

## CODE-SWITCHING: STRUCTURE AND MEANING

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**Abstract.** *In the past, detailed structural description has largely been absent from code-switching research informed by the principles of conversation analysis (CA) (e.g. Auer, 1998). In this paper, I will try to argue in favor of situating a sequential analysis of code-switching in bilingual conversation within a structural description of bilingual speech. A structural description contributes to the interpretive analysis in that: (1) the analytic process itself is made transparent in its entirety; and (2) the structural variety of code-switches is revealed, as is the potential for items identical in terms of structure to differ in terms of interactional meaning.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM AND ITS THEORETICAL CONTEXT

In CA-oriented analyses of meaning in bilingual interaction, the term 'code-switching' is used in a sense different from that generally accepted in language contact research: specific to CA-type analyses is the requirement of local functionality. The local functionality of code-switching is viewed "as the decisive characteristics to show its differences from other language-contact phenomena, which, taken individually in their specific context, cannot be said to have a specific [conversational] function" (Auer, 1984: 8). In this, CA-type analyses build on Gumperz's (1982: 132-5, 1992: 42-3) notion of code-switching as a contextualization cue.

The concept of contextualization as advanced by Gumperz rests on an understanding of context as flexible and reflexive (Auer, 1992: 21): continually reshaped in time, not a prior given but an outcome of the interaction, that is, of participants' efforts to nominate what, in the material and social surroundings of the interaction and in the interaction itself, is relevant for the interpretation of the referential message. In essence, any verbal and many non-verbal means by which participants contextualize language may be considered contextualization cues. However, for practical reasons, contextualization research restricts itself to the study of non-referential, non-lexical contextualization cues<sup>1</sup>: prosody, gesture/posture, gaze, back-channels, and linguistic variation (Auer, 1992: 24).

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<sup>1</sup> Limiting the object of analysis to non-referential contextualization cues excludes explicit formulations of context and deictics from contextualization research (Auer, 1992: 24-5).

Contextualization cues have no referential meaning; their input to the interpretation of an utterance is conveyed by a process of inferencing. One of the ways inferencing can lead to contextual interpretation is by establishing contrast; that is, an indication of 'otherness' serves to prompt an inference as to why a change in the formal characteristics of the interaction has occurred. As this process is dependent on the context of its occurrence, the 'meaning' of a contextualization cue can only be determined by a sequential analysis of the conversational context (Auer, 1992, 1995).

Code-switching works as a contextualization cue because it has the capacity to establish contrast between contiguous stretches of talk. In code-switching in bilingual interaction, speakers exploit their ability to alternate between codes in order to signal contrast between what has been said (by themselves or others) and what they are about to say. In other words, there exists a 'sequential implicativeness' of code choice: code choice is "an interactional issue, related not only to the further development of the conversation (by the impact it may have on it) but also to its preceding sequential context whose [code] bears on the present speaker's choice" (Auer, 1984: 30). By creating contrast, speakers are able to construe the conversational context in two ways: (1) they are able to display, as well as ascribe to other participants, language competence and preference; and (2) they are able to accomplish conversational tasks, e.g. indicate side remarks, introduce new topics, set off reported speech, mark dispreferred responses. Through their own orientation to their code choices, as evidenced by the sequential embeddedness of their utterances, and the way in which these choices contextualize conversational activities, bilingual speakers reveal to each other (and the interested analyst) locally established conversational functions or meanings of code-switching. It is therefore within the framework of the sequential organization of contrasting code choices that the meaning of a code-switch needs to be interpreted.

If code-switching derives its signaling value from the capacity to set off stretches of talk against their environment by a contrasting 'other-code' choice, an issue of immediate concern (not only for the analyst, but more importantly, for conversational participants) becomes the communicative code (Alvarez-Cáccamo, 1998), that is the base code of the interaction, the code switched-from and eventually switched-back to. It is against the backdrop of a base code that the choice of a code other than that already in use in the ongoing interaction stands out as a contextualization strategy. But what is this base code?

Alvarez-Cáccamo (1998) and Gafaranga (2000) have problematized as a consequence of monolingual bias the widespread tendency in the contact literature to equate 'code' with what Gumperz (1982: 99) has referred to as "the grammarian's notion of language". 'Base code', from the analyst's perspective, translates as 'base language', meaning 'base grammatical system' and the analysis is geared toward establishing the grammatical systems evidenced in bilingual speech. But consider, for example, that it has convincingly been argued that the base code of a bilingual interaction is the bilingual speakers' own interactional accomplishment, for instance, in sequences in which speakers negotiate the code in which they will carry out the interaction (cf. code-switching as an exploratory choice ((Myers-Scotton, 1993) or language negotiation sequences (Auer, 1995)). As the speakers' own interactional accomplishment, the base code can only be demonstrated through a sequential analysis of participants' conversational moves. If the aim is to reconstruct the participants' perspective of bilingual interaction, as in CA-oriented analyses, it is necessary to distinguish between the grammatical systems evidenced in bilingual speech and the communicative code of a bilingual conversation: identifying the former is

a matter for structural analysis, the latter a matter for sequential analysis. In the rest of this paper, the communicative or base code will be termed the medium of the conversation following Gafaranga (2000), in order to avoid the confusion which the use of the polysemous 'code' can bring about.

CA-type analyses of bilingual interaction as a rule do not take full account of the structural characteristics of the bilingual speech they study. In failing to do so, CA-type analyses: (1) put the cart before the horse, so to speak, that is, make it appear as if it were possible to establish the medium of a bilingual conversation prior to a structural analysis, and in doing so, fail to make the analytic process transparent in its entirety; (2) failure to identify an item structurally before evincing it to be a code-switch runs the danger of misrepresenting how varied structurally code-switches can be, as well as of obscuring the fact that items identical in structural terms may differ when considered in terms of the criterion of local functionality. Situating a sequential analysis of bilingual conversation within a structural description of the phenomena of bilingual speech would, on the one hand, ensure that those phenomena which lack local functionality are not considered code-switches by the analyst, even when the fact that they are structurally 'other language' material seems to indicate the converse. On the other hand, phenomena which should rightfully have code-switch status because of the local functionality by which they are characterized would be less likely to be disregarded by the analyst even if they cannot structurally be classified as unequivocally 'other language' or if their 'other language' is blurred by, in particular, morphological integration into the base language.

The data which provide the impetus for this discussion come from tape-recorded sociolinguistic interviews I conducted in February-July 2003 with Serbian/English bilinguals living in Melbourne, Australia. The interviews were part of a broader study of the macro-social and micro-interactional bilingual language practices in an immigrant Serbian language community in Australia. In this brief paper I am unable to provide a description of the social context, i.e. the Serbian language community in which my research was undertaken nor the methods I have relied on to collect the data. An account of both these aspects can be found in Dimitrijević (forthcoming). To complement this data set, I have relied on some instances of Serbian/English bilingual speech from another context; these are relevantly documented.

## 2. THE TRANSPARENCY OF THE ANALYTICAL PROCESS

In CA, analysis begins either by the analyst noticing an action being done in talk-in-interaction and is pursued by attempting to specify how the action is accomplished through talk (or other conduct), or analysis may begin by the analyst noticing a particular feature of the talk and is pursued by asking what action, if any, is accomplished by such a practice of talking (Schegloff, 1996: 172). If the analyst's interest lies specifically in the conversational functions of code-switching, the trajectory of the analysis is almost certain to be the latter. The reconstruction of the participants' perspective, or the medium of bilingual conversation, is preceded by a first step informed principally by the perspective of the linguistically trained analyst: assigning a given stretch of talk to the base language or, conversely, to the 'other language'. It could be argued that this first step is simply presupposed, but as I have argued, there are pitfalls involved in neglecting to make transparent this stage of the analysis. To illustrate, I will now discuss an example taken from the work of another analyst before going on to discuss data from my own corpus.

A CA-informed discussion of the following extract, taken from Li Wei (1994: 166)<sup>2</sup>, illustrates how a detailed sequential analysis enables the analyst to demonstrate that a contrastive choice of code can be used to mark a dispreferred second pair part. Unlike preferred seconds which are unmarked in that they occur as structurally simpler turns, dispreferred seconds are marked by structural complexity, e.g. unfilled or filled pauses, prefacing, an account of why the preferred second cannot be performed.

Dispreferred Second, from Li Wei, 1994: 166  
Informal conversation between two women shopping for a dress

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1. A: *Nau, ni goh.*  
(This one.)
2. B: *Ho leng a.*  
(Very pretty.)  
A: *Leng me?* (1.5) Very expensive.  
(Pretty?)  
B: *Guai m gaui a?*  
(Expensive or not?)  
A: *Hao guai.*  
(Very expensive.)
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Briefly, Li Wei (1994) argues that first speaker's use of a reflective question combining a partial repetition (*leng*) with the question marker *me*, which has discourse functions similar to the English tags 'isn't it?' or 'really?', the ensuing 1.5 second silence, and subsequent delivery of the assessment *very expensive* in a code different from that employed in the rest of the interaction all serve to mark the assessment in turn 3 as a dispreferred second, as does second speaker's request for confirmation.

This kind of turn-by-turn analysis is quite transparent: it is based solely on what (discourse marker, silence, contrasting choice of code) can be shown to be discernible and oriented to by the conversational participants during the on-going course of the interaction. What remains opaque, however, is how the analyst came to focus on this particular interactional sequence, and more specifically, on the second part of turn 3. It is only after performing a CA-informed analysis of the conversational sequence that it could be established that the sequence contained a conversationally meaningful instance of deviance from the base code, or current medium of the interaction. This leaves us with the question: When and how was it established which stretch of talk belongs to the base language and which to the 'other' language? Or even that stretches of talk from two languages were present in the sequence in the first place, as we must assume that it was the linguist's perspective that led the analyst to originally focus on specifically this sequence.

It may appear unnecessary to ask this question in this particular case as it seems non-problematic to distinguish stretches of Chinese speech from the stretch of English speech, to identify the English phrase *very expensive* as 'other language'. But just we cannot assume that what the analyst would classify as deviance from the base code on the basis of structural criteria would be perceived the same way by participants in a bilingual conversation, vice versa, we cannot assume that what is perceived by participants as deviance from current medium will also be perceived by the analyst as 'other language' material.

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<sup>2</sup> The reason why this example was chosen is that I believe it to be representative of work done in this tradition of language contact research.

The analyst orients to grammatical systems, participants orient to the medium; there need not be a one-to-one correspondence between a grammatical system and the medium of a bilingual conversation. The medium of a bilingual conversation may itself be a bilingual code (consider Myers-Scotton's (1993) code-switching as the unmarked choice, Auer's (1999) mixed code).

### 3. STRUCTURE AND MEANING: HOW DO BILINGUAL PARTICIPANTS SEE IT?

Before proceeding to consider several examples from my corpus of Serbian/English bilingual speech, I would like to introduce to the discussion the concept of transference (Clyne, 1967, 2003), which describes bilingual speech from a structural perspective. Most recently, Clyne (2003: 76) defines transference as the process whereby a "form, feature or construction has been taken over by the speaker from another language". Transference may occur at different levels of language, but here I will be concerned only with lexical transference: either single lexemes or several collocated lexical items can be transferred. A transfer is an instance of transference; transfers can be integrated or unintegrated. A lexical transfer is, from the perspective of the analyst, an instance of deviance from the base language, an 'other language' item. In identifying an item to be a lexical transfer, the analyst identifies the base language or the language transferred-to and the 'other language' or the language transferred-from. It is interesting to see how participants in bilingual conversation perceive lexical transfers.

#### EXAMPLE 1

Sociolinguistic interview with a Serbian/English bilingual, a woman in her mid-eighties, migrated to Australia in 1958.

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1→	NR	MILK BAROVI su bili <u>slabo</u> . 'MILK BAR:NOM.M.PL were few'
2	I	aha aha
3	NR	onda (.) 'then'
4→		nađemo u jednom MILK BAR [...] 'we find in one:LOC.M.SG MILK BAR'

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In example (1)<sup>3</sup>, the lexical items *milk barovi* (line 1) and *milk bar* (line 4) are instances of transference from English to Serbian. Whereas *milk barovi* is a fully integrated

<sup>3</sup> In this and all subsequent examples, SMALL CAPITALS are used to indicate transferred items, *italics* for established loanwords in Serbian. Other transcription conventions are:

(.)	micro-pause	-	dash: break off, unfinished words
,	comma at end of line: clause final intonation ('more to come')	[...]	omitted sections
.	point at end of line: sentence final falling intonation	{ }	transcriber's comments are set off by curly brackets
?	question mark at end of line:	' '	translations are set off by single quotes
:	sentence final rising intonation	NOM	nominative
:	colon: elongating of preceding vowel sound	M	masculine
[ ]	square brackets indicate overlapping speech, two speakers talking at once	PL	plural
=	equals sign to the right of top line= =and to the left of bottom line indicates latching, no interturn pause		

transfer in that it receives Serbian inflection, in addition to following Serbian word order<sup>4</sup>, *milk bar* remains morphologically unintegrated: it is not, unlike its modifier, *jednóm*, marked for case. Structurally, there is no doubt that the base language in this extract is Serbian; English provides the 'other language', transferred, lexical material. A sequential analysis, on the other hand, shows that neither participant discerns or orients to the two transfers from English as in any way different from the talk that follows or precedes them. There are no pauses, no glossing, no metalinguistic commentary, in other words, there is no conversational evidence that *milk barovi* or *milk bar*, the integrated or the unintegrated lexical transfer, are perceived as instances of deviance from current medium, which is a bilingual code.

## EXAMPLE 2

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1	NR	pa ja govorim. 'well I speak'
2		[ja ne mogu da čitam] ništa 'I can't read anything'
3	I	[više govorite, aha ] 'you speak more'
4	NR	vrlo malo (. ) 'very little'
5		pročitam ono što znam 'I read what I know'
6→		kad mi dođe pošta ili BILOVI i to, 'when mail arrives for me or BILL:NOM.M.PL and that'
7		računi 'bills'
8	I	[aha ]

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From a structural perspective, (2) is very much like (1) in terms of the bilingual speech phenomenon evinced. Structurally, the item *bilovi* (line 6) is a lexical transfer from English morphologically integrated into Serbian. In this, *bilovi* is like *milk barovi* in (1). But unlike in the case of the integrated transfer in (1), a CA-informed analysis of this extract reveals that both participants orient to *bilovi* as contrasted to the talk that precedes and follows it. Note that NR glosses *bilovi* with its monolingual Serbian equivalent, *računi* (line 7). NR's self-repair is recognized for what it is, an attempt to (re)align with the interviewer's (perceived) monolingual variety of Serbian, by an overlapping back-channel from the interviewer (line 8). The participants' conversational work thus identifies *bilovi* as a locally functional instance of deviance from current medium, i.e. it is a competence-related code-switch in that it signals NR's momentary superior lexical knowledge in English as opposed to Serbian (cf. Auer, 1984: 60).

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<sup>4</sup> Phonology will not be considered a reliable indicator of integration.

## EXAMPLE 3

Interview given by NB, a woman in her mid-fifties to KM, a man in his early thirties, a reporter for a Serbian language newspaper

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1	NB	<u>uglavnom</u> , 'all in all'
2→		eh tokom septembra za njega je planirano da uradi WORKSHOPOVE (.) 'during September it is planned that he do WORKSHOP:ACC.M.PL'
3		radionice= 'workshops'
4	KM	=da,= 'yes'
5	NB	=da koristimo naše reči (.) 'to use our {Serbian} words'
6		da uradi par radionica. 'to do a couple of workshops'
[...]		
7	NB	kratak dokumentarni film, 'a short documentary film'
8→		eh praviće ga ta deca u WORKSHO- u radionici, 'these children will make it in the WORKSHO- in the workshop'
9		znači biće mala filmska radionica. 'so there will be a small film workshop'

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## EXAMPLE 4

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1	NB	i što je ta ideja takva da (.) 'and that this idea is such that'
2→		<i>promoviše</i> (.) 'it promotes'
3→		da <i>plasira</i> ili, 'to market or'
4→		ne znam koja je naša reč za <i>promociju</i> ? 'I don't know what is our word for promotion'

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Examples (3) and (4) are taken from an interview to a Serbian language newspaper in Australia<sup>5</sup>. The effect on the interviewee NB is heightened awareness of lexical transfers from English which are part of her bilingual code. The interviewee, in fact, is intent on producing the 'purest' Serbian she can to such a degree that she rejects established loan-words. But, consider (3) first: the morphologically integrated transfer from English that NB uses in line 2 is *workshopove* 'workshops'. She, however, quickly produces a self-initiated self-repair (line 3), then goes on to make a point of the self-repair: in line 6, the interviewee not only repeats the entire final clause of the turn in which she produced *workshopove*, but also precedes it with a metalinguistic comment (line 5). Further on in the interview (lines 7 to 9), the interviewee corrects herself in mid-word, and then both

<sup>5</sup> My thanks to Krste Marković for making the recording of this interview available to me.

substitutes the Serbian equivalent (*radionica*) for the intended transfer and makes a point of repeating the repair in wrapping up her turn. In this, she clearly orients to the lexical transfer as to an instance of deviance from current medium.

Example (4) is even more interesting, precisely because it does not include any instances of transference. Instead, the interviewee orients to established loanwords, *promoviše* (from *promovisati*, 'to promote') and *plasira* (from *plasirati*, 'to market'), as to instances of deviance from current medium, intendedly a monolingual variety of Serbian, pausing, trying out different alternatives, concluding with a metalinguistic comment: she does not know "the [Serbian] word for promotion" (line 4). The sole equivalent of 'promotion' in Serbian is *promocija* and the interviewee clearly is familiar with it as it is the word she actually uses. Conceivably, all three loanwords are part of the speaker's everyday variety of Serbian, but in a situation which she interprets as calling for the 'purest' Serbian she can produce, the speaker orients toward them in the same way as she does to the integrated transfer *workshopove* and marks them as competence-related switches.

EXAMPLE 5

Interview with a second-generation Serbian/English bilingual, a woman in her late twenties

1	AJ	teško je ali 'it's hard but'
2→		YOU KNOW ja volim volim da učim, 'YOU KNOW I love love to learn'
3→		SO: ja mislim zato zato što volim tolko puno 'SO I think because because I love so much'
4		nije mi teško da učim. 'it isn't for me difficult to learn'

In (5), *you know* and *so* are unintegrated lexical transfers from English, but there is no conversational evidence that the interviewee, AJ, and the interviewer, who remains silent, perceive *you know* and *so* to be contrasted to the surrounding talk by virtue of being in a code other than the base code. The 'otherness' of the discourse markers transferred from English goes unnoticed, or at least, unacknowledged by the participants. If the focus of the analysis were to be restricted to sequences incorporating items which conversational participants can be shown to discern and orient to as instances of deviance from current medium, the use of the English discourse markers *you know* and *so* by AJ, would have to be disregarded. I acknowledge that it could hardly be argued that had AJ used Serbian rather than English discourse markers, the extra-conversational, i.e. social, as opposed to the 'purely' conversational, meaning of her utterance would not have been fundamentally altered; however, the role of *you know* and *so* in the sequential organization of AJ's turn cannot be shown to be different from that which the Serbian equivalents, *znaš* and *tako (da)*, would have performed. English discourse markers predominate in AJ's speech to the almost complete exclusion of Serbian discourse markers. I would argue with Matras (1998, 2000) that this reduces their potential to generate contrast and in this way structure the conversation.



## 4. DISCUSSION

Structurally, four of the examples of Serbian/English bilingual speech discussed feature lexical transfers. In other words, in these four examples, looking at structure only, a speaker diverges from the base language, Serbian, at some point and an item from the 'other language', English, is introduced. Three of the lexical transfers are integrated into the base language (*milk barovi, bilovi, workshopove*), and three are morphologically unintegrated (*milk bar, you know, so*). Most if not all examples of code-switching presented in CA-type analyses of bilingual conversation which can structurally be classified as lexical transfers tend to be unintegrated, as in the extract from Li Wei (1994). If we were to take this as indicative of the only form code-switches are likely to take, we might expect the unintegrated transfers *milk bar, you know*, and *so* to be the code-switches in the data I have presented. A sequential analysis, however, reveals that exactly the opposite is the case.

Two of the instances of code-switching, specifically competence-related switching, that I have discussed are integrated transfers (*bilovi, workshopovi*), while none of the unintegrated transfers can be shown to be code-switches. Furthermore, the remaining code-switches discussed are, in structural terms, loanwords, lexical items which were at some point taken over from an other language, but which are now 'naturalized' in Serbian (*promoviše, plasira, promocija*). Clearly, we would be wrong to assume that what is perceived by bilingual speakers, whose perspective is interactional, as contrasted to the base code by virtue of being in an 'other code' would also be perceived as in a language other than the base language by the linguistically trained analyst, whose primary perspective is structural. Correspondence, if any, between the base language and the medium cannot be assumed, it must be demonstrated.

Demonstrating whether or not the base language and the medium of the conversation correspond contributes to the analysis not only in making it fully transparent, but it also enriches our understanding of the structural variety elemental to code-switching and, in this way, ensures that structure does not belie meaning. Consider integrated transfers, like *bilovi*: as a result of equating the base language and the medium, morphologically integrated transfers might not even be considered to have the potential for the signaling value of interactional otherness. This is likely to actually be the case as integrated transfer code-switches are, as I have already mentioned, palpably absent from CA-type analyses<sup>6</sup>. Secondly, unintegrated lexical transfers like *you know* and *so* are more likely, by virtue of their other-languageness, to be considered as also characterized by interactional otherness if the analyst conflates the base language and the medium. If, on the other hand, a conclusion regarding an item's local functionality is not based on a judgment (same language, other language) exterior to the conversational participants' perspective, *you know* and *so* are more likely to be correctly identified as the beginning of a fused lect (Auer, 1999) or, more specifically, a class-specific (discourse markers) non-separation of the two linguistic systems, Serbian and English in this case, resulting from fusion (Matras, 2000).

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<sup>6</sup> Despite early warnings to the contrary; e.g. Auer (1991: 409) is explicit when discussing integration that whether or not an item is marked and made use of by the bilingual speaker as belonging to an 'other' code, rather than whether or not the item is classified by the linguist as belonging to an 'other' language, is the decisive criterion in distinguishing code-switching from what he variously refers to as borrowing or unnoticed contact phenomena.

It is for these reasons that an effort needs to be made to take account of both the analysts' structural perspective and the participants' interactional perspective while keeping the two strictly separate.

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## CODE-SWITCHING: STRUKTURA I ZNAČENJE

**Jovana Dimitrijević**

*Do danas, detaljan opis strukture dvojezičnog govora retko je prisutan u studijama koje posmatraju code-switching iz perspektive uobličene principima analize konverzacije (AK) (npr. Auer, 1998). U ovom radu, pokušaću da pokažem da opis strukture dvojezičnog govora doprinosi analizama AK tipa u tom da: (1) sam analitički proces postaje transparentan u celosti; i (2) ovakav pristup otkriva raznovrsnost struktura dvojezičnog govora koje možemo uvrstiti u code-switching, kao i mogućnost da se elementi identični po strukturi mogu razlikovati po značenju u dvojezičnoj interakciji.*