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Abstract

Many researchers on bilingualism feel the need to state that a given bilingual stretch of talk is "basically" in language A, although elements of language B may also be present in some way or other within it. The goal of this paper is to discuss both the limits of analysts abilities to attribute a given stretch of bilingual talk to language A or language B –i.e. to determine a "base language" at all–, and the proper way of proceeding within these limits –i.e. in those cases in which it is indeed possible and useful to reconstruct what language participants are "basically" speaking at a given point (or during a given activity). In this paper, it is also argued that in an interpretative approach to code-switching, based on conversation and using an analytically inspired methodology, great care is required not to confound linguists and participants' identifications of languages. Several examples of how the "language-of-interaction" is negotiated sequentially are shown in this contribution. Joined to these, others that point to the numerous strategies of ambiguity by which bilingual participants may choose to leave the question of one language-of-interaction locally unsettled, are discussed here.

Key words: bilingual conversation, base language, code-switching, code-mixing, language-of-interaction.

Resumo

Moitos investigadores do bilingüismo senten a necesidade de establecer que un fragmento dado de fala bilingüe está "basicamente" na lingua A, aínda que dun xeito ou doutro tamén poidan estar presentes nel elementos da lingua B. O obxectivo deste traballo é discutir os límites da habilidade do analista á hora de atribuír un fragmento dado de fala bilingüe á lingua A ou á lingua B –isto é, determinar unha "lingua base"–, e mais formular cál é o camiño axeitado de actuación dentro deses límites –isto é, naqueles casos en que é realmente factible e útil reconstruír qué lingua están os participantes falando "basicamente" nun momento dado (ou durante unha determinada actividade). Neste estudio sostense así mesmo que nunha aproximación interpretativa á alternancia de códigos, baseada na conversación e cunha metodoloxía inspirada na análise, cómpre ter moito coidado para non confundir as identificacións das linguas feitas polos lingüistas coas feitas polos participantes. Preséntanse exemplos de cómo a "lingua da interacción" é secuencialmente negociada. Xunto a estes, discútense outros casos que exemplifican as numerosas estratexias de ambigüidade polas que os participantes bilingües poden escoller deixar momentaneamente sen resolver a cuestión da lingua da interacción.

Palabras clave: conversación bilingüe, lingua base, alternancia de códigos, mestura de códigos, lingua da interacción.

1. Introduction

Many researchers on bilingualism, both in the more grammatical and in the more discourse-oriented research tradition, feel the need to state that a given bilingual stretch of conversation is 'basically' in language A although elements of language B are also present in some way or other within it. Language A is often called the base language or (in the more grammatically inclined approaches) the matrix language. In this paper, I want to discuss (a) the limits of our ability (as analysts) to attribute a stretch of bilingual conversation to language A or B, i.e., to determine its base language, and (b) the proper way of proceeding within these limits, i.e. in those cases in which it is indeed possible and useful to reconstruct what language participants are 'basically' speaking at a given point in time.

These issues play a prominent role in many studies on bilingualism, but are nonetheless often treated as methodological or terminological questions to be settled in a more or less ad hoc fashion before the proper analysis begins. I will argue that, other than what is suggested by this treatment, determining the 'base language' of an interaction (or rather, as I will call it, the *language of interaction*) is a matter of permanent concern for bilingual *participants* themselves who usually deal with it as part of the background business of making the conversation works, but sometimes move this issue into the foreground of conversational interaction as well.

2. Micro vs macro level issues

In this section, I will give a brief overview of the various ways of defining the 'base language' that have been proposed in the literature. In order to clarify the issue, let us follow Nortier (1990:158) in distinguishing terminologically the *base language* of an entire conversational episode (or an interactionally relevant section of it) from the *matrix language* of a 'sentence'[1] or a similar minimal syntactic unit. This distinction intuitively makes sense, for within a conversation in language A, there may occur one or more 'sentences' in language B, which, in turn, may contain smaller elements of language A. Or, to put it differently, the base language may accommodate changing matrix languages.

To my knowledge, the one major approach to code-switching which links together micro ('sentence level') and macro ('episode level') aspects, i.e., where the base language of the conversation is bound to be the matrix languages of the sentences within it, is that of Myers-Scotton (1993a, b). She argues that in the African settings investigated, it is always the indigenous language which is both the matrix and the base language, and that the "international language" (English, French) is the embedded language (1993b: 125f). Since Myers-Scotton acknowledges that such a total convergence of base language and matrix language cannot be generalized to other bilingual settings, I will not discuss this approach further here.

2.1. Determining the 'matrix language'

Assigning a matrix language to a clause or sentence is not an aim in itself. Researchers who believe that clauses/sentences containing elements from more than one language can in each and every case be assigned to matrix language A or B, adhere to grammatical models in which language choice takes place at a 'deep' rather than 'shallow'

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[1] I will come back to the problem of identifying 'sentences' in ordinary conversation below.

level of syntax. To them, the possibility of defining the matrix language in such a way that all clauses can be assigned to one language or the other, is evidence for language choice at a 'deep' level of language processing. As soon as this choice has been made by the speaker, language does not 'change', and 'codes' are not 'switched' during the production of a clause/sentence; all that can happen is that elements from the 'guest language' (i.e., the non-matrix language) are inserted into the frames opened by the 'host language' (matrix language).

The concept of a matrix language is therefore linked to certain grammatical assumptions about the processing of sentences by bilingual speakers which Muysken (1995: 180) calls "insertional". Opposed to these models are more linear, surface-oriented approaches to syntax such as that advocated by Sankoff & Poplack (1981) in which the language may change at so-called equivalence sites. Again following Muysken 1995: 180, these models can be called "alternational". They do not require the notion of a matrix language since language choice may change during the production of a sentence/clause at any appropriate point[2]. Insertions occurring at non-equivalent sites are treated as an entirely different phenomenon called "borrowing".

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the various proposals made by the followers of the "insertional" approach for determining the matrix language of a sentence/clause. There are incremental models in which the first word of the sentence/clause determines the matrix language (cf. Joshi, 1985). More widespread, however, are approaches in which the matrix language by definition determines word order or the choice of grammatical elements in the sentence, the "system morphemes" (Myers-Scotton, 1993a). For obvious reasons, these latter models run into problems in languages without (much) morphology (such as pidgins; cf. Turchetta, 1992) and when they are applied to language pairs with the same basic word order (cf. Deprez de Heredia, 1991: 73f). In such cases, it may not be possible to determine the matrix language. Finally, some researchers believe that it is the governing element in the clause (or also in a smaller constituent, such as a phrase) which defines its matrix language (di Sciullo, Muysken & Singh, 1986; Bentahila & Davies, 1983 speak of "subcategorization rules"); for instance, on the clause level, the verb (Klavans, 1983). Note, however, that the notion of government is itself highly theory-driven and partly controversial, and what is considered the head of a phrase or a clause may not be at all clear, but rather change according to the syntactic theory in use (determiner or noun in the NP?, verb or inflectional affix in the clause?).

A brief look at an example may demonstrate the difficulties in determining the matrix language in a speaker´s utterance.

| 18 | Al.: | zum beispiel due sbagli cinquanta an' anschläge ab[ziehe |
| | | for instance two mistakes 50 tou- touches subtracted |

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[2] Although the hierarchical and the linear model are often discussed as mutally exclusive, there is, of course, an easy way of combining the two, namely, accommodating changes of the matrix language within a sentence or clause (cf. Nortier, 1990: 158ff for such a more liberal approach; followers of the government approach to code-switching such as di Sciullo et al. 1986 seem to permit such sentence- or clause-internal switches as well). However, this solution would neutralize the implications of the model for sentence processing.

This utterance, taken from an Italian/German conversation with a second generation Italian teenager in Germany, begins with a German discourse particle (or adverbial) *zum Beispiel*, continues with an Italian noun phrase *due sbagli* which in turn is followed by a mixed noun phrase (Italian numeral *cinquanta* and German noun *Anschläge*) and ends with a German verb in the infinitive, *abziehen* (dialectal *abziehe*). The meaning is roughly: 'for instance, if you make two mistakes in your type writing exam, they will subtract 50 points [= touches] from your results'. Using a typical oral structure, the speaker encodes the 'if-then' relationship by simple juxtaposition (asyndesis), and no finite verb is necessary although the utterance is syntactically complete and well-formed.

The problem in assigning a matrix language to this utterance is inseparably linked to the segmentation problem. There are various possibilities of segmenting the utterance into clauses, such as

(a)   /<u>zum beispiel</u>/ due sbagli/ cinquanta <u>an' anschläge abziehe</u>/

(b)   /<u>zum beispiel</u> due sbagli/ cinquanta <u>an' anschläge abziehe</u>/

(c)   /<u>zum beispiel</u> due sbagli cinquanta <u>an' anschläge abziehe</u>/

each of which leads to different results. For instance, system morphemes come from both languages in the utterance as a whole, but they would result in double code-switching German (dative suffix) - Italian (plural morphology) - German (plural, infinitive suffix) if the first segmentation is chosen. If the first element is taken to determine the matrix language, including *zum Beispiel* into the syntactic frame (third segmentation variant) makes German the matrix language of the utterance as a whole, but according to the first segmentation we get code-switching German - Italian - German, and according to the second one, code-switching German - Italian. In a government approach, the (non-finite) verb *abziehe(n)* arguably governs its object *cinquanta Anschläge* and is therefore decisive in determining the matrix language of the final part of the utterance (*cinquanta Anschläge abziehen*), the noun *sbagli* governs the middle segment *due sbagli*, and - according to most approaches - the preposition *zum* in the first element the noun *Beispiel*. But which element governs the first segment in the second segmentation or the utterance as a whole according to the third segmentation? It may be said that exactly these difficulties show that the first segmentation is the only correct one; but then, of course, we are trapped in circularity: via segmentation, rules of government determine the same assignment of the matrix language which they are supposed to explain![3]

All in all, assigning to this utterance a matrix language appears artificial and informed more by theoretical than by empirical considerations[4]. Note in passing that a linear (alternational) model would not encounter any problems in the present case since all switches take place at equivalence sites:

<u>zum beispiel</u>	zwei fehler	fünfzig	<u>anschläge</u>	<u>abziehe</u>
<u>per esempio</u>	due sbagli	cinquanta	<u>tocchi</u>	<u>sottrarre (sottratti)</u>

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[3] Others cannot be applied, in particular word order, which is the same in both languages in this example.

[4] A critical summary of the older grammatical discussion of the matrix language may be found in Romaine (1989: 131ff).

The point to be made is that the matrix language is not something that can be found in the bilingual data themselves but is rather brought to bear on the data by a certain theoretical framework. This, of course, is nothing to be critical of, but if assigning utterances or parts of them to one matrix language or the other is theory-determined, it can hardly be said to be empirical proof for the assumptions of this theory. It also means that unless there is evidence otherwise (for which see below), there is no need to believe that participants do the kind of grammatical analyses which would be necessary in order to establish the matrix language; in fact the very notion of a matrix language may not be relevant to them.

2.2 Determining the base language

Again, various definitions have been proposed. The (seemingly) most simple way of defining the base language for a given interactional episode, or a relevant exchange within it, is the quantitative dominance of one language over the other, established by counting words or morphemes[5]. A simple argument shows that this cannot be satisfactory. If, in a given interactional episode, participants use one language in the first part and switch to the other language somewhere in the middle of the conversation, the quantitative approach would treat it as just as ambiguous with regard to its base language as a conversation in which participants mix codes in every clause. The example shows that a quantitative definition can only make sense if the unit of counting is established prior to quantification; in the case of a switch of the base language halfway through the episode, the two parts would then be counted separately. But establishing the unit of counting beforehand presupposes criteria for doing so. This, in turn, means that in practice, the base language is *not* determined by the quantitative criterion alone but rather by an interpretation of language choices documented in the materials at hand. Seen in this light, it is unclear why the counting should be done at all.

Another, equally unsatisfactory way of establishing the base language is to define it as the language in which participants are more proficient (e.g., their 'first language'). This would lead to the somewhat absurd conclusion that an interactional episode could be in base language A although participants exclusively use language B.

The only way of determining the base language of an interaction as a whole which merits serious consideration is exemplified by Myers-Scotton's notion of the "unmarked code" of a setting, by which she means the language the use of which is considered "normal" (Myers-Scotton, 1988, 1993a)[6]. The problems with this approach are twofold. On the one hand, it presupposes a highly uniform society in which all members agree on language choice. This is certainly not true of all bilingual communities; in many cases, there is, for instance, a tension between the linguistic norms (prescribing the use of a certain language) as seen from the point of view of the linguistic majority and the linguistic norms (prescribing the use of a different language) advocated by the minority. Such tensions are rather frequent and have been described for many places. The other problem with the notion of an unmarked language is that even if we assume an idealized community in which all members agree on certain norms of bilingual conduct, these norms are hardly ever so strict that one could

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[5] Such counting may also be done on the level of the clause or sentence, of course; cf. Nortier (1990) and Hyltenstamm (1995: 307).

[6] But also cf. Appel & Muysken (1987: 121ff) who speak of a sociolinguistically "unmarked linguistic code in a particular setting".

calculate the unmarked language choice on the basis of a limited number of situational parameters in each and every case. True, there are linguistically highly constrained situations in many if not all bilingual communities in which only one of the languages in play can be legitimately used; however, there are also others in which language choice is not or not unambiguously determined. In many bilingual communities, they make out the vast majority. In these cases, it would be empirically inadequate to picture participants' language choices as being determined by some kind of social constraints inherent in the situation. Rather, participants play an *active* part in determining which language should be spoken[7].

A look at the wider conversational context of the above-cited example of an utterance in which the matrix language cannot be established unequivocally shows that there is no satisfactory way of establishing the base language either quantitatively or conversation externally (such as speakers´ proficiency or socially unmarked language choice):

Ex. (1) [from: Auer, 1983:286, 291][8]

((Italian/German conversation; narrative within a report Alfredo gives about his type-writing training; adult m. is the primary addressee of this report, but his friends Agostino, Camillo and Clemente are also present; German underlined))

01	Al.:	scrivi (-) dop´ quand´ la mestra vid´ che sai scrive (-) molto,
		you write - and then when the teacher sees that you write - a lot
02		ti fa comminciare a scrivere coll' l=orologgio=
		she makes you write against the clock
03		=dieci minut´ quand´ fai;
		when you've done it for ten minutes
04	m:	<p>h[m
05	Al.:	[dop´ (-) da tutte quelle pagine che p´ scrive svelti (c=è/cioè) scritte,
		then of all the pages that you can write fast (that are) written
06		tutti _anschläge_ quand' volte (-) [.hhh
		all _touches_ how many
07	m:	[<p> hm,
08	Al:	_sin zum beispiel:_ due mille=o (-) cinque cento: (-)
		there are for instance two thousand or - five hundred
09	Ag.:	<p, molto presto> due mille cinque cento
		two thousand five hundred
10	m:	par[ole
		words
11	Al.:	[an[schläge
		touches
12	m:	[anschläge <p> qu'=chm (........)

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[7] Cf. the critique of Myers-Scotton´s model in Meeuwis & Blommaert (1994).

[8] For transcription conventions, see Selting et al. (1998).

		touches *how-ehm* (........)
13	Al.:	<lento> rrope (-) guarda le: (-) <u>fehler,</u>
		then *she looks at the - mistakes,*
14		alorə i=errori (-)
		that is the mistakes
15		e tutto sbaglio ci vonno lovare <<hesitating> venticinque <u>anschläge></u> (-)
		and (for) every mistake they will subtract 25 touches
16		cioè: (- -)
		that is:
17	m:	<p> ho capito
		I got it

18	Al.:	<u>zum beispiel</u> due sbagli cinquanta <u>an'</u> anschläge ab[ziehe
		for instance *two mistakes 50* *tou- touches* *subtracted*
19	Ag.:	[<presto> <u>und wieviel</u>
		and how many
20		<u>ha[st du?</u>
		have you got?

21	Al.:	[e dopo
		and then
22	m:	[e poi [(il prossimo)
		and then (the next)
23	Al.:	[<u>geteilt durch zehn</u> (-) <u>durch die zeit</u> (-)
		divided by 10 *by the time*
24		<u>und denn kummt da raus zweihundertvierzig,</u> zweihundert fünfadrei'
		and then that makes *twohundredandforty, twohundredandthirty'*
25	m:	ahm,=
26	Al.:	=<u>wenn sie sieht aha, zweihundertvierzig zweihundertdreißig</u>
		when she sees umm, twohundredandforty twohundredandthirty
27		<u>des isch gut des kann (i)</u> (-) .hh <u>dem ins Zeugnis schreibe=</u>
		that's alright (I) can *write it in his report*
28	Ag.:	=<u>u[nd du?</u>
		and (what about) you?
29	Al.:	[<u>dann schreibt sie=s hin;</u>
		then she writes it down;
30	m:	[i' in' in der Minute
		per minute
31	Ag.:	[<u>und du,</u>
		and you,
32	m:	<incredulous> <u>zweihund[ertvierzig</u> -

twohundredandforty -

| 33 | Al. | [hja! |
| | | sure! |

| 34 | Ag.: | [und du? |
| | | *and you?* |

| 35 | Al.: | [halt ich hab zweihundertfünfzig in der minute |
| | | *well I had twohundredandfifty per minute* |

| 36 | Ag.: | <p>(gut,) |
| | | *(well done)* |

Quantitatively speaking, this exchange has about an equal number of Italian and German words; yet it is clear that the language participants are using is Italian in the beginning and German at the end. As far as competences are concerned, the language better known by the teenagers is surely German, whereas for the adult participant (m.), it is Italian; i.e. language proficiencies do not concur. With regard to a situationally determined "unmarked language", the situation is that of an informal conversation about school experiences. There is no unmarked language choice for such a situation in the community under investigation. If one wants to talk about unmarked language choices at all, ethnographically gathered knowledge about this particular group of friends (which cannot however be generalized to all Italian second generation *Gastarbeiter* in Germany) suggests that among themselves, their usual language of interaction is German (cf. d'Angelo, 1994); however, since in the recorded conversation an adult is present, and since in many cases, adults (at least first generation migrants) have a preference for Italian in this community, there is a certain tension with regard to language choice which cannot be settled on the basis of any kind of calculus for determining the unmarked base language before the conversation has actually started.

3. Language choice as a matter of conversational negotiation

Many researchers who use the notion of a base language would concede that this base language may change within an interactional episode. However, the new base language is usually seen as a quasi-automatic consequence of a change in the fundamental parameters of the situation which led to the choice of the other language in the first place. Such a mechanistic view also underlies, for instance, Myers-Scotton's formulation that "even though sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic criteria are not amenable to measurement, in general, a major change in their content means a change in the assignment of ML status. For example, within the same interaction, the ML can change when there is an adjustment in situational factors (e.g. a new topic, an added participant)" (1995: 238)[9], and also Grosjean's formulation: "Bilinguals usually choose a base-language to use with their interlocutors (that is, a main language of interaction) but can, within the same interaction, decide to switch base languages if the situation, topic, interlocutor, function of the interaction, etc., requires it" (1995: 262). Often, this mechanistic view leads to a theoretical and/or terminological

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[9] ML = matrix language. Remember that for Myers-Scotton, the matrix language also is the base language; see below.

separation between a change of the base language on the one hand (related to the gross changes in situational parameters by which it is triggered), and 'code-switching' (in a restricted sense) which is said to occur within the domain of a base language (and is related to finer, more creative uses of language alternation); this separation is similar in spirit to (and, indeed, quite often a crude version of) the distinction between "situational" and "metaphorical" code-switching introduced by John Gumperz in the seventies (cf. Blom & Gumperz, 1972). However, this distinction is untenable if seen as a dichotomy (cf. Auer, 1984b), although there can be no doubt that some code-switches are more "presupposing" while others are more "creative" (Silverstein, 1976; Rampton, 1998).

In this section, I want to argue that rather than dealing with language choice on the macroscopic level of the base language of a whole episode or a major part of it, and rather than separating code-choice (of the base language) and code-switching (below it), we should look at language choice on a turn-by-turn level in order to do justice to bilingual participants' conversational practices. This means describing and explaining patterns of conversational code choice on a local basis, i.e. by analysing speakers' language choices for one particular turn or turn constructional unit with reference to the language choices directly or indirectly preceding it, as well as in their consequences for language choice in the turns to follow[10]. As outlined elsewhere in more detail (Auer, 1984a, 1995), code-switching from this perspective is conceptualized as a divergence from the language of the prior turn or turn constructional unit, regardless of whether it is linked to gross or subtle situational changes (or none at all, as in the case of language negotiation sequences; see below).

The first decision every speaker has to make is whether or not he or she wants to take up the 'code' used in the previous turn (component). A line may be drawn between code-switches which are made in the local context of an already established language-of-interaction, agreed upon by all participants, and code-switches which take place in a context in which the language-of-interaction is not settled or even disputed, with different participants trying to enforce their preferred language. The latter state of affairs constitutes a "language negotiation sequence".

In extract (1) above, Italian is established as the language-of-interaction, but speakers happen to agree on a different language-of-interaction at the end (German). The transition from Italian into German is linked to delicate shifts in the alignment of participants. In the first part of the extract, teller Alfredo (Al.) has adult Mimmo (m.) as his principal addressee; Mimmo acknowledges this status by producing continuers in lines 04, 07, 10, 12 and possibly 17. Italian is the agreed-upon language-of-interaction, since in each turn (component), Alfredo chooses to select the same language as in the prior one, i.e. Italian[11]. Although Alfredo's narrative includes German bits and pieces as well, they do not endanger the established language-of-interaction; rather, they are insertions within a clearly Italian discourse. In fact, the insertion of German *Anschläge* (touches) is done in such a way as to make it clear that it is not Alfredo's intention to change the language-of-interaction, but that it is rather due to a (momentary or permanent) lack of vocabulary; evidence for this is

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[10] To avoid misunderstanding, I would like to add here that this 'local basis' does not exclude the possibility of bringing conversation-external regularities (knowledge) to bear on code choice, provided there is evidence that speakers index these regularities and thus visibly use them for negotiating a language-of-interaction.

[11] The terms 'Italian' and 'German' here gloss over dialect and standard, with all sorts of intermediate forms; the exact location of their speech on the standard - dialect dimension is of some relevance for the sociolinguistics of these speakers but cannot be dealt with here (cf. di Luzio, 1986 for some suggestions).

provided by Alfredo himself through subsequent self-turn repair (cf. line 06). The German beginning of the turn-component in line 08 (*sin zum Beispiel...*) is of a different nature: had the component been brought to an end in German, a clear contrast between this language and that previously used (Italian) would have emerged. However, by returning to Italian during the production of the turn-constructional unit (i.e., by repairing his original language choice), Alfredo once more displays his intention to remain with Italian (and also his orientation at this language as the language-of-interaction).

In the further development of the conversation, Alfredo runs into further trouble because he still does not know the Italian equivalent of German *Anschläge* (line 11); this time, the German insertion is acknowledged by his recipient (line 12) such that Alfredo can continue his report without self-repair. Another insertion in line 13 (German *Fehler*) is quickly and successfully self-repaired by the Italian equivalent *errori* (line 14). The insertion of *Anschläge* occurs once more in line 15, and is now already a locally established "nonce borrowing" which needs no further interactional marking.

It is in this local context that Alfredo produces the utterance discussed above (line 18). Here, Alfredo deviates for the first time from the previous pattern of language choice, for, as shown above, the utterance cannot unambiguously be assigned to Italian or German. This opens up the possibility for other participants to look upon it as either Italian *or* German. Marvellously timed, Alfredo´s friend Agostino comes in exactly at this point with his question (line 19), doing two things at once. First, he slightly changes the participant constellation by intervening as an active participant at a time when the conversation has so far been dominated by Alfredo (speaker) and Mimmo (addressee-recipient); his previous role of a mere listener is thereby abandoned, if only for a small side-play in which he seeks to learn about and evaluate the results of his friend´s typewriting test. But secondly, Agostino also intervenes with an utterance which is unambiguously German; i.e., together with the participant constellation, he also attempts/proposes to change the language-of-interaction. He does so at a point where for the first time a German utterance can be produced without questioning the language-of-interaction, since due to its ambiguity, Alfredo´s turn enables him (or any other next speaker) to take up in either language. (As will be shown below, the internal structure of Alfredo´s turn also plays a role in the exact placement of the German intervention: arguably, its final part is 'more German' than the middle part. Positioning his intervention in slight overlap with this final, German part 'treats' Alfredo´s ambiguous utterance as a German one.)

The further development of this extract can only be sketched here: Alfredo finds himself in a dilemma, for he has to deal with two conflicting language choices: Italian, the language of his narrative so far, which is taken up and reinforced by Mimmo, and German, the language of his friend´s intervention. He also has to deal with two interactional tasks at the same time: on the one hand, he can be expected via adjacency pair structure to answer Agostino´s question, on the other hand, he is obliged to continue and complete his report. The utterance in line 23 provides a structural solution which allows him to deal with Mimmo and with Agostino at the same time, if only 'symbolically' in Agostino´s case: he exploits language choice in order to display an orientation towards Agostino´s intervention –i.e., he picks up Agostino´s German– while on the level of activity chaining, he continues his narrative (a case of "double cohesion" in the sense of Auer, 1984a: 42ff).

Note that the switch into German is in no way 'determined' by the subtle shift in the situation. Rather, the change in participant constellation and the change of the language-of-interaction interact in a reflexive way.

4. Strategies of neutrality and the development of mixed codes

In the last section, I have tried to show by close examination of the sequential development of an exemplary exchange in an Italian/German bilingual group of speakers that the question of 'what language are we speaking right now' is answered on a local basis by bilingual participants. In this section, I want to dwell a little longer on the notion of ambiguity in language choice. As shown in the discussion of ex. (1), such turns/turn components are not only ambiguous for the researcher (for instance, because his/her theories are not precise enough to assign a base language to them) but for bilingual participants as well, such as Agostino, who exploits this ambiguity for his conversational purposes[12].

How can bilingual speakers render their contributions ambiguous? Not all cases of code-switching within a turn have this effect. Cf. the following examples of turn-internal switching taken from the same sociolinguistic contexts which has the effect of unambiguously changing the language-of-interaction:

Ex. (2) [Auer, 1983:261]

01	m:	e che (-) che cosa: m (-) che' che film quale programma
		and which -which kind of ehm which which film which (TV) programme
02		vedete [(.......)
		do you watch (.......)
03	Ag.:	[italia; mei vatter will ja immer den scheiß italienisch
		Italy; my father alway wants to watch his fucking Italian
04		[sehn
05	Al.:	[aah: des regt uns auf du!
		ohh: it drives us crazy man!

Here, Agostino first answers Mimmo´s question in Italian, taking up his (the previous speaker´s) language choice and establishing (or reinforcing) a language-of-interaction; however, this language-of-interaction is abandoned in the middle of his turn (i.e., after the first turn component *italia*) by a switch into German which clearly is functional on the discourse-level: it marks the transition from information-giving to evaluation. In the following, Al. takes up both the newly proposed language-of-interaction together with the new, evaluative key[13]. No ambiguity is involved in this type of turn-internal switching.

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[12] Heller (e.g. 1988) has drawn attention to this "strategic ambiguity" achieved by code-switching and has analysed its social functions in various publications on French-English code-switching in Canada. She argues that code-switching "can allow the simultaneous accomplishment of tasks through conversation and the management of conversation and of personal relationships through the avoidance of the conflict which categorical language choice would entail" (1988: 82). Another discussion of "bivalency strategies" can be found in Torras i Calvo (in prep.).

[13] Other instances of turn-internal switching (usually within a turn component) which leaves the status of the language-of-interaction unambiguous are of course self-repairs of language choice such as in ex. (1), line 08 as discussed in section 3.

Yet there are other cases in which turn-internal switching *does* have the effect of leaving the language-of-interaction ambiguous (be it intentional or not). A wide-spread format in which this can be achieved is the use of same-turn (quasi-) translations. This phenomenon has been reported for a multitude of bilingual communities, and it seems to be one of the most basic patterns of code-switching. These (quasi-) translations may also fulfill discourse related functions, such as underlining and emphasising an argument. Here are some examples:

Ex. (3) [Auer, 1983: 114]

```
01      mo:     la gita ti è pia[ciuta
                you liked the excursion?
02      B.:                     [che?
                                what?
03      mo:     la gita; (-)
                the excursion
```

```
04      B.:     quale; (-)      a non ci sono anda:to [sic] alla git´ no.
                which one       oh no I didn´t go on  the excursion, no.
05              ich bin nicht gegangen;
                I didn´t go;
```

```
06      mo:     come, (- -)
                why
```

((continues in Italian))

Ex. (4) [Auer, 1983: 115]

```
01      Al.:    l´ bambin´ tedesch; (-) non ci=hanno proprio rispetto davanti i genitor´
                the German children    don't have any  respect for their parents
02              kein reschpekt, (-) [nix
                no respect, -        nothing
```

```
03      m:                          [bambin´ tedesch;
                                    German children
```

Ex. (5) [Auer 1983: 115]

((Tiziano, Giacomo, Giagio and p. are playing 'Monopoly'; it is Giacomo's turn and he lands on the jail field))

```
01      Gc.:    <<counting while moving his piece> eins zwei drei [vier fünf>
                                                    one two three  four five
02      Bg.:                                                       [vier fünf
                                                                   four  five
03              [sechs {Giacomo moves on to the jail field}
                six
04      Tz.:    [<<laughing} ha!> [{claps hands in joy}
```

05	Gc.:	[non è njend' _ich bin nur b' für besüke_ ha ha
		it´ nothing _I´m only here as a visitor_ ha ha
06		_nur für besüke_ (-) sto a guardare soldand';
		only visiting _I'm only looking;_

07   non (parl'). non (giova) restare.

(I) don´t (speak). (I) don´t (have to) stay.

08   Tz.:   (io) neanche, e (s')=io vengo da te?

(Me) neither, and (if) I come to (see) you?

In all of the cases above, the (quasi-) translation opens up the possibility of changing the language-of-interaction from Italian into German, but in the first two examples, the respective recipients do not take up this invitation but rather stick to the previously established language, Italian. The final example (5) is different and similar to ex. (1), for here, the ambiguous turn (made ambiguous by Giacomo´s quasi-translation) leads to an Italian take-up and a change in the language-of-interaction.

The important differences between the (pseudo-) translations in (3)-(5) and ex. (2) seems to be that the first are a means to structure the turn internally, by lending extra stress to some part of it. But they do not propose a contextual shift which involves the speaker´s co-participants; their discourse function is restricted to the speaker´s turn, and no take-up is required. This is different in (2) where Agostino´s very emotional statement about his father´s preference for Italian TV (and his own disliking for it) invites co-participants´ responses and can hardly stand alone in the sequential development of the conversation.

There are, to be sure, many strategies of turn-internal switching other than pseudo-translations which have the same effect of rendering a speaker´s contribution ambiguous with respect to the language-of-interaction, and in this way open up the possibility of a smooth transition into the other language. If they are used frequently, they may result in what could be called an open state of language choice (paraphrasing Goffman), and in the long run contribute to establishing a 'mixed variety, i.e. a new bilingual mode of interaction in which the alternation from one language to the other and back is an altogether unspectacular affair and thus loses its potential of functioning as a contextualization cue for discourse-related purposes[14].

Instances of such mixed varieties abound in the literature; by way of a conclusion, here is an example from El Barrio in New York (Puerto Rican bilingual speech) where Shana Poplack long ago noted this phenomenon (using the term "frequent code-switching" for what it would be better to call "mixing"; cf. Poplack, 1981)[15].

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[14] For details, cf. Auer (1999).

[15] Unfortunately the speaker´s turn is given without the recipient´s backchannelling and/or responses in Zentella´s book.

Ex. (6) [Zentella, 1997: 117]

Hey Lolita,

but the Skylab, the Skylab   no se cayó pa(-ra) que se acabe el mundo.
                           didn't fall for the world to end

It falls in pieces.
Si se cae completo, yeah.
If it falls whole
The Skylab   es una cosa que (e-)stá rodeando el moon taking pictures of it.
          is something that's going around
Tiene tubos en el medio.
It has tubes in the middle
Tiene tubos en el medio.
It has tubes in the middle
It's like a rocket.
It's like a rocket.
¿Oíste Lolita?
You heard Lolita?
Tiene tubo(-s), pero como tubos en el medio, así, crossed over.
It has tubes, but like tubes in the middle, like this,
The thirteenth it's going to fall,
pero si se cae completo (-) that falls by pieces (-)
but if it falls whole
pero no se acaba el mundo.
but the world won't end
Ahora una cosa sí,   everybody has to be in the house,
Now one thing's for certain
porque si le cae encima de alguien se lo lleva ejmanda(d)o,
because if it falls on top of somebody it'll blow them away
'cause those things are heavy!

Although discourse-related functions are not necessarily completely absent in such a turn, the mixing of elements from what to the linguist-onlooker seems to be Spanish and English cannot be compared to code-switching in the sense of the previous examples. Since there is no language-of-interaction, using the other language does not take on interactional meaning via a deviation from the established language-of-interaction. In fact, interactionally speaking, there is little reason to speak of a switching of codes in such a case (a point made very convincingly by Alvarez-Cáccamo, 1998; Meeuwis & Blommaert, 1998): rather the mixing itself has become the new code. It is tempting to postulate a continuum from code-switching into a mixed variety of this type in which ambiguous utterances (containing elements of both languages), such as line 18 in ex. (1), play the role of the missing link. Looked upon in this way, what we are dealing with here may be an interesting case of an

interactionally founded phenomenon (strategic ambiguity/neutrality) which is evolving into a structural one (i.e., a mixed variety).

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