

## Switching

Code-switching is the use of two or more languages in one speech exchange by bi- or multilingual speakers. Switches between languages can occur between turns, within turns, and between constituents of single sentences. Code-switching is one of many language contact phenomena, and analysts do not always agree on the precise demarcations between code-switching and other contact phenomena such as lexical transfer. Syntactic analyses of code-switching have repeatedly shown that code-switchers attend to the syntax and morphology of switched languages in making their switches, rebutting the notion that code-switching is a haphazard, ungrammatical jumble of linguistic elements. Even when assumed to be grammatical, however, code-switching tends to be seen by analysts as requiring explanation, in contrast to monolingual speech, which is implicitly treated as the unmarked, or natural state of affairs.

Code-switching is of particular interest for linguistic anthropology because it is both a *language* contact phenomenon and a *social* contact phenomenon. Language is the central semiotic tool for representing social reality and transmitting sociocultural orientations, and in multicultural, multilingual contexts, particular codes are often associated with particular social roles, relationships, institutions, activities, and ideologies. Code-switching is both reflective and constitutive of the social processes that occur in such multilingual situations. Because code-switching involves discrete linguistic forms that can be recorded and transcribed, analysis of code-switching can make visible social negotiation processes that are otherwise veiled.

Defining code-switching in terms of outward form—as the alternation of codes in a speech exchange—backgrounds the diversity of practices and meanings that code-switching encompasses. The occurrence, shape, distribution, and meanings of code-switching vary across and within communities, depending on members' access to cross-boundary social roles and domains and to groups' relative and situational interests in boundary-maintenance versus boundary-leveling. The nature of these social boundaries

and the social associations of particular codes are a function of specific histories of social relationships. The children of many international labor migrants, for example, have access to both immigrant and host society languages and sociocultural roles and thus straddle national, linguistic, and ethnic boundaries. Code-switching in this second generation is often frequent, intra-sentential, and unmarked in intra-group peer interactions, an emblem of identity for individuals who live simultaneously in multiple social and linguistic worlds. In situations of more stable bi-/multilingualism, codes and social identities are often more highly compartmentalized, individuals have fewer opportunities to develop multiple roles and relationships across social boundaries, and there are higher sociopolitical costs for crossing boundaries. In such situations, code-switching tends to be less frequent, inter- or intra-turn rather than intra-sentential, and socially and linguistically marked.

Although code-switching is irreducibly polysemous and multifunctional, researchers have highlighted several overarching functions of code-switching by assigning switches to one of several, overlapping, functional types: (1) situational switching, (2) metaphorical switching, and (3) unmarked discourse contextualization switching. As defined by Jan-Peter Blom and John Gumperz, in *situational switching*, distinct codes are employed in particular settings and speech activities, and with different categories of interlocutors, i.e., there is a direct and predictable relationship between code use and observable features of the situation. Codes are switched as observable changes in the context occur, e.g., to accommodate a monolingual speaker who joins the group or as interlocutors move to a different institutional setting associated with a distinct code. *Metaphorical switches* are defined in terms that complement those of situational switches. In contrast to situational switches, metaphorical switches partially *violate* conventionalized associations between codes and context/activity/participants. In such metaphorical switching, changes in language effect changes in context and social roles, without tangible changes in the outward context. Alternative frameworks for interpreting experience and constructing social reality that are associated with a code can thus be invoked by a switch into that code. In *discourse contextualization switching*, individual switches do not co-occur with external changes in the context or significant shifts in sociocultural framework. Individual switches serve instead as contextualization, or framing, cues to mark off quotations, changes in topic, etc. from surrounding speech. In such unmarked discourse contextualization switching, conventionalized associations between particular codes and social worlds are suspended by participants (although not necessarily by non-member bystanders), and the act of code-switching itself, rather than the particular social associations of given codes is central.

Such categories serve as a heuristic for highlighting particular functions of code-switching and should not be understood as representing entirely discrete or manifest types. Switches that co-occur with shifts from small talk to the beginning of a formal speech, for example, can be simultaneously (and ambiguously) situational, metaphorical, and discourse contextualizing. There can be conventionalized assumptions about separate codes for casual

and for formal speeches, making such a switch a situational one that accompanies an observable shift in institutional activities. The switch *itself* can also effectively change the context, from one of informal conversation to more formal speech-making, without other observable shifts in context, thus making it a metaphorical switch. Finally, such a switch also serves as a local discourse framing device in that it signals contextual information—without necessarily invoking alternative cultural worlds—that might be conveyed in a monolingual setting through prosody or other contextualization conventions.

Code-switching reflects sociohistorical meanings and boundaries, but it can also be used to negotiate and redefine them. Speakers' juxtaposition of codes with divergent social associations within single speech exchanges—simultaneously violating and redefining conventionalized expectations—highlights speakers' creative powers to negotiate linguistic and social boundaries.

(See also *codes, contact, crossing, endangered, heteroglossia, identity, ideology, indexicality, inference, register, variation*)

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