



The Impact of Codeswitching in a Multilingual Speaker

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Abstract

The aim for this paper is to present the results of a research conducted to identify the impact of codeswitching in a multilingual speaker. The research was conducted via electronic since the participant and the researcher are not in the same country. The results were obtained by an interview where the participant share her experience by being a multilingual speaker in Germany. The results show the effect and how the participant feel regarding the phenomenon of codeswitching.

Keywords: code-switching, multilingual speaker, multicultural environment.

1. Introduction

Producing a language is a whole process that involves many aspects, and it is not always easy for the speaker. As it is known there are different theories and approaches that mentions its ideas of how a language is learn and produce. Those theories and approaches not only focus on the production or learning of a person's native language but also of a second or third language. When a person decides to learn a second or third language it is very likely that after acquiring it or them, the person will encounter phenomena such as the codeswitching.

Codeswitching as is already known is the adaptation on how the speaker decide to use the language, how does she or he will use the language structure, this phenomenon occurs between two languages. Mentioning the above codeswitching is an important element of the process of being bilingual and or multilingual, for this reason this research tempts to find out *to what extent does codeswitching influence the language production of a multilingual in Germany*. By sharing the results is expect to help more people to be aware of the influence and effects that codeswitching has in a multilingual person.

2. Literature review

2.1 *Codeswitching in social and grammatical perspective*

Many definitions can be provided to describe what does codeswitching is, its impact or even how it is performed depending on the perspective. Social and grammatical perspective are examples of the perspectives in which various research projects have been developed.

Myers-Scotton (1998) came out with the Markedness Model (MM) which mentions that within each language individuals are able to identify the linguistic variety and by whom the variations are used and in what context.

In Moyer's (2009: 173) work a codeswitching definition is provide in a grammatical perspective and it is described as "as the embedding of grammatical information/structure from two (or more) languages within the same syntactic unit, usually the sentence but also within intermediate and phrasal level constituents."

With the MM codeswitching behavior can be provide and with Moyer's (2009) definition a more grammatical idea of codeswitching is provided.

2.2 *Varieties of code switching*

According to Rose and Van Dulm (2006: 1): "Markedness model, according to which there are four types of code switching, namely marked, unmarked, sequential unmarked, and exploratory code switching."

Markedness model also stablish that all communities have different code varieties of language and the of them are marked and unmarked opposition. According to Myers-Scotton (1998) as cited in Rose and Van Dulm (2006) code marked is the variation that involves those norms that the community would not expect to be use and on the other hand the unmarked one are those norms that the community would expect to be used.

2.3 *Multilingual*

According to Edwards (2002: 11), multilingual can be defined "...as the use of three or more languages."

In their book Cenoz and Genesse (1998: 7) mentioned some of the reasons why multilingualism has been growing over the years; "there is a growing need for individual multilingualism as a result of increasing communications among different parts of the world and the need to be competent in languages of wider communication."

2.4 *Superdiversity*

Vertovec (2007), as cited in Hall and Nilep (2015), came up with a model call superdiversity. This model suggests that instead of following the multiculturalism, other aspects such as "ethnic, economic, gender, age, education, and citizen or immigrant statuses co-present in urban populations" (p. 30), should be take into account.

2.5 *Language policy*

According to Annamalai (2002: 2) "language policy is basically about deciding on the networking of languages." In Annamalai's work is also mentioned how is the network built and

according to Annamalai (2002): “The network is built on the functional relation between languages. Language policy, then, is not about a language but is necessarily about languages, about the functional (or ecological) relationship between languages” (p. 1).

2.6 Emotions

Marcos (1976) as cited in Dewaele (2012) “named the emotional detachment that bilinguals often have in their L2 as the “detachment effect.” According to him, the L2 fulfills an intellectual function and is relatively devoid of emotion, whereas the L1 clearly expresses emotions” (p. 2).

2.7 Predicting codeswitching

According to Solorio and Liu (2008) “Predicting possible code-switching points can help develop more accurate methods for automatically processing mixed-language text, such as multilingual language models for speech recognition systems and syntactic analyzers” (p. 973).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research question

As mentioned before this research tempt to provide an answer for the following question:

To what extent does codeswitching influence the language production of a multilingual in Germany?

3.2 Qualitative research

According to Saldana (2011) qualitative research is “an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches to and methods for the study of natural social life” (p. 3).

In other words, qualitative research is the one who allows the researcher to obtain information about a certain topic in a more natural/ real way and since this research is intended to look for the experience of the participant qualitative research was done to obtain the result.

4. Case study

According to Gustafsson (2017: 2) “A case study can be defined as an intensive study about a person, a group of people or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units.”

In order to obtain the results, the case study was used to identify the units based on the participant’s experience. The participant for this research was a multilingual 30-year-old woman living and working in international human resources in Germany. She has been living in Germany for the past three years. Most of her daily life is.

4.1 Inquiry tools

According to Burgess (1984) the typical qualitative research interview has been described as a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (p. 102), as cited in Heigham and Croker (2009).

For the research an interview was design and applied to the participant in order to obtain the results. As mentioned before, the participant is not in Mexico that is why the interview was carried out in virtual way by using Microsoft team's platform.

5. Results and discussion

In this section, I present the results of the research to mention *the influence that codeswitching has in the language production of a multilingual in Germany*. The general results seem to indicate that codeswitching influences both language production and writing in the L3.

The participant was not aware of the term codeswitching, for me it was interesting to know this. When I explained the definition of the term to her, she mentioned that she was aware that sometime the phenomenon of codeswitching happened to her, but she did not know that it had a specific name. The participant mentioned that she considers that she notices the phenomenon pf codeswitching more from the social perspective.

She mentions that at the beginning this phenomenon was hard for her because she tends to feel a little frustrated since she was aware of the norms and structures of each language, but something occurs when she needs to write.

As mentioned before the research was conducted with a woman living in Germany, she can be considered as a multilingual person since as mentioned before in the literature review a multilingual person is the one who speaks three or more languages. In this case the participant speaks Spanish, English and German.

With participant's responses during the interview, it can be said that the participant feels more comfortable using her L1 that is Spanish in very specific contexts. She mentioned that when she needs to share their emotions and talk with her family, she feels more comfortable using Spanish. As mentioned before, multilinguals person feels more comfortable by sharing their emotions by using their L1. Based on participant's response and my own experience as a native Spanish speaker, I could say that this preference of using the L1 to express emotions is because Spanish is a more calid language in terms that for example if we want to say that we have a feeling of love in Spanish we have more options such as "te quiero", "te amo" unlike in English we only use the phrase "I love you" and for some people this phrases do not have a lot of difference but for Spanish speakers the phrase will depend of the context.

Another response that I want to highlight is that she mentions that it is more common to have codeswitching while writing in her work. She mentions that she uses German more usually in her work life and her daily life to develop activities such as buying her groceries or ordering in a restaurant. In her job she only uses German so when writing her emails, she identifies the phenomenon of codeswitching between English and German. She also mentions that she thinks that happens because some structures and words in German have an influence on English language. She also mentions that since English was her L2 learning German was kind of easier to her.

The participant also mentions that is not as common to have codeswitching between Spanish and English. She thinks this occurs because even tough Spanish is her native language, in her context is more usually to use English or German. As mentioned before, she makes use of Spanish when talking with her family and sharing her emotions, but the use of Spanish is less than the other two languages.

The participant mentions that the only type of codeswitching between Spanish and German is when she comes to Mexico and sometimes, she is codeswitching the sentence structure of Spanish and German.

Regarding to language policy, the participant mentions that the government does not force the population to only speak German, she mentions that it is very common to hear different languages when you are in the subway because there are many foreign populations. She is surprised that even though Germany is a country with superdiversity, the immigrants and some of the travelers use the German language to communicate in places such as restaurants and when buying tickets in transportation service stations.

Thanks to the interview and participant's experience it was easy for me that her codeswitching affects her language production but in a more social perspective, since the phenomenon of codeswitching occurs more often in her work life. The advantage that she mentions is that she has the support of her husband to help her when the phenomenon appears, with this I can support my idea of codeswitching in her life as a more social perspective.

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Appendix

Participant interview:

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you from?
3. Which is your native language?
4. What other languages do you speak?
5. Which of them do you use more?
6. Which of them do you prefer to share your emotions? Why?
7. With which of them do you feel more comfortable while speaking?
8. With which of them do you feel more comfortable while writing?
9. Which one is easier for you?
10. When is more common that codeswitching appears?
11. How do you feel with codeswitching?
12. Do you think codeswitching affects your language production?
13. In Germany does the government force the population to speak only German?

