

Contributions to the Sociology of Language

48

Editor

Joshua A. Fishman

Mouton de Gruyter
Berlin · New York · Amsterdam

Codeswitching

Anthropological and
Sociolinguistic Perspectives

edited by
Monica Heller

Mouton de Gruyter
Berlin · New York · Amsterdam 1988

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A conversation analytic approach to code-switching and transfer

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Background of this study

This paper summarizes some main findings of an analysis of code-switching and transfer (in the following, the term *language alternation* will be used to cover both) carried out in Constance, W. Germany, among the children of Italian migrant workers with a Southern Italian background.¹ The investigation was part of a larger study on the native language of Italian migrant children (*Muttersprache italienischer Gastarbeiterkinder im Kontakt mit Deutsch*)² and is based on an extensive corpus of spontaneous and non-spontaneous speech used by these children interacting with each other, the field-workers, or their parents. Nineteen children between the ages of six and sixteen formed the core group of this study. These children were observed to use (various varieties of) Italian and German alternately, in a number of situations. 400 instances of such alternations were submitted to conversation analysis; another 1400 instances were used for quantitative-differential analysis.

In my contribution, I want to sketch the conversation analytic model that was developed out of the materials and that can account for the main types of interpretations language alternation receives in the community under investigation. In addition, I will briefly touch upon differential issues. Before going into details, however, some general remarks on the global linguistic and ethnographic situation of the Italian migrants in W. Germany may be necessary.

The linguistic situation of the urban Italian 'communities' in Germany differs from what is known about other contexts of

language contact after migration; it also differs from the linguistic situation of other ethnic groups in the FRG, such as the Turkish or the Yugoslavian communities.

The difference is due to the political status of the Italian migrants who, as members of the European Community, have the right to move relatively freely between Italy and Germany. Whereas the influx of adult workers from non-EC countries has been stopped, and those returning to their countries of origin are no longer allowed to come back, the Italian 'communities' are continuously reshaped by the arrival of new members, as well as by the multiple migration of those who came and go again. This comparatively high mobility, which, particularly in a southern German town like Constance, is still enhanced by geographical closeness to Italy, is one of the reasons for the weak or even absent positive self-definition of the Italians as one ethnic group or community. Although the first Italian migrants – first men, later wives and families – arrived in Constance 30 years ago, the Italian population still lacks any political and almost any cultural infrastructure. Activities on the community level, such as attempts to create social foci (*centri italiani per i lavoratori*), have been treated with utmost suspicion; at the same time, the Italians' inability to create such foci is perceived by them as one of the few stable and widely accepted stereotypes that are part of the Italian population's negative self-image. In fact, if we can speak of a community at all, it is a largely negatively defined one.

The comparatively high degree of mobility led us to abandon the terms 'immigrants' and 'emigrants' in favour of the more neutral term 'migrants'. It applies not only to the first generation adults, but also to the second generation. Many Italian couples send their children back to Italy for a while to live with their relatives, and/or to go to an Italian school, before allowing them to stay in Germany again.

For the present study, this high degree of mobility was relevant in the following way. The children that form the core group of our investigation were either born in Germany or had come to this country early in childhood; although some of them went back to Italy for shorter periods, their dominant socialization

took place in the host country. Nonetheless, the social environment of these children is not homogeneous, for the Italian 'community' in Constance includes children of varying biographical backgrounds. If they wish to, they can establish peer relationships with children and youngsters who have only come to Germany recently and are clearly dominant speakers of Italian (dialect). On the other hand, they, too, may choose their friends among those who have been socialized predominantly in Germany (and, for the most part, are dominant speakers of German (dialect)). Finally, they may, of course, avoid all ties to the Italian ethnic group to which they were born, and exclusively affiliate with Germans.

Accordingly, the children's and youngsters' linguistic repertoire is quite complex. The dominant language of pre-kindergarten socialization in the family is, in many cases, the parents' local, southern Italian dialect (in our materials, mostly dialects of the Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily). In kindergarten and primary school, the German dialect is acquired as the most important variety for inter-ethnic peer networks. Between 5 and 8, all the children we investigated had become German-dominant; their German was a more or less dialectal (Alemannic) variety. Regional or standard Italian comes latest in the acquisition process. It is used in the Italian *doposcuola* (a couple of hours per week), and heard in the Swiss Italian mass media. Most families are not in a position to act as a language mediator for the Italian standard, for even regional Italian only plays a peripheral role in family interaction.

After childhood, many young Italians develop a more positive, and more self-confident attitude towards Italy and Italian. But although this change of attitude favours the acquisition of a more standard variety of this language, the problem of learning a language that, in the migrants' everyday world, hardly has any speakers, remains. Being, as it is, a diffusely perceived target, standard Italian is hard to acquire. Instead of showing progress towards that target, the speech of many young Italians continues to be characterized by a very high degree of fluctuation and variation.

But questions of language acquisition are only part of the issue. The rich repertoire of the second generation Italians also opens up

the possibility of functionally employing variation in their repertoire. We have investigated such functions via the analysis of complex variational signs such as code-switching, code-shifting, code-fluctuation (including *italiano stentato*) (cf., for instance, Auer and Di Luzio 1983 a, b).

Variation in the repertoire has to be dealt with in a way that is sensitive to the general social and linguistic situation of the 'community'. As this 'community' is heterogeneous, it is not very likely to have developed rigid regulations or norms of language use and language alternation. Within certain limits imposed by co-participants' linguistic competences, language choice is indeed open to negotiation quite regularly, often throughout an interactive episode. Patterns of language choice begin to emerge in small scale network structures, but there are no larger scale "domains" in Fishman's sense. This calls for an analytic tool that is able to catch the subtlety of the on-going linguistic and social processes; we think that this tool is available in the framework of a linguistically enriched conversation analysis.

Another consequence of this social and linguistic instability is that the patterns of language alternation found in the data can be expected to be related to the type of network in which they are being produced. It is reasonable to predict that language alternation of a different type will occur in networks whose members have diverging language preferences (due to their biographical background) than in those where such a divergence is absent, be it because all members share the same history of migration, be it because certain members of the network are dominant in the sense of imposing their preferences on the others. This calls for a differential account of language alternation on the basis of network types.

In our investigation, we focused on children and youngsters with a predominantly 'German' socialization because we think that it is this group of second generation 'guest workers' who will decide the linguistic future of the migrant 'communities'. In order to make predictions about the future development of the Italian part of the speakers' repertoire, it was necessary to find out something about the role this Italian repertoire plays in the everyday life of the children when compared to the German part of the

repertoire. Are the varieties of Italian at all necessary in Germany? If so, in what situations are they employed? One can look for an answer to these questions by closely observing linguistic behaviour, and, in fact, this was one line of procedure. A more rigorous answer to the question is possible, however, when small scale linguistic behaviour is analyzed on the basis of transcriptions of audio and visual recordings. The analyst of such recordings is in a better position than the participant observer to pay close attention to the small details involved in the organization of linguistic activities. The basic question facing the micro-analyst in the case of language alternation is this: If children regularly switch from variety A to variety B in order to organize linguistic activities X, Y, etc., and from B to A in order to organize linguistic activities V, W, etc., then what status is being attributed to these varieties by and because of the ways in which they are being employed in conversation? Regularities of language choice and language alternation, if treated in this way, reveal the status of the varieties contained in the linguistic repertoire of the speakers.

In addition, I had a more theoretical interest in the analysis of language alternation that relates to the notion of bilingualism itself. Linguistics owes an extensive and inconclusive literature to the futile discussion of how competent someone has to be in order to be considered 'bilingual'. Dozens of attempts have been made at a definition. The impasse reached can only be overcome, if bilingualism is no longer regarded as something inside the speaker's head, but as a displayed feature in participants' everyday behaviour. You cannot be bilingual in your head, you have to use two or more languages 'on stage', in interaction, where you show others that you are able to do so. I propose then to examine bilingualism primarily as a set of complex linguistic activities, and only in a secondary, derived sense as a cognitive ability. From such a perspective, bilingualism is a predicate ascribed to and by participants on the basis of their visible, inspectable behaviour. As a result, there is no one set definition of bilingualism. Being bilingual is turned into an achieved status, and how it is achieved, in different ways and by different speakers, is precisely what we need to investigate. We need a model of bilingual conversation which provides a coherent and functionally motivated picture of bilingualism as a set of linguistic activities.

A model of bilingual conversation

Two basic category pairs provide the 'underlying' procedural apparatus for arriving at local interpretations of language alternation embedded in their individual contexts. These are the category pairs *transfer* vs. *code-switching* and *participant-* vs. *discourse-related* language alternation. From a hearer's point of view, the speaker has to indicate solutions to the following problems corresponding to the two category pairs:

- I. Is the language alternation in question connected to a particular conversational *structure* (for instance, a word, a sentence, or a larger unit) (transfer), or to a particular *point* in conversation (code-switching)?
- II. Is the language alternation in question providing cues for the *organization of the ongoing interaction* (i.e., is discourse-related), or about *attributes of the speaker* (i.e., is it participant-related)?

In answering these questions, and in providing indications that make them answerable, bilingual participants operate a basic category grid which provides a fundamental four-way differentiation of the signalling device under investigation. It is important to keep in mind that 'discourse-related code-switching' 'participant-related code-switching', 'discourse-related transfer' and 'participant-related transfer' are not generic categories grouping language alternation types, that is, they are not superordinates to subordinated alternation types such as addressee selection, citations, and so on. Instead, the latter should be seen as situated interpretations arrived at in context, whereas the former are generally available procedures designed to carry out these local interpretations. It is these more general procedures and not the types of language alternation which are used as interpretive resources by participants in the first place.

Let us begin by taking a look at the dichotomy *discourse-* vs. *participant-related switching*. In the organization of bilingual conversation, participants face two types of tasks. First, there are problems specifically addressed to language choice. A given con-

versational episode may be called bilingual as soon as participants orient to the question of which language to speak. Second, participants have to solve a number of problems independently of whether they use one or more languages; these are problems related to the organization of conversation in general, e.g. to turn-taking, topical cohesion, 'key' (in Hymes' sense), the constitution of specific linguistic activities. The alternating use of two languages may be a means to cope with these problems. For illustration, let us turn to some data extracts:⁴

Extract (1) (VIERER G 37-39)

((Clemente is telling a story in order to prove how little respect German children have for their parents. He reports an interaction between a German boy and his mother.))

- 37 : 14 m: kom=è kome a fattè?
 15 Cl: na - na - un - un kompan'o del - kë kë va nella
 16 klassè ko me a dettO ke io IO devO a - prendere
 nO: per g'oka:rë - io sono andantè dopè nè -
 17 noi le volemè=mondare una - - Seifenkiste - -
- 38 : 01 m: mi devi spiegare kos=è sta Seifekiste hë hë
 02 ((Agostino, Camillo and Alfredo laugh))
 03 Cl: i weiß itte
 04 Al: sag einfach na karrotsEllè ko le rO:tè
 05 Cl: aja: ja genau - - na dopè a venuta la la su
 06 Ag: u:nd?
 07 Cl: ma:dre noi ab/ ehm - - e=nato a spannè i - - pannè
 no: nda dopè lei dOmanda ma : : ti: tu n eh de
 08 de=fattè i komptè - nda : : - nël suo fil'è - -
 09 ditt
 10 (1.0)
 11 nientè
 12 (1.0)
 13 dopa heh? - (ja it ie a) sentsi=i: - kompti - -
 14 mae - h (tu : :) hë hë hë hë 'h dopè=kompè=a=
 oo oo
 15 Ag?: h
 16 Cl: =dettè; 'h=

- 17 Al.: =sags in deutsch halt wenn=s et it
 → 18 Cl: Mensch du mit deiner
 ((high pitch, imitates
 shouting))
 19 miese Laune fahr doch ab h h h h h
 shouting))
 20 ((Ca., Al. & Ag. laughing))
 21 m: kome, kome?
 22 Mensch du mit? ki è - il bambino a detto
 23 alla mamma
 24 Cl: e: : la dittè a la ma a - ditt=a: - tu=eh ke ke
 25 Al: laut!
 26 Cl: lei kwella: - ku - kèlla Laune -
 39 : 01 Al: Cle - sags auf deutsch er wird scho verstehe=aber
 02 Ca: (.)
 03 Al: deutlich!
 04 Cl: nja -
 05 Ag: Mensch du mit deiner miesen Laune fahr ab

 TRANSLATION (German parts in CAPITAL LETTERS)

- 37 : 14 m: how did it what did he do?
 15 Cl: a-a-a-a friend of the - who who goes in the class
 16 with me said that I have to - take him you know for
 playing - I went then (we) -
 17 we wanted to set up a - - SOAP BOX - -
 38 : 01 m: you have to explain to me what that is this SOAP BOX
 03 Cl: I DON'T KNOW
 04 Al: JUST SAY a pram on wheels
 05 Cl: OH YES I SEE - - a - then has came the the his
 06 Ag: SO?
 07 Cl: mother we ha/uhm - - she came to HANG UP the - -
 clothes you see in the then she asks but you you n uh ha
 08 have (to do) your homework - in - in her son - -
 09 he said
 11 nothing
 13 then eh? - (.) without=the - homework - -
 14 (but) - h (you : :) hè hè hè hè 'h then=what=did=shè=
 16 =say; 'h=
 17 Al: =SAY IT IN GERMAN IF YOU CANNOT (SAY) IT
 → 18 Cl: HEY YOU AND YOUR
 LOUSY IDEAS

- 19 PUSH OFF h h h h h
 21 m: what, what?
 22 YOU AND? who was - the boy said it to
 23 his mother
 24 Cl: yes he said it to his mo he - said to - you=eh who who
 25 Al: SPEAK UP!
 26 Cl: she this : - with - this IDEAS -
 39 : 01 Al: CLE - SAY IT IN GERMAN HE WILL UNDERSTAND=BUT
 03 CLEARLY!
 04 Cl: WELL -
 05 Ag: YOU AND YOUR LOUSY IDEAS PUSH OFF

The interaction is between four youngsters (Clemente, 13, Camillo, 13, Alfredo, 14 and Agostino, 15) and an Italian student and fieldworker (m.). The four form an insulated network cluster which is characterized by a high frequency of switching and transfer of all types. Clemente, the youngest, is also the most German-dominant of the four. In our extract, he tries to tell a story to m. Many aspects of his way of talking suggest that he is having enormous difficulties formulating what he wants to express in Italian (see the hesitations, vowel lengthening, repetitions and reformulations, incomprehensible passages). The efforts he makes to speak (Standard) Italian for m. (a variety he hardly knows), and not to make use of German (which he speaks fluently), lead him into hybrid forms, transfer from German (cf. the *spannè* in 38 : 07) and Italian dialect (cf. the *nda* instead of *nel*, 38 : 08), hypercorrections (cf. *a venuta* in 38 : 05 as the maximally distinct form from dialectal schwa-reduction *venutè*), and a generally wide range of variation.⁵ Clemente's difficulties reach a climax when he attempts to translate what the German boy in his narrative said to his mother - the punch line of the story. He finally switches to German to make himself understood (line 38 : 18f). In reconstructing the local interpretation of this instance of code-switching, the various hesitation phenomena and, on a grammatical level, the *italiano stentato* produced by the boy give us the decisive cues. They reveal that it is his competence in Italian which doesn't allow him to continue, and that switching into German rescues the narrative (if at all) because of his superior competence in this language. Switching thus displays an imbalanced bilingual competence. A second pos-

sible interpretation relating Clemente's switching to the direct speech he is about to report, can be shown to be of no more than secondary relevance for participants, for another participant explicates how he interpreted Clemente's hesitations: Alfredo, in lines 38 : 18 and 9 : 01 appeals to Clemente to use German (in line 17, his *sags in deutsch halt* is to be continued with a 'if you can't . . . say it in Italian'). We can therefore be quite sure that our interpretation of the speaker's switching into German as being related to his lacking competence in Italian is also shared by the co-participants in this episode.

The second type of participant-related switching doesn't display a participant's competence, but his or her *preference* for one language over the other. Of course, the two are not always independent. For instance, participants often use self-ascriptions of incompetence as accounts for their preferences.⁶ Extract (2) is an instance of preference-related code-switching. Participants are Irma (11) and m., the field-worker. Irma lives in a German-dominated network, including only one Italian boy (her brother). She has a clear preference for German, whereas m. (as do almost all adult Italians) prefers Italian. Language alternation is due in this case to m.'s and Irma's insisting on and thereby displaying their respective preferences. While m. consistently uses Italian for all of his contributions, Irma only switches into Italian once (for the Italian variant of her brother's name – *Tonio* instead of *Toni* – which answers m.'s *ki* in line 03). Usually, she speaks German:⁷

Extract (2) (MG 10 I B, 2)

((talk about Irma's name))

- 01 Ir.: Toni ((=her brother)) nennt mich Makkaroni;
 02 -- Makkaronimännchen
 ((lamenting))
 → 03 m: ~ki
 04 Ir.: Tonio!
 05 m: ki E/ ah:
 → 06 Ir.: de Toni eh (immer) Toni mi(t)=m=
 → 07 m: =E=pperkE? perke: ti kiama
 → 08 Ir.: früher hat=r immer gsagt

- 09 Makkaronimännchen °wieviel Uhr und so,° --
 10 jetz nennt=er mich au Irma: --

TRANSLATION

- 01 Ir.: TONI CALLS ME MACARONI; -- MACARONI
 02 MANNIKIN
 → 03 m: who
 04 Ir.: TONIO!
 05 m: who's that/ah:
 → 06 Ir.: TONI UH (ALWAYS) TONI WITH=THE=
 → 07 m: =and=why? why does he call you
 → 08 Ir.: HE USED TO SAY MACARONI
 09 MANNIKIN WHAT'S THE TIME AND SO ON, --
 10 NOW HE CALLS ME IRMA TOO; --

Our interpretation that such a patterned usage of the two languages can tell us (and participants) something about Irma's and m.'s preferences (at least, in the given constellation) is based on the more general expectation that for two participants it is 'unmarked' to agree on a common language for interaction rather than using languages at random. This is in fact the case in the sociolinguistic situation we are dealing with, although certainly not an universal feature of bilingual communities.

Extracts (3) and (4) illustrate *discourse-related code-switching* for certain conversational tasks which are relevant in monolingual contexts as well.

(Luziano is 10, Pino is 9.)

Extract (3) (MG 3 I A 70/71)

((m. has taken Luziano and Pino in his car to his house. The car has stopped, the three are about to get out.))

- 70 : 06 m: là là si apre, là sotto
 07 Lz.: ah là.
 → 71 : 01 Pino -- willscht rau:s -- wart mal
 02 wart mal Pino

TRANSLATION:

- 70 : 06 m: here here you can open it, down there
 07 Lz.: oh there.

71: 01 PINO – SO YOU WANT TO GET OUT – WAIT,
02 WAIT PINO

Extract (4) (MG I A 50)

((In m.'s car, on the way to a city district called Wollmatingen))

01 Lz.: il mio dzio ahm – abita=pure a Wollmatingen
02 m: ah
03 (0.5)
04 lo vai a trovare on'i tanto?
05 Lz.: °ah° (.) kwalke vo:lta=
06 m: =mhm
07 (5.0)
→ 08 Lz.: da kommt Luft raus
09 m: si : , – mhm,

TRANSLATION:

01 Lz.: my uncle uhm – also lives in Wollmatingen
02 m: ah
04 do you go and see him now and then?
05 Lz.: ah (.) sometimes=
06 m: =mhm
08 Lz.: HERE THE AIR COMES OUT
09 m: yes, – mhm,

In example (3), Luziano's switching in line 71: 01 helps to bring about a change in the participant constellation. His *ah là* has acknowledged m.'s instruction on how to get out of the car; but in the following utterance, the boy takes on the role of the 'knowing adult' himself vis-à-vis Pino. The activities are set off by the use of different languages against each other. Together with non-linguistic cues such as gaze and gesture (which cannot be analyzed on the basis of the audio-tape), it is language alternation which effects this change in constellation. In (4), the discourse function served by code-switching is topic change. Luziano has been talking about his uncle in 01–06, but in 08, after a relatively long silence, he refers to the car. Again, switching from Italian into German is one of the means used to terminate one and to initiate the next stretch of talk.

If we compare participant and discourse-related language alternation we note that the main difference is the object of

the signalling process. Whereas in the case of participant-related alternation, co-participants display or ascribe certain predicates to each other (competence, preference), they signal a change of conversational context in the case of discourse-related switching.⁸ This is why language alternation of the second type is what Gumperz calls a contextualization strategy: a strategy by which participants signal what they are doing at a particular moment. We may also use Goffman's term *footing* and say that code-switching can effect a change from one footing to another when related to discourse.⁹ Looked upon as a way of contextualizing verbal activities, code-switching can be compared to other contextualization cues such as change of loudness or tempo, change of body position or gaze, etc.

Some important types of discourse-related switching found in our materials are

- change in participant constellation
- change in mode of interaction (for instance, between a formal interview and a casual conversation, or between a move in a game and conversation)
- topic change
- sequential contrast (for instance, between an on-going sequence and a subordinated repair sequence, or side-remark)
- change between informative and evaluative talk, for instance, after stories (including formulations and other summing-up techniques).

In addition to these local interpretations of code-switching occurring between or within single speakers' turns, there are others which overwhelmingly or even exclusively occur within turns, such as

- marking of non-first firsts (e.g. of repeated questions or requests)
- marking of reformulations/elaborations
- setting off prefaces from stories or other 'big packages' (Sacks)
- setting of 'setting' and 'events' in narratives
- distinguishing various types of information in an utterance (for instance, 'given' and 'new', or 'focus of contrast' and the rest of the contribution, to use Chafe's terms).

The last types hold a middle position with regard to the second major distinction, that between *code-switching* and *transfer*. (Note that the two basic dichotomies provide bilingual participants with four prototypical cases of language alternation; between these prototypical cases, there are numerous less prototypical ones, which are attributed conversational meaning on the basis of their distance from the prototypes. Heller (Introduction, in this volume, pp. 11 and 15) is indeed right: category boundaries *are* fuzzy, and any attempt by the analyst to dissolve this fuzziness in favour of the Procrustean bed of clearly delimited categories will lead to a loss of realism in description.)

Looking at language alternation in conversation, especially in sequential terms, one notices two major patterns. According to the first, language alternation from language X to language Y is followed by further talk in language X, either by the same or by other participants. According to the second pattern, language alternation from language X to language Y is followed by further talk in language Y, by same or other participants. Apparently, there is a difference in how language alternation affects the language of interaction (the 'base language'). In the first case, we speak of transfer: no renegotiation of the language of interaction is observed. The stretch of speech formulated in the other language has a built-in and predictable point of return into the first language. In the second case, we speak of code-switching: the new language invites succeeding participants to also use this new language. In fact, not using this language may be interpreted as disregarding the first speaker's language preference and/or competence (in the case of participant-related switching) or the new 'footing' (in the case of discourse-related switching).

Extracts (5) and (6) illustrate transfer from German into Italian. (Participants are the same as in Extract (1). The episode SCHNECKENFRESSER was recorded two years after VIERER. It will be noted that whereas Clemente still has a preference for German, Alfredo is quite willing to speak Italian (dialect) now.)

As in the case of code-switching (see extracts (1) to (4)), we have to distinguish between participant- and discourse-related transfers:

Extract (5) (VIERER B: 37-38)

((narrative about a typing test the speaker took))

- 37 : 07 Al: skrivi dopo – kwandë la maestra vidë ke sai skrive
 ((lento)) ((acc.))
 08 – molto ti fa komminc'are a skrive – h koll=o –
 ((lento))
 09 l=oro10g' g' o=diec' I minutI kwante fai;
 10 m: °aha,
 11 Al: dOppë – da tuttI kwelle pac' ine ke pë skrive
 12 sveltI c'E skrittë,
 13 tutti Anschläge kwandë/volte – 'hhh
 14 m: °mhm,
 15 Al: sin zum Beispiel: due mille=o – c'inke c'ento: –
 16 Ag: due mille c'inkwe c'ento
 (pp e molto presto))
 17 m: par ole
 18 Al: Ansc hläge
 19 m: Anschläge kwã=m (. . .)
 ((pp))
 38 : 01 Al: arOppë – guarda le: – Fehler – allOrë i=errori
 ((lento))
 02 e tutto sbal' c'i vonno lovare ventic'inkwe
 ((hesitating))
 Anschläge – c'ai/ –
 03 m: °o kapito°

TRANSLATION:

- 37 : 07 Al: you write then – when the teacher sees that you can write
 08 – a lot she makes you start to write – h
 with=the=w –
 09 the watch=when (?) you do ten minutes;
 10 m: aha,
 11 Al: then – of all the pages that you were able to
 12 write fast which you (?) have written,
 13 all the TOUCHES how many/times – 'hhh
 14 m: mhm,
 15 Al: THERE ARE FOR INSTANCE
 two thousand=or – five hundred
 16 Ag: two thousand five hundred ((corrects Al.'s pronunciation))

- 17 m: words
 18 Al: TOUCHES
 19 m: TOUCHES (.)
 38 : 01 Al: and then – she has a look at the – MISTAKES – I mean
 the mistakes – and (for) every mistake they are going to
 subtract twenty-five TOUCHES – which is/ –
 03 m: I got it

Extract (6) (SCHNECKENFRESSER 91 : 25)

((Cl. and Al. are complaining about two older people living in their house))

- 02 m: perke non lavorano però eh stanno tutto=il
 03 g'orno a kasa
 04 Al: ke E vekkië e g'a pendzionann nun g'annë fil'ë,=
 05 m: =he : :
 06 Cl.: na aber nicht der Mann; – der Mann schafft no;
 07 Al: u mO u mO
 08 u Mann E : : c' s' te: kiu s' – kiu schlimm angOrë;
 09 (1.0)
 10 Al.: na vO : t (.)
 11 m: °°mhm°°

((follows Italian narrative))

TRANSLATION:

- 02 m: because they don't work eh they stay at home all day
 03 long
 04 Al: because (s)he is old and retired already they don't have children;=
 05 m: =he : :
 06 Cl: NO BUT NOT THE HUSBAND; –
 THE HUSBAND STILL GOES TO WORK;
 07 Al: the HUSBAND the HUSBAND
 08 the HUSBAND is sometimes even wor – worse;
 10 once (.)

((follows narrative))

((Note: mo is dialectal for Mann))

In (5), Alfredo is about to explain a rather complex matter, i.e. how the final results were calculated in a typing test. He runs into difficulties in the case of *Fehler/errori* and *Anschläge* ('touches')

which are marked as such by vowel lengthening, hesitation, short silence and above all the self-repair in line 01 (*allorë i=errori*) and the initiated but uncompleted self-repair in line 02 (*c'ai :/from cioè i. . .*). The transfer from German is displayed as related to the speaker's (momentary) lack of competence in Italian: it is the German word which comes to his mind first. In (6), we find one of the more important types of discourse-related transfer which I call anaphoric. Alfredo refers to the person introduced in Camillo's previous German turn and uses *Mann* as a topical link between the two utterances. *U Mann* here means 'this man you are talking about'.¹⁰ Certainly, this type of back-referencing could also have been accomplished by the Italian equivalent (*l=uomo*); however, anaphoric typing is based solely on semantic similarity in this latter case, whereas it is based on semantic and formal identity in the first.

Although most of the instances of transfer we find in our materials are on the lexical level (here, nouns are by far the most frequent), our definition of transfer does not restrict the term to this level. We only require that transfer not relate to a certain *point* in conversation (as code-switching does) but to a certain (well-defined) unit which has a predictable end that will also terminate the use of the other language. Accordingly, transfer on higher structural levels must be included as well, for instance language alternation to set off citations, or even songs, sayings, poems, rhymes and other 'kleine Gattungen'. In all these cases, transfer is discourse-related.

Two additional remarks concerning the distinction between transfer and code-switching: (1) first, our expectation is that after code-switching, it is the newly introduced language that will be taken up by the co-participant. This is only a conversational preference, not an absolute 'rule' or 'norm'. On the one hand, there are cases of code-switching in which recipients refuse to accept the new footing together with the new language; and cases in which recipients accept the new footing, but not the new language (a phenomenon which would have to be interpreted on the level of language preference ascription); on the other hand, there are cases of transfer which 'prepare' or 'trigger' switching into the other language. What is important is the distinction

between switching *points* and transferred units; (2) Secondly, my notion of transfer does not correspond to and is not to be confused with the one usually met in the literature on language contact and second language acquisition. The latter is supposed to cover the phenomena subsumed under 'interference' before that concept went out of fashion. Let us call them transfer_L, where the subscript L stands for 'linguist'; for transfer_L is defined and described from the linguist's point of view. He or she can take into account 'diachronic' and other facts that do not necessarily concern participants. Transfer_L is in continuous danger of being a linguistic artifact, due to a monolingual point of view, that is, of taking the monolingual systems of the two languages in contact as the point of reference (German as spoken by Germans in, e.g. Hanover, and Italian as spoken e.g. in Milano). The (bilingual) speaker may not make a distinction between two independent and strictly separated systems. Often the varieties in the repertoires of bilingual speech communities show independent developments setting them off against the coexisting monolingual norms ('convergence'). Transfer_P (P for participant) is defined from the member's perspective. Accordingly, if we want to claim that an item such as *Mann* is a transfer_P, we have to show that the speaker *makes use of* the other-language status of *Mann*. It is not enough that *Mann* can be found in a German dictionary, and not in an Italian one. The 'proof procedures' for transfer_P and transfer_L are therefore quite different. Usually, transfer_L is the weaker alternative with which we have to content ourselves if we cannot demonstrate that the production of an 'other'-language item has a function (be it of the discourse- or of the participant-related type). Transfer_P requires demonstrating how the participant displays a 'reason' for language alternation, in the way this alternation is produced, which is visible to his or her co-participants (as in our extracts 5 and 6).

Transfer_L is observed in the following utterances, also from our materials, but from a different speaker: Daniele is part of a network that is dominated by newly arrived Italian boys. Interaction in this network is characterized by the almost complete lack of code-switching. Language alternation occurs in the format of (mostly discourse-related) transfer_P, but most transfers are not marked as such by the speaker:

Daniele: mia (*sic*) padre fa: l=spazi:no: e: — mia madre fa: la Putzfrau
(50 : 08/9)

TRANSLATION: my father is a road sweeper and — my mother is a
CLEANING WOMAN

Daniele: o: vergon'atevi davanti $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{il} \\ \text{al} \end{array} \right\}$ Mikrophón — 71 : 07)

TRANSLATION: or do you feel embarrassed in front of the MICROPHONE

Daniele: volete delle Kartoffel (73 : 11)

TRANSLATION: do you want CHIPS ((lit.: potatoes))

Daniele: mme l'i mettè tutti sopra al Sparbuch kwelli ke mi gwardan'o=ilà;
(97 : 12)

TRANSLATION: (s)he puts them all on my SAVING ACCOUNT (the
money) which I make there;

Here, we cannot speak of transfer_P in the sense of (individually) functional language alternation, but only of transfer_L in the sense of *code-fluctuation*¹¹ which is possibly interpretable in global terms. The distinction between language alternation and code-fluctuation is based on the way textual variation between two items presents itself to conversationalists.

Who switches how?

The following remarks on individual differences among the Italian children investigated must be prefaced with a *caveat* as this part of the study is not finished yet. Above all, differential statements need to be embedded in a wider linguistic and ethnographic description of the speakers than can be given here.¹²

The first question we have to ask is: If Italian migrant children alternate between languages, what is the *direction* of code-switching and transfer? There is an enormous amount of evidence which supports the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1:

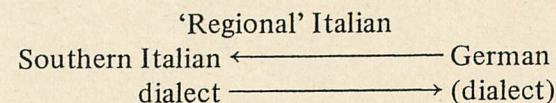
In the overwhelming number of cases, code-switching is from the Italian into the German part of the linguistic repertoire. Transfer is from German into Italian passages.

This clear dominance of German holds for more or less all types of alternation mentioned above, with the exception of turn-internal switching, which is unspecific with regard to direction. In the case of competence-related alternation, practically all transferred items are from German, and all instances of code-switching are from Italian into German. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that because the preponderance of German is not restricted to preference-related switching, all types of alternation, in addition to whatever else they may do in conversation, display an imbalance between the Italian and the German part of the repertoire. Most of the children have a much stronger tendency to switch codes when the 'base language' is Italian, and almost all children readily transfer lexical items from German into Italian, but rarely vice versa. If we look at the type of 'footing' that coincides with discourse-related switching, the much greater interactional 'value' of German as opposed to Italian is underlined even more. German is the switched-to language coinciding with a transition from formal to informal interaction or from giving information to evaluating it. German is used for ironic or humorous statements, for side-remarks, for the punchline of a story or a joke, etc.

The instances of language alternation that do not conform to this picture are often of a particular type. They are not from German into Regional Italian, but from German (or Regional Italian) into the local southern Italian dialect or its approximation. Without going into details¹³ it can be said that for those children who (still) have the choice between more than one variety of Italian, the local dialect may have the same function in relation to German (or Regional Italian) as German does in relation to Regional Italian.

This is to say that a transition from more to less formal speech, from topical talk to side-remarks, or the setting off of humorous or funny statements, may either correspond to a switching from 'Regional' Italian to dialectal Italian, or to one from 'Regional' Italian to German (dialect); it will not coincide with a transition

in the opposite direction, however. The third case (switching between Italian dialect and German (dialect)) is rare and less predictable: it may take either direction. Thus, in a maximally exploited repertoire, we can get the following switches:



A second hypothesis concerns the overall frequency of language alternation. Here, the following picture emerges:

Hypothesis 2:

Frequency of language alternation is most often similar for members of the same interactional network.

It seems that members of the same network adapt to each other and develop a common style of linguistic behaviour which may or may not be characterized by code-switching and transfer. This is true independent of the quality of the particular network.

Types of network contacts are relevant for a more detailed characterization of the individual speaker's linguistic behaviour:

Hypothesis 3:

If a child's primary network contacts are children of a similar biographical background, language alternation will mostly assume the format of discourse-related switching, otherwise, there may be discourse-related transfer, but most often, language alternation is restricted to the participant-related types.

This means that children who do not have any contacts with other Italian children, or who are part of networks which incorporate children with different histories of migration (recently arrived Italian dominant speakers), show the lowest percentage of discourse-related switching. Those who have their primary network contacts with children who have lived through a similar socialization process show a higher percentage of these switches. Thus, only the existence and the homogeneity of networks seems to provide the necessary conditions for the development of language

alternation as a contextualization strategy. If a child who has been brought up and/or was born in Germany has close friends or siblings who have only come here recently, discourse-related switching will be rare.

A final hypothesis concerns the internal differentiation of the largest group of alternations, i.e. discourse-related switching:

Hypothesis 4:

The employment of code-switching as a contextualization strategy varies with age.

Among the earlier employments of discourse-related switching (most frequent between the ages of 10 to 13), switching to initiate a change of participant constellation is most likely because of its intimate relationship to preference-related switching. For quite often, changing the language when addressing a new partner is only the functional aspect of adapting to his or her language preference which diverges from that of the preceding addressee. More sophisticated uses of code-switching, for example, changing the topic, or the mode of interaction, or establishing sequential contrasts, etc., as well as the various types of turn-internal switching only become frequent at around age 13 or 14.

Conclusion

Language alternation can be approached from a number of perspectives. Three stand out in the literature: the grammatical, the macro-sociolinguistic and the conversation analytic approach. From the grammatical perspective, a number of restrictions on code-switching within the sentence have been formulated (cf. Poplack 1982; Gumperz 1982; and others). These restrictions are important for a general theory of grammatical processing in bilinguals, for they allow one to draw certain conclusions about the psycholinguistic reality of the bilingual's two grammars. However, they are only relevant in a minority of cases of language

alternation in our materials. The Italian children we have investigated usually change languages either for individual lexical items, or for whole sentences. But even in intrasentential switching, grammatical restrictions do not tell us anything about the interactional 'value' or 'meaning' of transfer and code-switching as conversational activities.

Surprisingly perhaps, the same applies to the macro-sociolinguistic perspective (cf., for instance, Breitborde 1983). Again, general statements are made, concerning the distribution of code-switching in certain situations, or among participants holding certain 'roles' and 'statuses' in a given society, but little or nothing is said about the contribution of language alternation to the ongoing interaction, that is, about its local functioning. Thus, although neither the value of the grammatical nor that of the macro-sociolinguistic perspective can be denied, it seems that both have to be incorporated into a third, more basic perspective which is to investigate the contribution of language alternation to members' sense-making activities. This may fruitfully be done in the framework of conversation analysis, which, taking into account grammatical restrictions where necessary, can work up and relate to larger scale sociolinguistic statements.¹⁴ Some fundamental distinctions that are relevant for the production and interpretation of language alternation in conversation have been presented in this paper.

On the basis of these distinctions, the place of language alternation between the German and the Italian part of the repertoire, in the speech of Italian migrant children in Germany, can be summarized as follows:

- The two parts of the repertoire are not kept distinct. There is a high degree of variation; in particular, a high degree of lexical transfer_L was noted. These lexical transfers are not usually adapted to the phonology or grammar of the receiving language: indeed, I have argued that it would be mistaken to speak of a receiving language here at all. We are simply dealing with intra-repertoire variation.
- Code-switching is frequent, but mostly occurs at sentence boundaries. Sentence-internal switching is only relevant in some few, insulated and dense networks.

- Code-switching is not necessarily related to a metaphoric function (in Gumperz' sense). Often, it 'just' takes part in the organization of discourse. As a contextualization strategy, it is comparable to prosodic parameters such as intonation, loudness or pitch level.
- Most speakers have a preference for German. By code-switching, they display this preference, or their better competence in that language. Code-switching is always an attempt to renegotiate the language of interaction, at least temporarily.
- Both competence-related switching and competence-related transfer demonstrate that in the present situation, typical aspects of language contact mix with aspects of second language acquisition (of 'Regional' Italian).

It is reasonable to conclude from all these indicators that at the macro-level, the sociolinguistic situation of the second generation Italian migrants is still unstable and may develop in two directions: complete linguistic adaptation including loss of Italian and Italian dialects in the repertoire, or stabilization as a bilingual community. This uncertainty certainly corresponds to the social mobility of the Italian 'communities' which, in turn, is to be seen against the background of political (European Community) and geographical (distance) factors. A more definite answer will be possible as soon as we move on to a next step of analysis: the comparison of different Italian communities abroad.

Notes

- * I wish to thank Steven Gillies for correcting my English.
1. A more detailed analysis grounded in the transcripts is given in Auer 1983/1984, 1981 and 1984a.
 2. Cf. Di Luzio 1983 for an outline of the project, and Auer and Di Luzio 1983a, b; Bierbach (1983); and d'Angelo 1984 for some results. The M.I.G. project was located in the *Sonderforschungsbereich 99* at the *Fachgruppe Sprachwissenschaft* of the University of Constance from 1980 to 1985.
 3. cf. d'Angelo 1984.

4. The usual transcription conventions of conversation analysis are employed. However, note that

/	:	phonetic break-off
(.)	:	phonetic pause
-	:	pause not exceeding 0.2 sec.
h h h	:	laughing.

For the transcription of the Italian passages, quasi-phonetic symbols are used:

E, O, I	:	open variables of <i>aub</i> <u>e, o, i</u>
c', g'	:	alveo-palatal affricates
s', z'	:	alveo-palatal fricatives
l', n'	:	palatal laterals and nasals
è	:	schwa.

English translations give a simplified version.

5. Cf. Auer and Di Luzio 1983a, b for an analysis of this type of variation (*italiano stentato*).
6. For details, cf. Auer 1981.
7. Irma insists on German in initiative sequential positions (lines 01/02), in responsive sequential position (line 09) and in a contribution which disregards the co-participant's prior turn altogether (lines 8 ff). In a more extensive discussion of the data, it could be demonstrated that these three positions are not equivalent with regard to preference displays. Responsive utterances in the other language are stronger indicators of diverging preferences than initiative ones (where I mean by 'responsive' and 'initiative' the respective slots in sequential formats such as question/answer, etc.). Disregarding the preceding other-language contribution can be a way to avoid a responsive position in which switching would have underlined one's preference, for the sake of an initiative contribution (cf. Auer 1983 for details).
8. We are talking about primary levels of interpretation here. On a secondary, 'global' level, matters of competence and preference also relate to the organization of discourse, for finding a common language of interaction obviously is a prerequisite for interaction. Vice versa, discourse related switching can allow ascriptions of competence and of preference to individual speakers.
9. Cf. Gumperz 1982; Goffman 1979.
10. Apart from anaphoric transfer, lexical transfer is not very often employed for discourse-related purposes in our data. In rare cases, transfer is usually part of a contrast pair built up between a same-language and an other-language item. For an example, cf. Del Coso-Calame et al., MS.
11. Cf. Auer and Di Luzio, 1983a, b.
12. Cf. d'Angelo 1984 for ethnographic details.

13. Cf. Di Luzio 1984.
14. Jordan and Fuller (1975), Heller (1982), Valdés and Pino (1981), and McClure (1977) belong to the few authors who have attempted to approach code-switching in conversation analytic terms, although the investigations are restricted to certain types of language alternation. More comprehensive accounts are given by Gumperz (1982), in his famous distinction between situational and metaphorical code-switching, and by Zentella (1981). I have dealt with Gumperz' model elsewhere in detail (Auer 1984a). Zentella's distinction between factors "on the spot," pertaining to the "observables of interaction" (1981: 147), and factors "in the head" which are not directly observable leads into somewhat artificial classifications, when, for example, "topic", "psychological setting" and addressee's language preference are grouped together as "on the spot" factors, whereas a momentary loss for words, or a change of the speaker's role are said to be factors "in the head".

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