Code-Switching in Simultaneous and Sequential Bilingual Haitian Creole-English Children

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- Financial Disclosures: None
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Background
- What is Code-Switching
- Types of Bilingual Acquisition
- The Haitian Creole Language
- Sociolinguistic Factors
- Problem and Purpose

What is Code-Switching
- Code-switching (CS) is the use of two or more languages within a single utterance.
  - CS requires understanding of grammatical functions in both languages.
  - CS may vary depending on the context of elicitation.
  - Studies have shown that almost all young bilingual children code-switch at a point during their development.

Types of Acquisition
- Sequential Bilinguals
  - Child is exposed to one language at birth and acquires a second language later in childhood
- Simultaneous Bilinguals
  - Child is exposed to two languages at birth

The Haitian Creole Language
- Haitian Creole is a mixture of West African, Spanish, French and Portuguese.
- 90% of the Haitian Creole lexicon is French based.
- Follows the subject-verb-object order.
- Haitian Creole does not use plurals (I have a book/Mwen gen an ivo) and I have many books/Mwen gen anpil liv).
- Tense markers are used (I am playing/Mwen ap jou, I played/Mwen te jou, I will play/Mwen pral jou).
- No voice and voiceless /th/ and /t/ like in “road” or vowel sounds /i/ in “pin” and /a/ in “bat”
Sociolinguistic Factors

- Bilingual speakers were more likely to code-switch when...
  - Telling a story, telling jokes
  - Avoiding miscommunication
  - Establishing themselves as part of the group
- Haitian Creole-English are least likely to code switch because...
  - Haitian Creole is considered a low language in Haiti
  - Haitian Creole has a history of being attached with a stigma in the US
  - 67% of Haitian Americans in public schools considered themselves weak in Haitian Creole (Hebblethwaite, 2010)

Plan/Hypothesis

1. Do patterns of code-switching in Haitian Creole-English bilingual children differ based on acquisition?
2. Do Haitian Creole-English bilingual children code-switch based on context of discourse?
   - Hypothesis
     Simultaneous Haitian Creole-English bilinguals will code-switch more than sequential Haitian Creole-English bilinguals. Haitian Creole-English bilingual children will code-switch more during spontaneous conversation than any other context.

Purpose

- Limited studies on Haitian Creole-English bilingual CS except Hebblethwaite (2010) which focused on adults
- Haitian Creole is the 3rd most spoken language in Florida therefore studying this population will give a better understanding of their CS patterns
- Studying CS acquisition type can provide insight on whether or not acquisition plays a role in interactions between L1 and L2.
- CS in bilingual children based on context have been studied by a few (Gutiérrez-Clellen, Simon-Cereijido & Leone’s, 2009, Goldstein, 2012) but no study has been conducted for Haitian Creole-Bilingual children

Methods

- Participants
  - 6 Children (4 females, 2 males)
  - 5 living in the US 1 living in Haiti
  - All educated in English
  - 5 single parent household, 1 two parent
  - All similar SES on free/reduce lunch
- Language Samples
  - Participants listened to two stories “Rita ak Jacko (read in Haitian Creole) and “Hansel and Gretel” (read in English) and their retell of the stories were audio recorded
  - Participants were audio recorded during group conversation with peers
  - Participants were audio recorded speaking with monolingual grandparents (3 with paternal grandmother 3 with maternal grandfather)

Procedure

- Language Samples
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Measurement

- Intersentential code-switch
  - switching between sentences
- Intrasentential code switch
  - switching within a sentence including...
    - word insertion,
    - phrase insertion, multiple switches
    - switching between clauses.
Results

- Simultaneous bilinguals: CS 10 times
- Sequential bilinguals: CS 8 times
- Narratives Retell: CS 0 times
- Conversational CS: 6 times
- Monolingual Conversation: 12 times

Discussion

- The data revealed that code-switching occurred more in simultaneous bilinguals than in sequential bilinguals. Simultaneous bilinguals used more intrasentential form of CS than sequential bilinguals. Sequential bilinguals rarely used intrasentential form of CS.
- Children code-switched more during spontaneous conversation. The participants did not code-switch at all during narrative retell despite the language in which the book was read.
- Sociolinguistic and language dominance played a role in the occurrence of CS. Children CS from Haitian Creole to English when speaking to monolinguals because it was their dominant language and used Creole to ensure comprehension.
- They did not code-switch during narrative retell because it was viewed as an educational task and English is associated with education.

Summary

- Simultaneous bilinguals: CS at a slightly higher rate than sequential bilinguals
- Children CS more base on spontaneous conversation and do not CS during narrative retell
- Sociolinguistic plays a role in the use of CS in Haitian Creole-English bilingual children
- Haitian Creole-English bilinguals may only CS to ensure comprehension of the communication partner
- Conduct this study with different combinations of language
- Compare patterns of CS in children with specific language impairments
- Use clinical judgment on how to use CS when assessing bilingual children

Reference