Code-switching in second language teaching of French

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Introduction
Although code-switching has attracted a considerable amount of attention for quite some time, the issue of linguistic switch in foreign language teaching has not been a major subject of scientific study. Using a qualitative approach to individual examples of linguistic switch among three second language teachers of French in Sweden, this article, although highly preliminary, attempts to highlight and explain some of the features of code-switching in the foreign language classroom.

History of research
Code-switching in general has been a subject of great scholarly attention in recent decades. For overviews of the subject, see e.g. Eastman 1992, Fishman 1971, Gumperz 1982a, 1982b, Heller 1988 and Jacobson 1997. Detailed accounts of individual cases of code-switching include those of Platt & Platt 1975:91-4 which deals with the multilingual situation in Singapore; Blom & Gumperz 1972, who describe the code-switching patterns in Hemnesberget, Norway; and Hewitt 1986, who discusses code-switching among West Indian youths in Britain.

Theoretical treatments of the purely linguistic aspects of code-switching include those of Woolford 1983, Di Scuiollo, Muysken & Singh 1986, Romaine 1989 and Poplack 1980. The latter suggests two constraints on code-switching: (1) ‘the free morpheme constraint’ which prevents switching between a bound morpheme and a lexical form; and (2) ‘the equivalence constraint’ which prevents switching at points where it breaks the syntactic rules of either language (Poplack 1980:585-6). More recently, Myers-Scotton 1993 has provided a model to account for the linguistic consequences of code-switching, claiming that one language is dominant and
the other is subordinate, and that the word structure of the dominant language determines the outcome in the subordinate language.

All of the above literature draws on material from natural discourse, but quite a few studies have also been done on code-switching phenomena in the more formalised context of classroom interaction. Using ethnographic observations, Merritt et al. 1992 explore the determinants of teacher code-switching between English, Swahili and mother-tongue in three Kenyan primary schools. Reasons for code-switching put forward include e.g. the socialising role of the teacher, the importance of variation and repetition, and the teacher's linguistic competence and insecurity. Bergman 1993:90-100, 102 discusses issues of conscious, planned code-switching among teachers in Swedish schools with bilingual education in Swedish and Finnish.

Other accounts include Martin-Jones 1988, who reviews research in bilingual education programmes in the context of classroom code-switching. For instance, she refers to Guthrie's comparative study of two teachers, one bilingual and one monolingual, working with Chinese learners of English in the U.S. The bilingual teacher made use of five communicative functions for switching into Chinese: translation, 'we code', procedures and directions, clarification and check for understanding. The monolingual English-speaking teacher, however, did not tolerate any code-switching into Chinese (Guthrie 1984).

Less has been done on code-switching within foreign language teaching specifically. Referring to Jacobson 1983, who has put forward a model in which code-switching is used as a teaching method in bilingual programs, Giauque & Ely 1990 propose an extended use of this method to also include foreign language teaching. Drawing on attitudes expressed by students, the authors note an increased acceptance of code-switching as a teaching method and understanding of its applicability.

Material and method of investigation

Material

The present study sets out from a series of video recordings, supplemented by back-up audio recordings, of classroom interaction between teachers and Swedish students of French as a second language. The recordings involve three classes of 4th year students (1st year of the Swedish gymnasium, roughly equivalent to upper secondary school or senior high school) and eight lessons for each class, altogether numbering 24 lessons, or 24 hours of recorded classroom interaction. All of the recorded material has been transcribed into CHILDES format. The three instructors of French studied include two Swedish male teachers and one French female teacher. All three teachers use both Swedish and French as a teaching medium.¹

Method

The transcribed material serves as a basis for a detailed analysis of the patterns of code-switching between Swedish and French exhibited by the three teachers in the classroom. A quick glance at the material reveals extensive use of code-switching in the teachers' interaction with their students, and the study aims at identifying these instances of code-switching and describe the reasons for them.

Several explanations for code-switching in the second language classroom may be relevant to the present study, including, for instance, the following:

(a) Linguistic insecurity, e.g. the difficulty teachers experience in relating new concepts, discussed by Merritt et al. 1992:112-13.
(b) Topic switch, i.e. when the teacher switches code according to which topic is under discussion; it might be suggested, for instance, that certain aspects of foreign language teaching such as grammar instruction, is preferably expressed in the mother tongue of the students (Flyman-Mattsson, forthc.).
(c) Affective functions, e.g. spontaneous expression of emotions and emotional understanding in discourse with students.
(d) Socialising functions, i.e. when teachers turn to the students' first language to signal friendship and solidarity (this is briefly touched upon in Merritt et al. 1992:108-9).
(e) Repetitive functions, i.e. when teachers convey the same message in both languages for clarity.

Presumably, these and other reasons for foreign language classroom code-switching interact in various complex ways.

As pointed out above, most of the previous research on code-switching deals with natural discourse, not with classroom interaction. Traditionally at least, the tutorial situation is obviously radically different from an ordinary conversational speech situation, and we might expect classroom code-switching to differ in several important respects from code-switching in

¹The recordings used in the present study form part of a larger collection of classroom interaction gathered by Anna Flyman-Mattsson.
natural discourse. For one thing, we should bear in mind that the foreign language teacher perhaps should not be regarded as a true bilingual who can choose freely between different codes. Instead we are normally dealing with a monolingual individual who has skills in a foreign language and whose task is to teach this language to other monolinguals. Still, we have chosen to study foreign language teacher code-switching within the framework of theoretical thinking on code-switching in general, in order to chart more easily the similarities and differences present.

Furthermore, we have chosen not to delve into the problem of distinguishing code-switching from language choice, since this distinction is not relevant for our present purposes. Hence, we adopt a fairly liberal definition of code-switching, namely, each time the teacher switches from one language to another.

Analysis

Introduction

At a first glimpse on code-switching in a foreign language classroom, it is easy to get the opinion that the teacher switches code for one reason only, to make the students understand the utterances. This of course is one of the main functions of code-switching since the number one purpose of classroom instruction is to teach the students the foreign language in question, and since their proficiency in this language is incomplete, the teacher feels it necessary to use the first language in order to make his or her students understand.

Further investigation of classroom data, however, clearly indicates that code-switching has more functions than mere translation. Although there is seldom true bilingualism on the teacher’s behalf in a foreign language classroom, since he/she is usually either a mother tongue speaker of the first language or of the second language, this study has shown that it is possible to find similarities in code-switching in natural speech by bilinguals and code-switching in classroom interaction by native or nonnative speakers.

Linguistic insecurity

There are, however, some differences in the reasons for switching code. In natural speech, in bilinguals as well as monolinguals, linguistic insecurity in the speaker may constitute a possible cause for switching into the code that is the most comfortable for the speaker. In the case of bilinguals, the two languages are often made use of in different situations, e.g. formal vs. informal situations, and consequently some words are more stable in one language. However, linguistic insecurity in classroom interaction is a more complicated matter. In students’ speech it is not uncommon; code-switching is one of the most frequent communication strategies used by foreign language students (Flyman 1997:57). In teachers’ speech the situation is somewhat different. Since the task of the teacher is to transmit knowledge of a foreign language onto the students, it is not appropriate to use words for which the teacher will have to switch code to be able to control. This might damage the students’ confidence in the teacher’s proficiency of the foreign language. A possible solution for the teacher might, therefore, be to avoid words he/she does not control or quite simply restructure the utterance. This assumption is based on the fact that nowhere in the data of the present study has there been found a clear case of linguistic insecurity by the teacher.

Topic switch

Code-switching at topic switch, on the other hand, seems to be a relatively frequent phenomenon in the classroom. As suggested above, grammar instruction is usually carried out in the students’ mother tongue (note that this is also the case with the teacher whose mother tongue is the students’ foreign language, in this case French), while conversation, in a majority of the cases, is performed in the target language. A probable explanation for this is the fact that the proficiency of the students is not developed enough to include terms necessary in grammar instruction. Following the traditional teaching methods still widely spread in Sweden, teachers believe that the first language is a necessary means of explaining rules and structures of the foreign language. Our data point to the presence of this belief as the teacher often switches code in the middle of an utterance if the situation demands a comment of a grammatical phenomenon. Examples (1) and (2) show some very obvious code switches where the teacher explicitly informs the students about the change of topic. There are also cases where the topic changes without any notice, but where the code switch indicates that a change of topic has been made, see examples (3) and (4).

(1) *LH1: ... c'est la fête de tous les saints Toussaint är alla helgons dag oui autres questions sinon da jag över till svenska vi ska prata lite verb här ...

[Transcription key: *L[school abbrev.]: teacher code; *E[school abbrev.][student]: student code; xx, xxx: unintelligible speech; #: pause; + ...: trailing off.]
Affective functions

A common reason for code-switching among people who speak one standard language along with another language in a more vernacular style is to use one of the languages for affective functions. If the speaker has only one mother tongue, this is usually the language used for such functions. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the teacher’s mother tongue is used for affective reasons also in the classroom. In example (7) the teacher expresses his sympathies by switching to Swedish, and continues with French as soon as focus is back on the task. In the following example (8), the code switch is affective in the sense that the teacher shows her anger by using the student’s mother tongue. In this way it is also stressed that the utterance is seriously meant and expected to be obeyed. Note that in this example, the teacher is French, but the affective code switch is adjusted to the student’s first language.

In examples (5) and (6), the topic switch seems to be a change from ‘typical’ classroom speech into a more personal level. In both cases specific students are addressed and indirect or direct requests are presented. There are mainly two possible explanations for this kind of code-switching: the message in the utterances is so important that the teacher is not willing to risk a misinterpretation on the part of the affected students, or the code-switching is used as an instrument to get the students’ attention. In any case, code-switching functions as a marker for the students to listen extra carefully.

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As can be seen from the last two examples above, the topic change is not obvious, if by topic change we mean an apparent change of the subject of discussion. However, the sense of the word that is used in the present study involves also the sometimes rather vague change from focus on meaning to focus on the form itself. Since topic indicates what is being dealt with, the switch from focus on meaning to focus on form should count as a topic switch. In natural discourse this kind of topic switch is not very common, if by topic change we mean an apparent change of the subject of discussion. However, the sense of the word that is used in the present study involves also the sometimes rather vague change from focus on meaning to focus on the form itself. Since topic indicates what is being dealt with, the switch from focus on meaning to focus on form should count as a topic switch. In natural discourse this kind of topic switch is not very common, mainly because metalinguistic conversations are rare outside the classroom. On the other hand, it is not unusual to switch code when a new subject is introduced. This code switch may be due to a higher degree of control of a certain subject in one of the languages. The control factor does not exist in classroom interaction, since the teacher is expected to use the foreign language in most topics discussed in the classroom. The data, however, contain situations where there is a code switch along with a topic switch, but no explicit reason for the code switch.

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3In all translations of Swedish and French into English, Swedish as opposed to French is italicised. The code-switching example in question is in bold text.
It might be argued that the code-switches exhibited by the teachers in the above examples are triggered by the students’ use of their mother tongue and that they therefore are not primarily signalling affective functions. However, influence from the students’ choice of code is highly unlikely since students use their first language quite frequently in the classroom and would then force the teacher to commonly turn to the first language, which is not the case.

Socialising functions

Closely related to affective functions are socialising functions, i.e. when the speaker signals friendship and solidarity by using the addressee’s first language. This is often directed to people with a lower proficiency in the second language. The same kind of phenomenon appeared in our classroom data: it seems as if the teacher switches code when he/she wishes to be friendly with the students. Example (9) shows an obvious attempt on the teacher’s part to fraternise with one of the students to create a positive attitude towards the task. Also, in example (10), the teacher tries to show solidarity towards the students by expressing understanding of their problems in their mother tongue.

Repetitive functions

As mentioned above, one of the main reasons for teacher code-switching to the L1 of the students is to make the students understand their utterances. Of course this can be done without using a single word in the target language, but more frequently code-switching is used as a repetition of the previously uttered sentences. The repetition in the first language can be either partial (12) or full (13) and is often expanded with further information. Commonly in the repetitive code-switch, the target language precedes the first language.
Then you should recognise you should keep your books closed of that you really understand French and this text you know and comprehension exercise here to make you feel we begin with computer room where there are verb programs that I have prepared for you so to work with the verbs today some small introductions here and then in the computer room during the second lesson where there are special verb programs ...

Further reasons for code-switching
Apart from the functions of code-switching discussed above, there are also some cases that are difficult to explain since there are no obvious reasons for switching code. Using examples (14) and (15) as prototypes for this kind of code switches, one may assume that the teacher switches code in a preventing purpose, that is, he/she expects the students not to understand the words he/she is about to utter. In the examples below, those words would presumably be bibeln, desinfektionsmedel and trubadurerna, respectively.

Discussion
The analysed material contains examples of several kinds of code-switching as outlined in the method section above, including instances related to topic switch as well as effective, socialising and repetitive functions. No examples of code-switching related to linguistic insecurity were found. By far, the largest category is represented by topic switch, and our assumption that a course and then you will work in pairs with these questions and then we will work with verbs now when I look back at your questionnaire your questionnaires and I asked you then as you know if there was anything particular within grammar that you found difficult and then many it was seven or eight who specifically mentioned the verbs and some have expressed their concern about the verbs and this we will deal with a little today and er work in the computer room during the second lesson where there are special verb programs ...
linguistic discussions, grammar in particular, is by and large supported by the data.

As far as affective functions of code-switching are concerned, there is a clear tendency in these cases for the teacher to make use of the students' first language, even in the case of the native French teacher. One would perhaps expect this particular teacher to make more use of her mother tongue for spontaneous expressions of emotion, but instead she appears to accommodate to the students' first language. The same patterns apply to the socialising functions of code-switching, although there are some interesting exceptions.

Repetitive examples of code-switching can be both partial and full and, as we have seen, normally go from L2 to LI.

Clearly, the tutorial situation affects the code-switching patterns in some respects. For instance, the extensive use of repetitive code-switching can be attributed to the teacher's wish to be as clear as possible in the act of teaching. Since code-switching in natural discourse normally involves bilinguals, repetitive functions of switch are not particularly common in such situations. Also, certain aspects of the kind of topic-related code-switching present in the material, notably that involving the transition from focus on meaning to focus on form, can be attributed to the classroom context. At a different level, however, subject-changing topic switch appears to follow the same patterns as in natural discourse.

The present data also show that affective and socialising code-switching does exist in a classroom situation not involving bilinguals but foreign language instruction, not unlike code-switching in natural discourse.

Although very preliminary, the present study has shown that teacher code-switching in the foreign language classroom is a relatively unexplored yet highly interesting field of research. It has pinpointed the presence of both similarities to and differences from code-switching in natural discourse. Future studies in this area, supported by larger corpora, are likely to shed further light on the subject.

References

Features of request strategies in Chinese

Gao Hong

Introduction

As Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989:1 point out, speech acts are “one of the most compelling notions in the study of language use”. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984) analyses two speech acts: requests and apologies across a range of languages and cultures to investigate whether there are universal pragmatic principles in speech act realisation, and what the characteristics of those universals might be.

Concerning requests, one of the most significant findings of the CCSARP was that all languages studied overwhelmingly preferred conventionally indirect request strategies (e.g. *Could I borrow your notes?*; *Would you mind moving your car?).

However, there remains a distinct Western bias in the CCSARP: all of the languages and varieties studied (except Hebrew) are either Germanic or Romance, and all of the cultures studied are either Western or heavily influenced by Western culture.

Therefore, in this article I will focus on the strategy types of making requests classified in CCSARP to analyse the linguistic features in Chinese speakers’ speech act realisation in the hope that further evidence can be found to support claims for a universal category of conventionally indirect requests.

1. Mood derivable

Imperatives are the grammatical forms of the utterances of this type. In most cases in English, the imperative signals that the utterance is an order, and its unmodified form is only supposed to be used by a speaker who has power over the hearer; otherwise, it can be considered very impolite. In this sense, this strategy is the least preferred means of making a request in