may but need to be proficient in the languages in use. Typical cases of using FL varieties are those which develop “mixed languages”, for example in 2nd or 3rd generation mixed marriages between colonizing men and indigenous women.

FL can only be of the insertional type.

3. The CS to FL continuum

Auer’s proposed continuum for language alternation is briefly described as follows.

3.1. From code switching to language mixing

CS can develop into LM, due to frequent juxtapositions weakening the contextualization value of this cue. The more frequently CS occurs, the less salient it becomes and, therefore, the potential for using it in locally meaningful ways is diminished.

CS to LM could start when speakers feel obliged to resort to strategies of neutrality in an increasing number of cases (this corresponds to Heller’s (1988) “strategic ambiguity”). Or it could also be because the identity related purposes of this style become more salient than the discourse-related tasks (e.g. when a group of bilinguals wants to define its own identity).

Insertional switches which are typical of the transition from CS to LM are not restricted to lexemes (nouns, verbs...) but spread to larger constituents in which this lexeme is embedded (noun, verbal phrase or verb + object phrase).

3.2. From language mixing to fused lects

Given the appropriate sociolinguistic context, there is a tendency in code-mixing communities to further constrain the possibilities of juxtaposing the two languages and to develop functional specializations.

In order to investigate how LM turns into FL we can either check where it originated, in which we would be making suppositions, or look at LM moving to FL to try to establish what prompts this transition, which usually have a starting point, such as relatively unbound elements of grammar, like discourse markers, conjunctions, some adverbials (discursive function rather than a referential one), which should not be the only resources available for the speakers, should be specialized in function and they do not need to have retained their meaning and/or function when compared to monolingual usage.

Another case which would let us know that we are now dealing with a monolingual variety is the established borrowing of content words.

Double marking of certain grammatical functions by functionally equivalent but structurally divergent strategies is another phenomenon which indicates a transition from LM to FL.

So, structural sedimentation of ML into FL presupposes a loss of variation and the stabilisation of function-form relationships.

4. Participants

The data was recorded at interviews and gatherings between different members of the Galician community in London. Interviews either took place at their homes or while socialising. Some of the recorded data belongs to social meetings between a different number of them. The total group was divided, for analysis purposes, into two sub-groups.

The first group was composed of 6 males and females over the age of 50. They have all migrated to England during their twenties. As in other immigrant communities (Li Wei, 1994) these are speakers who are not engaged in any form of code alternation, they are monolingual, although they have been living in England for most of their lives but they hardly venture outside their community (all their friends, family, etc., are Galician or Spanish), they regard English as a foreign language and people whom they do not belong to. Their interaction with English speakers only takes place in necessary situations (work, public transport, administration, etc.). This group of speakers' speech was, for obvious reasons, not pertinent for the present analysis as their speech did not contain code-alternation.

The second group was composed of 6 second generation females and males who have lived all their lives in England, their ages ranging from 20 to 30. They all have Galician parents, who speak either this language or Spanish at home, they all went to the same Spanish/English bilingual school in London and then went on to complete higher education studies. Six of them were still studying at different universities and the rest were working in different fields for English speaking companies in London. They all speak Spanish and English fluently and although they all understand it, only some speak Galician. They all speak Spanish or Galician with their family and usually go to Galicia on holiday. They use English at work, study place, with their non-Spanish friends, etc. When they meet with other people from their community they tend to use code-alternation.

5. Analysis

The first stage in the analysis was to distinguish the various forms of juxtapositions to find out to which type each belonged to.

A few cases of what could be denominated CS were found, but most were used in reported speech, where the alternation was used as a contextualization cue. They served to structure turns internally, as a discourse-related act which proved that they involved a strategy for the speaker to simply quote somebody outside the conversation.

An example of this would be the following:

Spanish	Galician	English
M:	es que tu madre es súper simpática ya como cuenta, porque se mete en el papel <i>e sabes que María</i>	
R:	Sí, además te habla como ellos por ejemplo yo te digo y tal persona me dijo esto y te lo digo yo lo que sé pero ella te lo dice como lo dijo la persona	
M:	como mi madre <i>e entonces díxome</i> <u>Celia are you going to come tomorrow</u> <i>e eu díxenlle</i> <u>no</u> . Las conversaciones son de una hora <u>just to tell you that her boss told her you know...</u>	
R:	Tu madre es como la mía. A mí es que ahora me fastidia bastante	
M:	a mí también, <i>e que che dixo? Ai, non me dixo nada ¿e para que mo contas?</i> Está dos horas y ahora está este el amigo de mi prima y siempre cena allí y tal porque vive en una...	

We can clearly see that whenever the speakers quote their mothers, who speak Galician, they use Galician, except when the mother has used English. In this case, we

can also figure that M's mother also uses this strategy to quote another speaker (she is speaking Galician and switches to English to quote her boss' words).

These examples of CS are clearly functional and meta-pragmatic, they produce a change of 'footing' and are of the insertional type, used by the participants as a conversational strategy.

Hardly any other type of clear CS took place in the various conversations other than a few cases in which a small constituent from one language was inserted into the matrix language which could be spotted in that part of the conversation, and this was usually because of the speaker's lack of knowledge of the same word in the matrix language.

The most significant type of juxtapositions found in the conversations were cases of LM.

Very few cases of juxtaposition between Spanish and Galician or English and Galician took place and they were always CS. The reason for this would probably be that the speakers do not normally use Galician in their exchanges, although they are aware that all of them understand and use this language.

When LM takes place it is difficult to say whether the language of interaction is Spanish or English, it seems like it is the combination of both which in itself makes up the language of interaction.

These juxtapositions are not functional, they do not contextualize linguistic activities and do not involve a change in footing. They are turn-internal, which makes it very difficult to label either language. This can clearly be seen in the following example:

R: I mean... you know, he went back to Switzerland pero, pero nos llama, or he was in Dublin, he lived in Dublin for about a year and he used to phone me up all the time. Era un tío, uf!! Le estoy diciendo a mi madre I have to phone him, I miss him so much. Me conoce desde que era pequeña. He was a friend, he wasn't my mum's boss or anything. Tenemos... la televisión que tengo en la habitación me la regaló él. La que tienen mis padres en su habitación se la regaló él... todo lo mejor. Todo, todo. ¿Sabes esas flores que bailan? Cuando salieron for Christmas I got that when no one else had it. Y despues salieron Cokes, I had it. It came from the States cuando aún no las había aquí.

(...) ahora está escribiendo libros. When he went bankrupt it was really funny cos we saw this ad and there was just a column in the newspaper, you know, cuando salió que Prince Edward estaba saliendo con la tía esa, he

phoned me up and he goes... 'cos he's gay as well. He's never told me he's gay, but you notice. Mi madre es un cachondeo con eso.

(...) she was putting clothes away and she felt something hard. She's such a bitch as well, cos when she tells me stories sabe que me mondo de risa. I had my wisdom teeth out y el martes vinieron Ana y Gonzalo a visitarme and she was telling them these stories... sentía los puntos que me tiraban and I just chucked them out de mi habitación I couldn't stand it! Tuve que tomar double pain killers aquella noche por culpa de mi madre.

Speaker R is talking about her mother's boss and narrates different stories with him and herself.

As can be appreciated, in general it is very hard to distinguish which would be the matrix language in the example, as the alternations, which very frequently occur at phrasal level, are continuous and the juxtapositions go in both English to Spanish or Spanish to English. There are cases (line 3) which could possibly be considered CS of the kind used in the first example and cases which could be considered insertional, e.g. in the first line “pero, pero nos llama” could be considered an insertion of English into Spanish, which would be the matrix language at this stage. However, although all participants did use the various combinations of “mixing” in different exchanges, as well as the monolingual varieties, most juxtapositions in all conversations are alternational type LM.

6. Conclusions

From the analyzed data, we can conclude that this set of bilingual speakers have not reached a FL point in the continuum. In general, their juxtapositions seem to have lost their pragmatic force and they tend to produce intra-sentential mixing. Yet, their code alternation does not threaten the grammatical structure, there are hardly any traces of structural sedimentation so their speech cannot be considered to contain FL.

CS and LM do co-occur. CS are used to structure turns internally (in emphatic repetitions, reported speech, etc.), however, LM has a much higher frequency. As has been said, CS as a locally meaningful contextualization strategy is salient against a matrix language, but when it is very frequent in juxtapositions it becomes less salient and its pragmatic force weakens turning it into LM, as we have seen in example 2.

A very interesting question from a sociolinguistic point of view would be why the continuum from CS to LM should take place. When asked about their “mixing,” participants alleged that they felt more comfortable using both languages, it helped

them express themselves in a way which they felt had more to do with them as individuals, as different from either “worlds” to which they belonged to. The answer could be that the range is much wider when being able to use all options and it facilitates expression in conversation.

This has been a first attempt to analyze these participants’ language mixing. The first stage in a wider research in which will be carried out an in-depth analysis including more participants from this particular community to find out if, as the results found in the present study indicate, LM is the main type of juxtaposition in this particular community’s bilingual speech.

Bibliographical references

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