

Peter Auer, University of Constance

A discussion paper on code alternation

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o. Introductory remarks

The following remarks are not empirical, although they were written on the basis of my work with Italian/German and Italian/English bilinguals. Instead, they focus on a number of theoretical and methodological problems which are - at least on the basis of my own experience - central to the investigation of code alternation. Given the fact that this is the first meeting of the ESF network on "code-switching", and given the still somewhat provisional, partially malleable delimitation of its subject, this unempirical character of my contribution may be excusable. I may add that in my view of code alternation as a field of study, there is presently no lack of empirical contributions. There is however, unless I am mistaken, a lack of theoretical concepts and methodologies shared by more than two (or three) researchers active in the field. As a considerable number of these researchers are present at the ESF meeting, the opportunity for theoretical discussion may arise.

1. Definition

Code alternation ("code-switching") has become a popular subject, at least in those parts of the world where societies with a multicultural and multilingual identity exist - de jure or de facto. Even in a country as stubbornly monolingual and monocultural (according to its own self-conception, and despite the presence of millions of speakers of other languages) as Germany (West-), code alternation at least between varieties of German has made its way, even into textbooks of

German as a second language. Thus, Strauss (1984), in an introductory book on "Didaktik und Methodik Deutsch als Fremdsprache", gives the transcription of an authentic (although outdated) TV interview with students of a prestigious public school in W. Germany¹ and categorizes one student's remarks

"Ich versau doch nicht mein Leben durch'n schlechteren Numerus clausus <...> was drum um mich herum ist, ist mir völlig wurscht"

as a "breaking of register" with respect to the other participants' more formal way of speaking. The students of German and users of the book are then encouraged by a number of exercises to see the speakers switching into a colloquial register as one which "treats his partner with disrespect, ridiculing her reproach" (p 18, my translation). A very crude adaption of Gumperz' conception of metaphorical code-switching seems to underly this interpretation, based on a simple equation of formal = standard variety. But Strauss is of course right in advocating this kind of sensitivity training in a textbook on "Deutsch als Fremdsprache", and that he puts such importance to code alternation may show that this phenomenon is less peripheral to such accepted areas of Applied Linguistics like second language learning than some (applied and non-applied) linguists may think. (Incidentally the same point could be made for language alternation in schools with bilingual children in Germany.)

But are we dealing with code alternation (code-switching) here at all? Or is code-switching only and exclusively a phenomenon of language contact, a "marque transcodique" between two languages? Do we want to accept any change of linguistic variety as code alternation or do we want to put restrictions on the kinds of varieties juxtaposed? Let me give a second example for a case where some of us may (possibly) not be too happy with using the term, although there is language contact involved this time. Hinnenkamp (1989) observed the following bilingual (German-Turkish) sign on a German playground

¹"Reservate. Die Schule im Schloß. Internat Salem", ARD, 14.12.1975.

Ball spielen verboten
top oynamak yasaktır

In his brilliant analysis, Hinnenkamp shows how in the specific context of a Turkish dominated neighbourhood and in the more general context of a country in which monolingual signs are the rule, a bilingual sign (incl. the spelling mistake it contains) which on the surface pretends to address both Turkish and German children and parents in their own language, is in fact contextualized such as to address particularly and in the first place Turkish children (who are bilingual anyway and could understand the German version as well as the Turkish one). Instead of enlarging the number of possible addressees, the use of two languages in this case reduces it (and all the job that is left to be done by the German version is to prove to the Germans that something is done against Turkish children).

But again: are we dealing with code-alternation here, or just with a sign in two languages? What are the criteria that delimit our subject? My own attempt at a definition would be: *code-alternation (used here as a cover term, i.e. hyperonym for code-switching and transfer; -> below) covers all cases, in which semiotic systems are put in a relationship of contiguous juxtaposition, such that the appropriate recipients of the resulting complex sign are in a position to interpret this juxtaposition as such.*

As an example of the kind one probably would not think of in the first place when speaking of code-alternation, let us look at the following clipping from an American journal (1988); it is part of an advertisement for "Canadian Club" (a whisky):



The sequence of five pictorial signs given here satisfies all the definitional requirements for code-alternation. The code-alternation, of course, occurs between the second and the third, and the third and the fourth picture, i.e. selects the middle sign (and is, because of this configuration, a case of "transfer"; again: -> below for this terminology). The relationship between this sign and the ones to its left and right is one of (spatial) contiguity and of juxtaposition. The same criterion applied to linguistic data means that non-contiguous stretches of talk (e.g. one occurring in the beginning, the other in the end of the conversation, or speaker X using language A on one occasion, and language B on another) cannot be related to each other as an instance of code-alternation. The criterion of juxtaposition implies that gradual transitions from one code into the other cannot be classified as code-alternation either. Thus, a gradual transition from dialect into standard may be a very important interactional event, but it works differently from code-alternation and should not be confounded with it.

Note that we do not require the juxtaposed signs to be in a relationship of sequential contiguity. They need not be ordered in a one-dimensional way. Thus, if the signs in our advertisement were scattered around on the page, the one containing the maple leave would still qualify as a transfer from a different code.

The requirement that semiotic systems be juxtaposed excludes the possibility of single parameter changes to be analysed as code-alternation. To give a linguistic example: The switching from German *Sie* to *Du* (or, more rarely, the other way round), is another dramatic conversational event. But as the use of the polite address pronoun is not embedded in a social register (as it is in Javanese and many other Asian languages), and therefore not part of system of co-occurring linguistic parameters that have to be changed with it, we

are dealing with the variation of a single parameter, not the juxtaposition of linguistic systems (e.g., varieties of languages). In the case of the whisky ad, the four peripheral pictures are part of the more or less conventionalized system of public pictographs ("pictogrammes"); they are deeply iconic. In the advertisement, their belonging together is additionally underlined by common colour (black and white). On the other hand, the middle sign, set off by red colour and by the lack of a black background with rounded corners, represents a company symbol, and is void of iconic content. (Of course, it also alludes to a national symbol, i.e. the Canadian flag.)

Most important of all the definitional criteria for code-switching is that of its interpretive reality. In my conception of code-alternation, it is the users of the signs that decide on their status. It seems that we have no other final authority to turn to if we want to decide whether a given sign is part of the same system as the contiguous signs, or whether it is part of a different system, and takes part in a juxtaposition of two codes. The 'objective' statement by the linguistically or semiotically trained analyst that a given arrangement of signs constitutes a mixture of two systems is not only very difficult to make at times (vide the discussion on borrowing), it is also irrelevant. There may be cases in which the two systems juxtaposed by the members of a community (and interpreted as such) are 'objectively speaking' very similar but from the members' point of view completely independent (cf. Hindi/ Urdu), just as their may be systems that are 'objectively speaking' very heterogeneous but nevertheless seen as uniform by the users (cf. English).

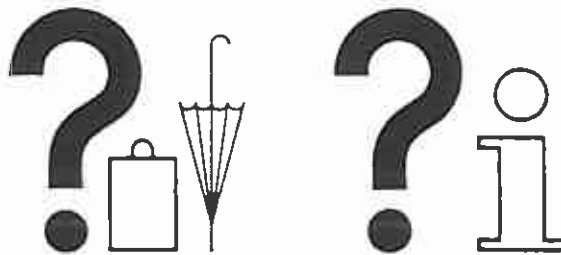
Take a picture like the following:



This is certainly a complex sign; it contains an iconic element - the stylized picture of a weeping child - and a symbolic element taken from another system, i.e. that of writing: '?'. Objectively speaking, there is a mixture of two systems. From the point of the users of these pictogrammes, however, the sign is seen and interpreted as one: 'lost children'. There is no code-alternation involved.

Of course it must be asked how the analyst can reconstruct the member's interpretation. The most important criterion here is functionality. Code-alternation is used in meaningful ways (->below) for the "contextualization" of utterances.

The difference can also be traced in the graphics. The combination of a weeping child and a question mark in the second pictogramme results in a disjunction of denotational meanings; as can be seen from a comparison with other elements of the same pictorial system, such as



the question mark 'means' (in the sense of denotation) a place where information can be gained, and the additional picture component modifies this meaning in the appropriate way; in the case of the weeping child, it restricts the meaning to denote places where information can be gained about lost children.

On the other hand, the juxtaposition of pictogrammes and a trade symbol in the first case has an entirely different effect on the viewer. The denotational meaning of the five individual pictures is left unchanged by their serialization. However, that a symbol that is ostensibly and observably taken from another code (trade mark) is used "as if" it was legitimately put in a sequence with "riding", "skiing", "airplanes" and "ships" gives a connotative meaning to the first (and also the others). They have something in common now

which is only established by their juxtaposition - a flavour of luxury and jet-set life. This effect is one of putting signs into context (of contextualizing them). But it is only by the contrast established in the juxtaposition of different codes that this connotational meaning can be conveyed, whereas in the case of the "lost children", it is the availability of both pictogrammes ("child", "information-giving") in the same code which enables their combination. The appropriate interpretation of the Canadian-Club ad therefore presupposes the user's ability to see the signs as being part of two different codes; but the appropriate interpretation of the "lost children" pictogramme presupposes the user's ability to see the parts of this composite sign as belonging to the same code. Thus, the way in which signs are put to use can reveal their status.

To come back to the bilingual issue (which I will not abandon from now on): when we compare the speech of bilinguals with that of monolinguals in either of their languages, we notice (qua our profession as linguists) a high number of "marques transcodiques", "qui renvoient d'une manière ou d'une autre à la rencontre de deux ou plusieurs systèmes linguistiques" (Lüdi 1987:2). But inside this very large domain of language contact phenomena, we want to draw a very basic distinction: that between contact phenomena classified as such by the linguist, and contact phenomena seen and used as such by the bilingual participants themselves. In employing particular kinds of "marques transcodique", these participants continually display to each other their bilingual competence, but they also exploit this competence for discourse-related ends. The question 'Do bilingual participants see it?' takes us from structural systems continually referring to each other, to the speakers using these systems. It implies the shift from a structural towards an interpretive approach to bilingualism.

2. Reductionist views

There are a number of reductionist views of code-alternation which are not adequate, at least for the analysis of code-alternation in 'new' bilingual communities (e.g. those that have come into being as a consequence of work migration).

One of these reductionist views is to see code-alternation as a simple consequence of lacking competence in one language or the other; the bilingual speaks whatever language comes to his or her mind first. Seen from the point of view of second language acquisition, such bilingual behaviour is reprimanded as an "avoidance strategy" unfavourable to the learner's progress. Although code-alternation as an avoidance strategy is not infrequent among some bilinguals of a very "unbalanced" kind or in the earliest phases of the acquisition of a second language (provided that there are co-participants around for whom this strategy makes sense), it is certainly much too simple as an explanation. For one, code-alternation can be more than an avoidance strategy; it can also be a learning strategy (cf. Meisel 1983, Auer 1987). But more important: even for the newly arrived migrant worker who has just started to grasp a few words of his or her host country's language, this language and his/her own language are not in a social vacuum; they are, from the very start, loaded with attitudes. And even in this early phase, the beginning bilingual may play with these attitudinal meanings attached to the languages in question by himself/herself and also by the minority group that he/she lives in.

According to this reductionist view, code-alternation has properly speaking no meaning; it has a reason, i.e. the speaker's incompetence. There is another equally reductionist view, which starts from almost the opposite presupposition. Here, code-alternation is meaningful because the languages concerned are meaningful themselves. Each language in the repertoire is said to have a unique context of usage (a domain), defined primarily by the roles of the participants, but possibly also by its local and institutional setting. Thus, one language may be appropriate for interaction with members of the "local team", whereas another language may be appropriate for interaction with outsiders, etc. In its extreme form, this approach to code-switching presupposes a one-to-one relationship between situation and language choice. On the basis of this relationship, the languages in the repertoire each take on by association a specific context-free meaning, i.e. "we code" and "they code", related to a specific complex of attitudes. Now, if the expectation of language use appropriate to the situation is broken by inappropriate language use, this breaking of expectations prompts

inferences which convey meaning to such a case of "code-switching" by channelling in the meaning of the non-appropriate language into the situation calling for use of the other language. This is the idea propagated by John Gumperz in his first theory of code-switching, which is based on the distinction between metaphorical and situational code-switching (cf. Blom & Gumperz 1972, for a critique: Auer 1984b).

Again, this explanation may be true for some cases of code-switching, and in some social contexts (such as the ones described by McConvell 1988 or Scollon 1988), it may even cover a large number of such cases. But it is too restrictive for the comprehensive analysis of code-switching in 'new' bilingual communities as they emerge on the basis of work migration, e.g. in many places in Europe. For the members of these communities, it is impossible to allocate languages to domains in a predictable way. In a great many situations, language choice is open to negotiation. In addition, members of the bilingual community may have diverging language preferences and competences, leading to preference-related code alternation.

In the semantic approach, the local meaning (interpretation) of code alternation is derived from the global semantic meaning of the language switched-to. The local conversational environment in which code alternation occurs plays no role for its interpretation. This leads to the expectation that code alternation can occur anywhere, without regard to conversational structure, which is clearly wrong. On the other hand, if it is true that the locus of occurrence of code-switching can be described in conversation analytic terms, we must concede that this conversational environment contributes to its interpretation in important ways. This is not to deny the fact that the languages in a multilingual repertoire are always invested with attitudinal meaning. The question is if this meaning can be derived from the allocation of languages to domains (alone). The alternative view will allow conversational code alternation to play an important active role in the constitution of these attitudes and values, exactly because it occurs in describable conversational loci. To give an example: if German is habitually used by Italian children in Germany for conversational activities such as joking, innuendo, side remarks, evaluations and assessments, whereas Italian is not, then this

conversational usage will both construe and display the values associated with German (e.g. "peer language"). The interpretation of such code alternation is not imported from outside, it is built up in the conversation itself, and on the basis of similar cases in the co-participants' experience. (From this it follows, that the observation and analysis of conversational code alternation is an important tool for the analysis of members' value systems, i.e. for attitudinal research.)

If monocausal explanations for code alternation such as the incompetence approach and the semantic approach fail to give a comprehensive picture, we have to look for more differentiated models. *Three dimensions have to be taken into account. The first dimension is that of the speaker's and of the recipient's individual linguistic competences and preferences. The second dimension is that of conversational structure. The third dimension is that of the values and social meanings attached to the languages in the repertoire.* In any particular instance of code alternation, all the three dimensions may play a role, or just one or two of them.

That there must be an independent dimension of conversational structuring can be seen nicely from language use in reported speech. In the majority of cases, code alternation on reported speech coincides with the language plausibly used by the reported speaker. However, there is a minority of cases where the opposite happens. For instance, a young Italian says of his German school mates, that

wenn ä Italiener kommt gell - sofort äh: guardate
Ittakerstinker und so" (when an Italian comes you know -
immediately look spaghetti heads and so on)

It is highly unlikely that the Germans would use an Italian phrase such like *guardate* when insulting their Italian colleagues. It is much more likely, that switching into Italian is for the Italian teller a means to mark the beginning of direct reported speech, which is not otherwise explicitly introduced.

Also, it should be noted that individual preferences and competences and code alternation referring to them may take on a conversational function. Thus, the following little exchange looks, at first sight, like

being purely preference-related (b is an Italian dominant adult, Daniela and Fiorella two German dominant Italian girls):

Dn. -> b: also ich hélf dir
 ok I'll help you (doing the washing
 up)
Fr. -> b: ích helf Dir;=
 'I'll help you
Dn. : =no: ío -
 no, I will

In the third line, Daniela seems to accommodate to b's known language preference. But more is at stake here. The two girls are obviously competing for being allowed to help b. Now, as Italian is b.'s preferred language, yielding to this preference (which has been in conflict with both Daniela's and Fiorella's preference throughout the interaction) is a step towards b. The association between b. and Daniela established on the linguistic level (one language), which at the same time excludes Fiorella (who remains outside the Italian-speaking constellation), is used by Daniela to establish a bond on the level of argumentation as well. She virtually trades giving in on the level of language choice for the favour of being allowed to help the adult. (One may call such a case of language alternation "metaphorical", and in a way, it is: what happens on the level of language choice stands for something on the activity level. However, such metaphorical interpretations are not what Blom & Gumperz have in mind, for in their approach, metaphorical code-switching refers to the larger situation (participants and their roles, topics, locality); participants behave 'as if' the situation appropriate for use of language A was given, although a situation appropriate for the use of language B is the 'real' context of interaction.)

3. Code alternation in the framework of a larger theory of interaction

The three dimensions mentioned in the last section on which code alternation can be analyzed may be integrated into a common theoretical framework, if the notion of contextualization is regarded as central in linguistic theory. According to Gumperz (whose second approach to code switching is based on this notion),

contextualization refers to all the process by which members construe the local and global contexts which are necessary for the interpretation of their linguistic and non-linguistic activities (cf. Gumperz 1982, in press.) This is done by contextualization cues, i.e., signs on the verbal, but also on the gestual, kinesic, and prosodic level. Two aspects of Gumperz' theory of contextualization, which cannot be outlined in any detail here, stand out: first, it takes 'context' as something not given a priori and influencing or determining linguistic detail, but instead, as something that needs to be shaped, maintained, changed, etc. by participants continually in the course of interacting, such that successful interaction not only requires 'using the right words', but als 'putting the words into proper context'. Second, the cues used for this purpose do not usually have referential meaning, their usage is itself context-dependent itself. Therefore, for the interpretation of an utterance, it is not sufficient to decode the contextualization cues it contains; this has to be done on the basis of the conversational locus in which the cue is produced.

I want to propose here *that code alternation is most fruitfully analyzed as a contextualization cue*. This cue may construe context in basically two ways; it may allow the ascription of competence- and preference-related predicates to participants in an interaction, and it may shape the interpretation of conversational activities. I call these two uses of code alternation as a contextualization strategy *participant-related and discourse-related*. Looking at code alternation as a way to display one's own competence in and preference for a language, as well as a way to ascribe to other participants and non-participants competence- and preference-related predicates such as 'speaks language A very well', 'is fluent in language A and language B', 'has difficulties with language B', 'likes to speak language A', etc. i.e. ascriptions rather common in multilingual communities, implies treating bilingualism as a social datum, not as a mental disposition or ability. We are not inquiring into the actual bilingual competence of an individual, nor do we attempt to measure it; but we are interested in the ways in which members of a multilingual community display their own multilingualism to each other (cf. Auer 1981).

Discourse-related code alternation, on the other hand, combines the conversational and the 'semantic' dimension mentioned above. Code alternation may work as a contextualization cue simply because of the contrast it is able to establish between two contiguous stretches of talk. It is a very convenient way of setting off what has been said in language A against what is going to be said in language B and works, in this respect, like prosodic and gestural cues. This contrast can be used for conversational tasks independent of the social meaning of the languages involved, e.g. for setting off side remarks, marking new topics, switching between participant constellations, etc.. But code alternation may also work as a contextualization cue because (in addition) it plays with the social values and attitudes associated with the languages in question, such as they have been established in the course of an individual's history of interaction by the recurring coincidence of language choice and particular conversational activities.

The analysis of code alternation as a contextualization strategy has some important advantages over other approaches. First of all, of course, it allows this linguistic phenomenon to be seen as connected to other contextualization conventions on the prosodic or gestural level. Second, it implies a non-deterministic relationship between language alternation in a specific direction and the interpretation of the linguistic activity on which it occurs. This calls for a detailed consideration of the local conversational context, which is indeed best done by using conversation analysis as a sophisticated technique for describing conversational sequences. (That this school of interaction analysis is hampered precisely by not taking into account the kind of linguistic and non-verbal detail so central for the notion of contextualization should not keep us from exploiting its merits.)

Given the local management of contextualization and interpretation, it is not surprising that it does not seem to be possible to enumerate in any exhaustive way the 'functions' of code alternation in any specific community. As the number of local environments for code alternation is in principle infinite, so is the number of possible interpretations to which language alternation can contribute. It is possible, however, to single out some of the more common uses of

code alternation (which may differ from one community to the next and may give us valuable information about the community we are dealing with). As this is part of the empirical work in a given community, the theory of code alternation will only describe in principal the ways in which code alternation can be used as a contextualization strategy.

4. *Comparison*

One of the most important questions in research on bilingualism is the typification of multilingual communities on the basis of their members' bilingual behaviour. A theory of bilingualism must be rich enough to provide criteria by which to classify "les marques transcodiques" in such a way that a typology of bilingual communities is possible. For a classification of bilingual markers, we need additional categories both above and below the level of code alternation.

Above the level of code alternation, the approach chosen here suggests the following division of "marques transcodiques": a) code mixing, b) code alternation, and c) unnoticed contact phenomena. Code alternation has as subcategories code-switching and transfer.

re. code mixing vs. code alternation : A basic question to be asked in any bilingual community is if this community orients to a preference (in the conversation analytic sense of the word) for 'one language at a time'. This preference, of course, does not preclude the possibility of using the 'other' language within the first, nor does it preclude the possibility of switching into the other at any time; however, it allows the expectation that for any encounter participants will try to converge on one language as the language-of-interaction. This language-of-interaction can be renegotiated, but apart from such sequences of (re-)negotiation, it is possible in such a community to answer the question 'what language are we speaking presently?' for most occasions. Sequences in which languages alternate because each participant insists on his or her preferred language will be seen against the background of the preference for one language at a time, and indeed, the mere existence of such sequences is only possible in a community orienting to the preference. But not only participant-related language alternation, discourse-related code alternation, too,

is only possible against this background; its contextualization function is based on the contrast built up between stretches of talk in two languages, which is only a noticeable event in a conversation in which language choice is given, such that against this background, using the other language is an unexpected event. The whole notion of code alternation as a contextualization strategy therefore presupposes the existence of a preference for one language at a time.

A borderline case is that of a community in which each participant has his or her preferred language when speaking, and if two participants interact whose language preferences are not the same, each of them will insist on his or her language, such that either participant sticks to his or her language but can understand that of the other. Cases of such passive bilingualism are not at all rare. But they are either instable (e.g. interaction between first and second or third generation migrants) or between social groups which have little contact, or they provoke massive convergence between the languages in question (accompanied by "marques transcodiques" of the third, unnoticed type). My impression is that such an interaction remains a marked fact, even when it becomes habitualized and loses all its abnormality. In migrant contexts, it is often the basis of first generation complaints about their children not being able to talk to them any more. (For a fictitious though not unlikely example, see J. Jarmusch' "Stranger than paradise".) We are therefore dealing with a kind of code alternation for preference-related reasons.

But there are also bilingual communities in which the preference for one language at a time is clearly absent. In such a community, the "marques transcodiques" at least in some conversations consist of the frequent and contiguous juxtaposition of two or more languages even by the same speaker. It is not possible, however, to determine which language is spoken at a given time in a great many cases. It is in these cases that the term code mixing seems appropriate (cf. e.g. Singh 1985).

Code-mixing is also observed in bilingual communities with imminent loss of one language, such as in Italian third or second generation children in Toronto. I would suggest that in such cases it is usually bare of discourse related functions. It is, in this community,

not an unmarked but a highly marked type of interaction, restricted to unusual situations (like talking to an adult who speaks Italian instead of dialect). An example:

(9 years)

[The child is about to explain how to cook gnocchi]

- Ch: ee ti fa farina e cu co la forgotta - **turn them around and then - you put the** sugo
- I: cosa? cosa? cosa? si prende la farina, quello [l'ho capito, poi?
- Ch: **yeah, and then, and then I don't know** che mette più **and then -** prende la forcotta e - **twist it**
- I: oo li gira con la [forchetta
- Ch: **yeah** cosi **yeah**
- I: si e poi
- Ch: e poi culcinare e poi **put** sugo
- I: oo col sugo
- Ch: **and then** mangia

Although code-mixing is not meaningful in the sense of working as a contextualization cue here, it is not necessarily unstructured. Syntactic constraints in code mixing may be less severe than in code alternation which is often restricted to individual words (i.e. transfers of nouns, sometimes whole noun phrases, and interjections or particles, more rarely verbs and adverbs) or occurs at phrasal boundaries.

Re. *unnoticed contact phenomena* : a lot of the phenomena that we (linguists) observe in bilingual contexts go unnoticed by the members of the community (at least in the individual occasion of their occurrence). They have to be treated differently from code-alternation and code-mixing. A classic example is the extreme convergence observed by Gumperz & Wilson (1971) in Kupwar. Examples from younger bilingual communities are not difficult to find either. The English borrowings in first and second generation Italian in Toronto (the so-called "Italiese") are a point in case - words

such as *trokko* 'truck', *basamento* 'basement', *morgeggio* 'mortgage', *storo* 'store', *checca* 'cake', *cieccare* 'to check', *smarto* 'smart', but also loanshifts such as *ammissione* 'admission', ital. *ingresso* 'entry', *carro* 'car', ital. *macchina*, *grado* 'grade', ital. *classe (scolastica)*. (Of course, there may also be unintegrated borrowings.) These words are used as Italian words, without any orientation to language alternation of code-mixing. Although many Italians living in Toronto will be able to locate the English source of these words, their individual occurrence has no local contextualization function. No contrast between one language and another is implied.

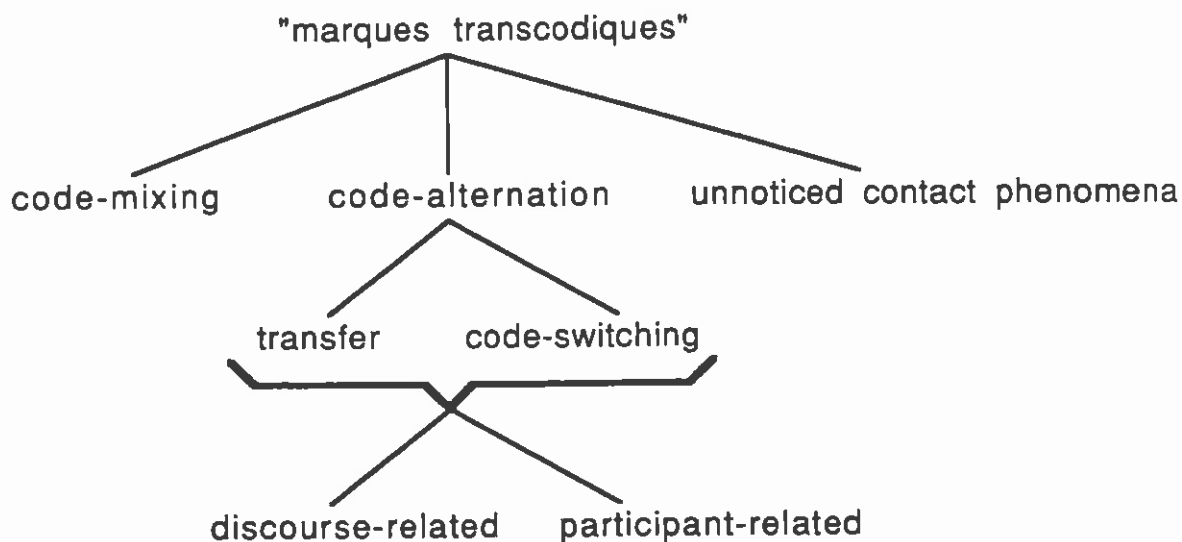
Borrowings of this kind may lead to a 'mixture' of two languages from the point of view of the linguist which disobeys the grammatical constraints on code-alternation and even code-mixing observed, e.g., in Sankoff & Poplack 1981. By consequence, these constraints cannot be falsified by examples of contact phenomena of the unnoticed kind. A case like the *alispoil* in the sentence *Ni nani alispoil kamba yetu?* 'Who spoiled our rope', cited as counterevidence by Scotton (1988: 158) (engl. *to spoil* and the Swahili prefixes *a-* (Subject), *-li-* (Past Tense) and *-i-* (Object)) is very likely such an unnoticed "marque transcodique" and therefore irrelevant for the syntactic description of code alternation and code-mixing.

re. *transfer vs. code-switching* : An important distinction has to be drawn within the category of code alternation concerning the extension of the passage in the language departing from the present language-of-Interaction. Transfer, in my terminology, refers to language alternation for a unit of speech with defined boundaries. Transferred units are often single words, but they may also be idioms, sayings and proverbs and, particularly relevant, reported speech. From the point of view of language choice, transfer is much less threatening for the present language-of-interaction than code-switching. There is a predetermined point of return into the original language which coincides with the termination of the unit on which code alternation takes place. On the other hand, code-switching occurs not in units, but at certain points in a conversation; the language is changed without a predictable point of return to the first language. For this reason, code-switching always contains an

element of renegotiation of language choice. Empirically, there is ample proof that code alternation, e.g., for the contextualization of new participant constellations, activity types, or topics, does not allow projecting a return into the language of departure and has to be classified as code-switching; indeed, the new language often persists beyond the end of the parameter contextualized in this way. Nevertheless, there are borderline cases, and it is useful to see transfer and code-switching as prototypes with many non-prototypical instances in between.

5. Summary

The categories for the analysis of "marques transcodiques" proposed here can be summarized in the following scheme. As can be noted, the central category of code-alternation is sub-categorized in functional (discourse- vs. participant-related) and structural (transfer vs. code-switching) ways.



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