

CODE SWITCHING SINHALA - ENGLISH

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It is a truism to say that every member of a language using community appears in a network of institutionalized roles and selects role-worthy varieties of a language or languages, which are topically and situationally appropriate. Through out the course of a day he changes his linguistic gears as many times as he enters into different personal and interpersonal relationships. Every man carries his culture and much of his social reality about him wherever he goes "We all carry our "Sets" about with us. By the time we reach adult life, our "Sets" have done a good deal of reading, and tune themselves automatically to various types of situations we have to live in. They are very Selective, too" (Firth 1964:93) what is important in this context is not our grammatical competence as such but what has come to be called our communicative competence - the ability to switch Linguistically and appropriately according to situational changes. This also involves our ability to move up and down the formality - informality cline. Every normal human being has at his disposal a repertoire of linguistic choices, from which he selects for each situation type the appropriate stock of available harmonies in the appropriate key-his choice of items is conditioned by the topic of discourse and the networks of interlocking socio-cultural relations. Most of us are

members of several speech networks. It may be useful at this point to stress the fact that linguistic competence does not necessarily mean communicative competence but communicative competence subsumes linguistic competence for it may be described as linguistic competence plus situational appropriateness. Linguistic competence is an abstract, Contextual, rule-governed linguistic behaviour. Communicative competence is context-governed, topic oriented externalization of linguistic competence.

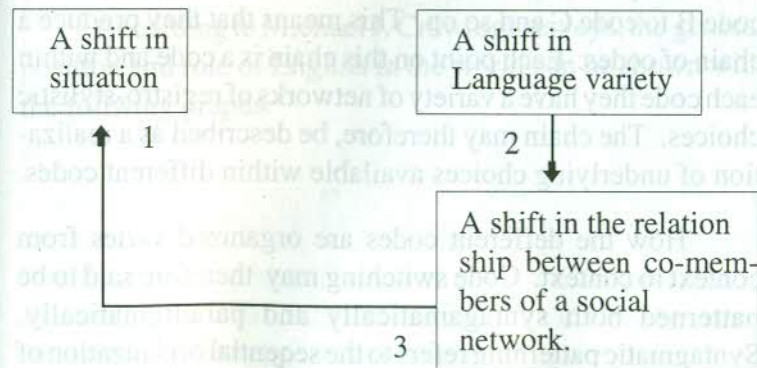
Exponents of sociolinguistics maintain that the ability to use one's language correctly in a variety of socially determined situations is as much and as central a part of linguistic competence as the ability to produce grammatically well-formed sentences. What we do actually produce is a rule-governed realization of a complex network of situationally and culturally determined choices.

Since these choices are situationally determined, shifts in situations require shifts in language varieties. In order to understand this activity fully, we will have to examine role relationships, types of interaction, and situationally relevant domains. They may be analysed in terms of the following components and their interrelations.

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| (a) participants
(addresser and addressee) | Their socio-psychological behaviours; their mood and their relative social positions. |
| (b) socio-cultural setting | its tension and network of relations |
| (c) topic of discourse | |

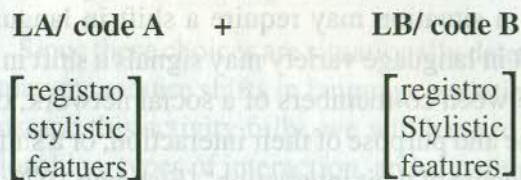
"A situation is defined by the co-occurrence of two (or more) inter locutor related to each other in a particular way, communicating about a particular topic in a particular setting. This, a social network on community may define a beer party between university people as a quite different situation than a lecture involving the same people. The topics of talk in the two situations are likely to be different, their locales and times are likely to be different, and the relationships of roles of the interlocutors vis-a-vis each other are likely to be different. Any one of these differences may be sufficient for the situations of the university community to require that a different language variety be utilized in each case.

Members of social network sharing a linguistic repertoire must (and do) know when to shift from one variety to another. One category of such shifts is known as situational shift. A shift in situation may require a shift in language variety. A shift in language variety may signal a shift in the relationship between co-members of a social network, on a shift in the topic and purpose of their interaction, or a shift in the privacy or locale of their interaction" (Fishman 1972:48-49) It may be represented diagrammatically as:



There are two points which we would like to make here. According to Fishman situational shifting is unidirectional 1→2→3. We would, however, maintain that it is bidirectional 1↔2↔3 and also circular 1↔2↔3↔1, for 1, 2, and 3 are interdependent, interlocked, and mutually defining.

This situation is more difficult in the case of bilinguals and multilinguals who select different varieties of two or more languages to meet the requirements of different situations. Their choices are conditioned by their concepts of appropriateness and effectiveness. Their assessment of the socio-cultural setting prompts them to use a registro-stylistic variety of LA in a situation marked X and on a topic M and then shift to a registro-stylistic variety of LLB in a situation marked Y and on a topic N



They tend to switch from code A to code B and from code B to code C and so on. This means that they produce a chain of codes. Each point on this chain is a code and within each code they have a variety of networks of registro-stylistic choices. The chain may therefore, be described as a realization of underlying choices available within different codes.

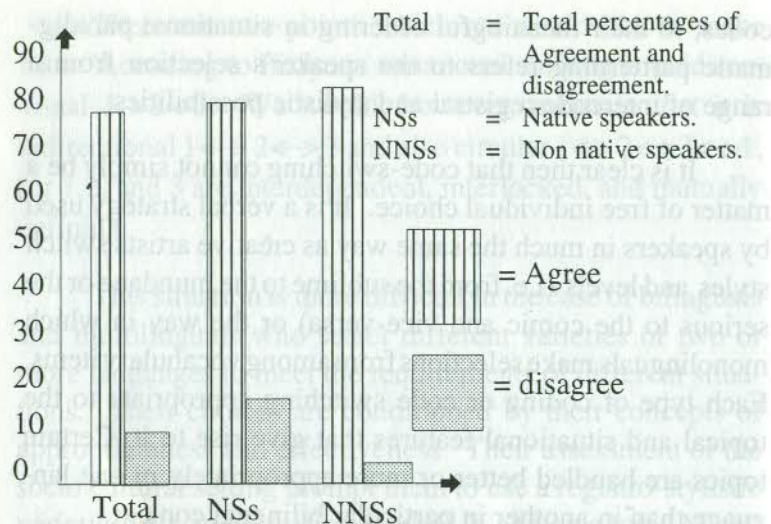
How the different codes are organized varies from context to context. Code switching may therefore be said to be patterned both syntagmatically and paradigmatically. Syntagmatic patterning refers to the sequential organization of

codes, to their meaningful ordering in situations; paradigmatic patterning refers to the speaker's selection from a range of intercode registral and stylistic possibilities.

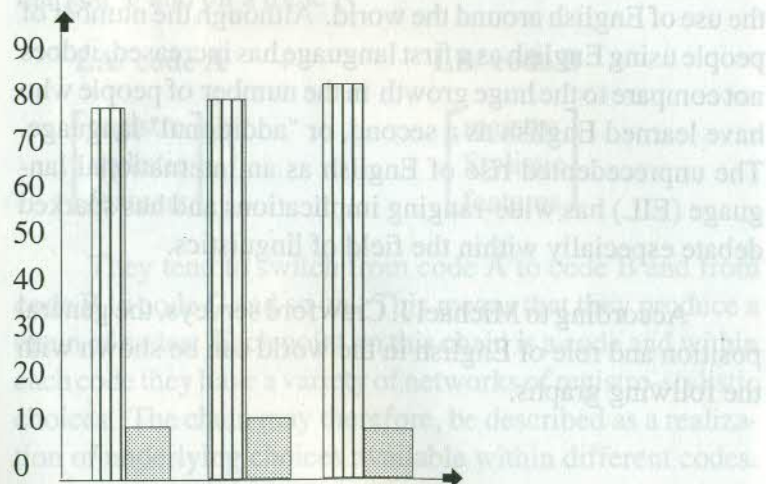
It is clear then that code-switching cannot simply be a matter of free individual choice. It is a verbal strategy used by speakers in much the same way as creative artists switch styles and levels (i.e. from the sublime to the mundane or the serious to the comic and vice-versa) or the way in which monolinguals make selections from among vocabulary items. Each type of coding or code switching appropriate to the topical and situational features that give rise to it. Certain topics are handled better or more appropriately in one language than in another in particular bilingual context.

The past few centuries have witnessed an explosion in the use of English around the world. Although the number of people using English as a first language has increased, it does not compare to the huge growth in the number of people who have learned English as a second, or "additional" language. The unprecedented rise of English as an international language (EIL) has wide-ranging implications and has sparked debate especially within the field of linguistics.

According to Michael J. Crawford surveys, the general position and role of English in the world can be shown with the following graphs.



English is the dominant world language



English will be the dominant world language

Though English is not the first language or official language in Sri Lanka, It is used as the official language. It has become a working Language in SriLanka. English has

become the primary language of science and technology. And also it in contemporary used for many purposes. Finally speaking in English is a mark of social dignity.

However, this paper doesnot attempt to illustrate its appearance in Sri Lankan society, But it is a preliminary attempt to illustrate certain aspects of Sinhala - English code-switching among educated speakers of Sinhala -English. In Sri Lanka English-using bilinguals behave in certain distinguishing ways. English has until very recently been the language of instruction administration, and education. It is even now used as the medium of instruction at the medical colleges, at some departments in universities and also in technical and computer education . Most of the text books, reference materias and journal on various subjects, especially on technical subjects are in English. The language of conversation among elite in clubs, central offices is English. English and sinhala have coexisted with in the same linguistic area as part of the same social economic complex for years. Both the codes have been serving important functions in daily social interaction.

It is only natural for English using bilinguals in Sri Lanka to keep on switching from one or more of the Sri Lankan languages to English according to different performative occasionsns and the role(s) they are playing. It is quite common today for speakers of Sinhala to switch to English when talking about abstract scientific principles or describing the working of some complex machinery. They use different varieties of their mother tongue in various situations in life, but when they have to use technical register they normally switch over to English. This kind of register oriented bilingualism may be labelled 'registral bilingualism'

In fact, the situation is never as simple as this. These bilinguals keep on switching from code to code in different situations. Muslim speaker in Sri Lanka speaks Arabic language at home. Sinhala in social get-together or in talking to sinhalese friends and English in lecturing on technical topics, writing official letters, reports, technical papers, applications for leave and other similar situations. One of the most interesting features of this sociolinguistic situation is that the same person switches automatically from one code to another in the same discourse or even within the same utterance or uses a mixture of codes. In each instance the speakers want to identify themselves with a different speech network to which they belong and from which they seek acceptance. There are pressures constantly towards a merger of the two systems of the bilingual. 'Bilinguals who speak only with other bilinguals may be on the road to merger of the two languages, unless there are strong pressures to insulate by topic or setting' (Ervin-Tripp 1968 : 204)

When consider the following extracts it shows different types of switching and different degrees of mixture.

Dr.Sumit : Hallo Jinet! How are you?

Dr.Jinet : I am fine, Thank you.

Dr.Sumit : saho: daraya! me: dasvala dakinna
nxtte?

ma:sa ganakin dxxke nx [why brother! you are not seen these days I haven't seen you for months]

Dr. Jinet : yah you are correct. Me lagaḍi mama Tuar ekak gihin hiTiya: [you are right. I have been recently on a tour outside]

Note:

Dr. Sumit and Dr. Jinet, are highly educated. They belong to sophisticated upper middle class families. Their children go to English - medium schools. Their servants have been trained to address them as 'mahattaya' and their wives as 'no:na'. They use a variety of English lexical items in their ordinary, everyday conversation in Sinhala. In the extract given above expressions of phatic communion are entirely in English. Not that they are not familiar with expressions like "a: yubo:van" and 'a: kohomada?', but that the formula-type expressions in English are class markers. They are supposed to place them in educated (upper) middle class. They are markers of higher education and social status. English is used as a superposed elite variety. Sinhala expressions reflect personal involvement and intimacy. It is one of the marked features of English dominated collegiate education that the bilinguals keep on throwing in complete English sentences, clauses, and phrases in conversations which are supposed to be in one of the Sri Lankan languages. The chief regulators of sinhala English code switching or of mixture of sinhala - English styles are level of education and topic of discourse. The higher the level of education and more technical the topic of discourse, the greater the degree of mixture and frequency of switching. It may therefore, be said that the bilingual's switching is patterned and predictable on the basis of topical and situational features.

Kumara: Ayya ' The beggers in Sri Lanka' kiyewwada?
[brother, Have you read ' The beggers in Sri Lanka?]

Jayanta: ou, e:kanan rima:kabal risaac ekak. risaaca hoḍaTa begaaslage fi:lins pennala tiyenava. [Yes, it is a very remarkable research. The researcher has voiced the feeling of the baggers nicely]

Kumara: man hitanne it is one of the best researches of the year [I think that it is one of the best researches of the year]

Jayanta: That's right. it is decidedly one of the best researches of the year.

Note

What might appear as random alternation between two languages is highly meaningful in terms of the conversational context. Kumara and Jayanta are university lecturers. They did their M.A. in English medium in few years ago and since then they have been teaching at a university. In their conversation they bring in a number of English expressions. According to my experience, why they did not use Sinhala equivalents is that they were so used to these English expressions that they though Sinhala equivalents would not be so effective and would sound unnatural. Even they never felt that they were so used to these English expressions that they thought Sinhala equivalents would not be so effective and would sound unnatural. Even, they never felt that they were using borrowed expressions in Sinhala. These expressions came so naturally to them that they considered them as constituents of certain varieties of Sinhala and as markers of certain style types in Sinhala. This mixed style has become a symbol of group identity and an integral component of social interaction.

Kristy: DokTa, ada api musical so ekako:ganaiz karanava. a:ve invaiT karanna. misut ekkaenna. [Doctor we are organizing a musical show. I came to invite you. Come with your wife]

Mark: Thank you. mama enava. item Ki:yak tiyanavada? [I thank you. I will come. How many items are there?]

Note

Here again the situational features are the same as the earlier one. When I asked kristy whether he knew the Sinhala equivalents of "musical show", or 'organize' and invite', he said 'yes' but added that these and a number of English expressions had become a part of his conversational Sinhala. He thought he might have sounded very formal if he had used Sinhala expressions like 'sanginta in an informal setting like the one mentioned above.

(a) "dannavada o:pan univasiTiye diplo:ma: kla:s sTa:T karanna yanne. ehe Ingliz fi: ld eke espeshalisTla: nx:Lu. api xplai Kalot silekT venna puluvan" [Do You know, they are going to start diploma course in the open university. They don't have any expertise in English. If we apply we may be selected]

Note

This type of Sinhala-English style is a marked feature of the sociolinguistic behaviour of the members of educated middle class society. Language mixture is a common feature of informal conversation and semi-formal talks in urban bilingual societies. Formal style and language mixture are normally mutually exclusive. The grammatical matrix of their sentences is that of sinhala with a heavy load of words, phrases, clauses and sentences borrowed from English. As a result of constant interaction between English and sinhala, these items are used naturally and unconsciously by speakers. All these items are used naturally and unconsciously by speakers. All these items are made to function as constituents of the main system and have to undergo morpho-syntactic changes required by it. (The main system) it may be said that

the basic assumptions of Bernstein's theory (1958) was that elaborated Code speakers would tend to be able to switch from one code to another according to the demands of the situation whereas the restricted code user would tend to be confined to one code" (Lawton 1998: 131). We switch codes either because the topics of discourse demand different codes or because our role and the participants involved make us switch our codes.

I use Sinhala or mixed Sinhala - English style in my normal every day conversations but sometimes switch to English when I have to give a discourse on linguistics for I have thus far had all my training in handling the register of linguistics in English.

- b. The switchers use English words and expressions even when equivalents exist in Sinhala. They feel that these English expressions come so naturally to them that their equivalents in Sinhala might sound formal and unnatural.
- c. Some of the formulaic expressions in English are now so deeply embedded in urban bilingual societies that they come out naturally in informal conversations.
- d. There is so much of English around us and it is so much in active use that switching from Sinhala to English takes place automatically and unconsciously. Educated speakers tend to switch freely and insert entire English sentences, clauses, and phrases in their Sinhala discourse. "But the Being of L1 utterances with L2 items is not confined to multilingual societies. It is likely to happen wherever a foreign language is a mark of social distinction and the sole medium of language activity in certain registers" (Halliday et al 1964:102).

e. Code switching is context governed. If the interlocutors have a degree in English and use English and use English as their medium of lecturing or in their office work, they are likely to use information carrying items of English and linkers of Sinhala. If their topic of discourse is technical, their registral items are likely to be from English and the grammatical items from Sinhala. Code-switching, one might say, is a marked badge of educated, urban bilinguals.

f. The preponderance of a particular set of lexical items of code depends upon our emotional and intellectual attachment to the code.

g. what is significant today is not that English is used in X situations and Sinhala in Y situations, but that Sinhala-English is being used more and more in informal everyday conversations. It would be interesting to examine the quantum of English that goes into Sinhala conversations and the modifications that English patterns undergo in terms of Sinhala systems.

"One striking linguistic aspect of the code switching situation is the fact that we find few of the strictures against structural borrowing commonly reported in the linguistic literature. Interference extends to all levels of the grammars-morphomic, morphophonemic and Phonological - as well as to lexicon. It almost seems as if the two languages were gradually merging" (Gumperz) 1964:1123)

(h) The following bidimensional diagram shows the code codes that the speakers tend to select in the given situations. Code - switching reveals certain patterns and regularities rather than purely random or idiosyncratic manifestations.

Topic	Manner	Speaker's choice
Serman or prayer	formal/informal	Sinhala
Instruction to servants	informal	Sinhala
Personal letters	informal	Sin/Eng sinhala - English
speech on technical subject	formal	English
University lecture	formal	Sinhala/English
Conversation	informal	Sin - Eng
News broadcasting	formal	Sinhala/English
Transactional contexts	informal	Sinhala/English

On the contrary there are advantages of code-switching. It sometimes leads to create socio-psychological complexes among the speakers of this mixed language. Mixed languages are a natural byproduct of language contact situations. The use of L2 in situations for which the L1 is adequately developed and of L2 words, phrases and clauses in L1 utterances where equivalents are available in L1 tends to inhibit the progress of the L1 towards regaining its full status in the community.

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