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Intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching in Turkish-English bilinguals in New York City, U.S

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Abstract

This study explores patterns of intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching (CS) that are manifest in the speech of Turkish-English bilinguals in New York City, U.S. and investigates the influence of language proficiency on intra-sentential CS. The data were collected via a sociolinguistic survey and face-to-face interviews conducted with 20 bilingual speakers who have lived in the U.S. for at least 10 years. The results indicate that intra-sentential CS occurred at a higher rate than inter-sentential CS and speakers dominant in both Turkish and English used more intra-sentential code switching than inter-sentential CS.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore patterns of CS in the speech of first- and second- generation Turkish-English bilingual adults using Poplack's (1980) model. Code-switching, which is defined as the "switching back and forth of languages or varieties of the same language, sometimes within the same utterance" (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumart & Leap, 2000) is considered as an important communication strategy occurring in language contact situations. Code-switching, although studied before the 1970s, has gained particular importance when Blom, Jan-Petter and Gumperz (1972) analyzed the speech of bilingual speakers living in Norway and reported that this phenomenon occurred with high frequency. Since then CS has been studied extensively and as a result, important theoretical considerations emerged as to whether or not this phenomenon is rule-governed, specific to language or follows discourse principles.

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Code-switching has been analyzed from three different perspectives: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and interactional. From a grammatical perspective, Poplack (1980) proposed three types of CS: extra-sentential, inter-sentential, and intra-sentential. Extra-sentential switching is inserting tag elements from one language into an otherwise monolingual discourse in another language, as in “*Porque estamos en huelga de gasolina, right?*” (Zentella, 1997, p. 94). Inter-sentential switching is characterized by a switch from one language variety to another outside the sentence or the clause level, as in “*Le dije que no quería comprar el carro. He got really mad*”, whereas intra-sentential switching is switching from one language variety to another at the clause, phrase, or word level within a single utterance, as in “*Abelardo tiene los movie tickets.*”

Among the above-mentioned CS types, intra-sentential CS is considered to be the most problematic one for linguistic description. Poplack (1980) and Sankoff & Poplack (1981) suggested two constraints regarding intra-sentential CS. The first one is the Equivalence constraint, which states that word order immediately before and after a switch point must be grammatically possible in both languages. According to this constraint, allowable switch points are before and after tags, before predicate adjectives, and between clauses. According to Hamers and Blanc (1989), this constraint is harder to maintain when the two languages are typologically different from each other. The second constraint is the Free Morpheme constraint, which states that CS may occur after any morpheme as long as it is a morpheme that may occur independently or not attached to other morphemes. It is important to note that these are not the only switch points that intra-sentential CS may occur. Bilingual speakers may also switch languages at a particular part of the sentence.

Another important grammatical approach to CS is Myers-Scotton's (1993) *Matrix Language Frame Model* (MLF) or what Hamers and Blanc (1989) called code-mixing, according to which in any interaction in which CS occurs, one language is more dominant than the others. The dominant language is called the matrix language (ML), which provides the morphosyntactic frame for intra-sentential CS. The language from which elements are inserted into the ML is called the Embedded Language (EL). Given this, Myers-Scotton suggested two principles: The Morpheme Order principle, which specifies that the ML determines the order of elements and the System Morpheme Principle, which requires that system morphemes that have grammatical meaning come from the ML.

According to Gumperz (1982, p. 66) who defined CS as “the juxtaposition of what speakers must consciously or subconsciously process as strings formed according to the internal rules of two distinct grammatical systems”, CS can take place between sentences or clauses, as long as the switch does not violate the grammar of either language. Gumperz further argues that if the two languages are syntactically very different, switches often occur between major constituents, such as noun phrases or clauses. If the two languages are syntactically similar, switches can occur almost anywhere.

What was also explored in CS studies was the relationship between the type of CS and language competency (Muysken 1995; Poplack 1980). Based on her study of Puerto Rican speakers in New York, Poplack (1980) found that only the most balanced bilinguals used intra-sentential CS whereas less proficient bilinguals favored single-word and tag switches. Poplack concluded that given the fact that intra-sentential CS is the most complex type of CS, it requires bilingual speakers to have sufficient knowledge of the grammars of both languages. So the more proficient the speaker is in both languages, the more he/she is able to code-switch from one language to another within a single sentence or clause.

Over the years, there has been a growing body of literature dedicated to CS among Turkish speakers who live in Europe (Backus 1992, 1996, 1999, 2000; Backus and Boeschoten 1996; Johanson 1993; Pfaff 1999; Türker 2000). However, there has been relatively little attention paid to CS among Turkish speakers living in the U.S. My aim is to contribute to this area by looking at CS in the speech of Turkish-English bilinguals in the U.S.

Here are the main research questions that will be addressed:

1. How frequent is the phenomenon of CS in the corpus?
2. What forms of CS dominate?

3. What is the relationship between CS and language proficiency?

2. Methodology

The research findings presented here are mainly based on face-to-face interviews conducted with ten first and ten second generation bilingual speakers. The speakers were asked to talk about an event that has influenced their lives. The interviews were approximately 30 minutes. The tape-recorded interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Apart from these speech data, subjects were asked to fill out a sociolinguistic questionnaire (Otheguy et al., 2007) where they stated their ages, gender, language proficiency in Turkish and English, age of arrival in the U.S. and number of years they spent in the U.S. etc. The speakers ranged in age from twenty to fifty-seven years and consisted of equal number of males and females.

Table 1. Distribution of informants by age and gender

Age	N of males	N of females	Total
20-34	3	6	9
35-55	7	3	10
56-57	0	1	1
Total	10	10	20

Table 2. Distribution of informants by age of arrival and length of residence

Age	N	Length of residence	Total
0-3	10	3-15	4
3-12	7	16+	5
13-19	3	Native	11
Total	20	Total	20

3. Results

This study focuses exclusively on patterns of intra-sentential and inter-sentential CS. The examples below elicited from the informants in this study illustrate both types of CS. The code-switched forms that comprise the narratives are in italic.

1. Yani o da böyle *coincidence* gibi birşey. (18 NY)

I mean that also such *coincidence* like something
'I mean it was like a coincidence.'

2. Onun için çok böyle birkaç ay çok rahatsız ol-du-m okul-da.
Therefore very such a few months very uncomfortable be-PF-1SG school-LOC
There was almost no communication.' (17 NY).

'Therefore, I felt very uncomfortable for a few months when I was at school. There was

almost no communication.’

The code-switched form in (1) is an example of intra-sentential CS whereas in (2) inter-sentential code-switching is prevalent. Note that the code-switched forms do not violate the grammatical rules of either Turkish or English and that entire structures are well-formed Turkish and English sentences.

The data collected for this study exhibit 831 cases of switches that involve both intra-sentential and inter-sentential switches. Intra-sentential switches are divided into categories: single-word and multi-word. The table below compares the number of occurrences of two types of switches found in the speech of 1st and 2nd generation speakers.

Table 3. Distribution of informants by age of arrival and length of residence

	1 st generation	2 nd generation	Total
Inter-sentential	21	31	52
Intra-sentential			
of which			
Single-word	263	280	543
Multi-word	117	119	236
Totals	401	430	831

As shown in the Table, the number of inter-sentential CS was 52 whereas intra-sentential CS occurred 779 times. Furthermore, we see a slight difference between the two generations in the frequency with which they switch to English.

Recall that a social variable that was found to have an important influence on the type of CS was competency in languages. In Poplack’s (1980) study of Puerto Rican speakers in New York, the speakers who had the most competency in both Spanish and English used more intra-sentential code switching than inter-sentential CS. On the basis of these findings, I also explored the relationship between intra-sentential CS and the level of English and Turkish skills of the speakers. The following table presents the results.

Table 4. Pearson correlations: Intra-sentential CS and level of Turkish-English skills

	N speakers	r	P
Intrasentential CS* Turkish-English Skills	20	.135	.34

As the table shows, there is a positive correlation between intra-sentential CS by NYC speakers and their level of Turkish-English skills. Even though this finding is not significant, it goes in the direction predicted by Poplack (1980).

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the CS patterns of Turkish-English bilingual speakers living in New York City. We have examined two categories of CS: Intra-sentential and inter-sentential. We find

that intra-sentential CS is represented in great numbers in the data, produced more than inter-sentential CS.

We also explored the relationship between intra-sentential CS and language competency of the participants. We found a positive but a non-significant correlation between intra-sentential CS and language competency in both Turkish and English. This means that the more the speakers report their language skills to be good, the more intra-sentential CS they use in their utterances. This result is consonant with Poplack's (1980) hypothesis that intra-sentential CS requires balanced bilingual speakers to make greater use of it.

Studying CS in language contact situations, one should also consider the influence of other social variables such as the participants, the setting, and the topic of the conversation on the type and frequency of CS. Further research is needed to investigate these and other possibilities in relation with the CS patterns in the data. It is important to note that contrary to the majority of studies that focused on in-group interactions between members of the same linguistic community, this study focused on interviews between the interviewer and the participants. So, the study did not take into account how the speakers interacted with members in their own communities. Considering the fact that speakers' CS patterns are influenced by the interlocutor or the context, (Blom & Gumperz 1972; Valdés-Fallis 1976) it is of great importance to analyze, in a further study, bilingual speakers' interactions with each other.

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