

A Study of Code-switching and its Purposes and Social Factors affecting it Among Azeri Turkish-Persian-speaking Teachers in Urmia City

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

As a remarkable topic in sociolinguistics, code-switching is a natural phenomenon among many bilingual communities throughout the world. Van Dulm (2007) describes this phenomenon as the use of two or more languages while making an utterance or a sentence. Azeri Turkish-Persian speaking bilinguals are one of these big communities which code-switching is a very common practice among them. The present study investigates code-switching and the goals of its occurrence among some of Azeri Turkish-Persian-speaking bilingual teachers in Urmia city. The study takes into consideration such social variables affecting code-switching as age, gender, education level, teaching experience, topic, and setting.

2. Review of Literature

One of the first studies in the United States of America in this regard is Barker (1947) that examined code-switching process among the Mexico-Americans in Tucson, Arizona. In addition to the analysis of the economic relations, social and geographical networks of the citizens of Tucson, the author sought an answer to the question that why bilingual people use different languages in different places or situations.

One of the most important investigations on code-switching from social perspective was carried out by Bloom and Gumperz (1972). They believed that social events introduced under the title of participants, setting and topic would limit linguistic variables choice. They added in any given social situation, some forms of language are more appropriate than others.

In a study in Ardabil province, northwest Iran, Heidari, Samaei, Latifi and Ruhi (2013), examined some primary school English teachers' views on code-switching process and factors which affect this phenomenon. Results showed that nearly all bilingual teachers agree with using code-switching in the classroom and asserted that repetition and translation have been the most effective factors involved in this process (Heidari et al., 2013). Sadat Giyasian and Rezaie

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(2014) examined different types of code-switching among Persian-Armenian bilinguals in Tehran. Inter-sentential code-switching was looked through Bloom and Gumperz' (1972) and intra-sentential code-switching was surveyed through Myers-Scotton model (1993 and 2002). The results showed that, in their daily communications, both situational and metaphorical types of code-switching took place and the intra-sentential code-switching was turned to have a very high amount of frequency.

Concerning different types of code-switch, Bloom and Gumperz (1972) believe that in metaphorical switching, speakers use two languages at the same time which occurs through topic switch and the speakers change their codes to achieve specific effects. And finally, examining different purposes of code-switching, Baker and García (1993) mentioned 13 basic types of purposes in making use of code-switching. Záhová (2011) enumerated some purposes of code-switching, i.e. putting emphasis on a particular point, reinforcement of request, clarification of a point-repetition, social distance-solidarity, quoting, communicating common identity, excluding people from a conversation, including people in a conversation, changing attitude, arousing attention, addressing oneself, hedging, expressing opposition, topic change, showing respect, no equivalence, introduction of certain topics, and substitution a word in one language.

The present study is based on Bloom and Gumperz' (1972), Gumperz' (1982) and Baker's (2001) theoretical frameworks.

3. Method

Studies carried out on code-switching have been mostly conducted among the students' communications and interactions at school or university classes but not among the university or high school teachers. On the other hand, most of the classifications are done to clarify inter-sentential or intra-sentential nature of an existing code-switching phenomenon, but this study is to search the case among the teachers and the use of different type of classification.

To carry out the study, relevant data on code-switching, produced by the teachers were collected through direct observation of their linguistic behaviour. The data were recorded and were later transcribed and analysed. To determine the function of social factors on code-switching, a researcher-made questionnaire was completed by 336 male and female Azeri Turkish-Persian-speaking bilingual teachers. Depending on the type of variables, tests as ne sample t-test, Independent t-test, Anova, Kalmogorov –Smirnov, Levene, and Structural equation modelling were used.

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive results showed that 19 factors were involved in teachers' code-switching occurrence and that the participants used situational, metaphorical, conversational, situational - metaphorical, situational - conversational and metaphorical-conversational code - switching at school offices, teachers' council meetings, and in service course sessions, while talking about educational and non-educational topics. The results of quantitative research also showed that there was no significant difference among code-switching according to the social factors mentioned above except for the in-service course sessions setting. In addition, the teachers preferred to switch from Persian to Azeri Turkish language in these settings and not vice versa.

5. Conclusion

Contrary to Bloom and Gumperz's framework, which had a clear boundary between different types of code-switching, the study showed that the difference between metaphorical and situational code-switching is in fact unclear and is not simple. There may also be more than one purpose for code-switching in a single conversation and overlapping among the goals. On the other hand, it seems that there is a direct relationship between code-switching and the goals. Also, in Urmia, the social factors mentioned above do not have a significant difference in the code-switching of teachers. Perhaps the reason for this is that Urmia is a Turkish-speaking city, and the teachers only need to speak Persian just in the classroom in teaching hours. On the other hand, they tend to keep their mother tongue.

The results of this study can be regarded as a guideline for other research projects in bilingual or multilingual regions of the country. The following recommendations can be useful for those interested in conducting research in this field:

1. Other bilingual and multilingual educational regions should be explored in amount of using their code-switching as well;
2. Other descriptive features such as culture, identity, language, accent, etc., and their impact on the amount of the occurrence of code-switching should be investigated as well to determine the kinds of relationship with this generally happen phenomenon.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Bilingualism, Code-switching, Azeri Turkish language, Urmia City.

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