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THE USE OF GREEK DURING ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Στο παρόν άρθρο παρουσιάζω και συζητώ τις πολλαπλές χρήσεις της Ελληνικής γλώσσας από τη δασκάλα και τους μαθητές της 4^η τάξης ενός δημόσιου δημοτικού σχολείου της Αθήνας, κατά τη διάρκεια του μαθήματος των Αγγλικών. Η τάξη αποτελείται από δίγλωσσα παιδιά που έχουν την Τουρκική ως γλώσσα σπιτιού και την Ελληνική ως γλώσσα περιβάλλοντος και μονόγλωσσα Ελληνόφωνα παιδιά.

Introduction

Even though the role of the L1 in FL instruction in the Greek context has been well documented, its role in FL instruction in the context of bilingual/bicultural classrooms has not been addressed. The present paper aims at taking a first step in tackling this issue by exploring the multi-functionality of Greek during English language instruction in classroom interactions produced by members of a linguistically and culturally mixed peer group comprised of Greek Turkish bilingual and Greek-speaking monolingual 4th graders, as they interact with their English language teacher, in an Athenian primary school.

In particular, this presentation is supported by an example from the EFL classroom data where one of the Greek-Turkish bilinguals initiates a code-switch to Greek that is received as a marked linguistic choice. By examining how this instance emerges sequentially and interactionally through the different types of frame shifts it triggers, I address the way in which a particular pupil employs Greek to make non-institutional role and identity displays, during EFL instruction.

To analyze this example I make use of the notion of 'interactive frames' understood as a 'definition of what is going on in interaction,

without which no utterance (or movement or gesture) could be interpreted' (Deborah Tannen & Cynthia Wallat 1987[1993]: 59-60) ¹. Since frames are dynamic constructs, they are subject to change. From their part, interactants use linguistic and extra-linguistic cues, such as code-switching, to signal frame shifts or changes.

The setting, the data and the participants

The school where data collection took place is a state-run primary school, in the centre of Athens. The high percentage of Greek/Turkish bilingual children in this school is explained by the settlement of a significant number of Turkish-speaking Greek Muslims of Rom origin, who moved there from Western Thrace, where they form an indigenous religious minority recognized by the Greek state, on the basis of the Lausanne Treaty.

The tape-recorded data used consist of 3 hours of classroom interactions and were collected by the author during her fieldwork, as part of her research degree (January and May 1999). English as a FL is taught in state-run primary schools in Greece from 4th grade onwards. The English language teacher met with the 4th graders twice a week, for one teaching period. Concerning the pupils' level of proficiency in English, at the beginning of the school year, the pupils proficiency in English ranged from children who had never studied English formally before -this group included nearly all the Greek-Turkish bilinguals- to pupils who had had at least two to three years of prior English instruction -this group included all the Greek-speaking monolinguals and one Greek-Turkish bilingual-.

The multi-functionality of Greek

The analysis of the 4th grade English language instruction data demonstrates the prevalence of Greek as the language of instruction, class management and inter-personal communication. In particular, the analysis reveals a high percentage of teacher-led instructional and

¹ Deborah Tannen & Cynthia Wallat, 1987[1993] Interactive Frames and Knowledge Schemas in Interaction: Examples from a Medical Examination/Interview, *Framing in Discourse*, Ed: Deborah Tannen, p. 57- 76

managerial talk in Greek, such as to initiate topics, tasks and activities and closely monitor them by regulating turn-taking, topic/frame development. Simultaneously, the teacher employs Greek to initiate instances of inter-personal talk, such as humour and teasing.

Not surprisingly, similar to teacher-talk, pupil-talk demonstrates a ubiquitous use of Greek. Most of the instructional talk produced occurs in Greek, for instance, pupils ask clarification questions or respond to the teacher's queries in Greek. In addition, the overwhelming majority of inter-personal talk produced, such as humour and teasing, takes place in Greek.

The data: analysis, discussion and concluding remarks

Although Greek remains the primary means of communication during English language instruction, it is not always seen as an unmarked language choice. A case in point is during language drill exercises, where pupils are practicing a particular grammar form. In the following example², Husein, one of the Greek-Turkish bilinguals, is about to complete a drill exercise whose purpose is to select the correct grammar form 'there is/ there are' to go with a picture of a basket with some fruit and construct a sentence in English. Half-way through his sentence, he hesitates, bursts into laughter and code-switches to Greek to complete the sentence (line 3).

1Husein	((in the basket)) there are ..
<i>1Χουσείν</i>	<i>((στο καλάθι)) υπάρχουν ..</i>
2Teacher	there are ..
<i>2Δασκάλα</i>	<i>υπάρχουν ..</i>
3Husein	there are .. ((laughing)) πεπόνια
<i>3Χουσείν</i>	<i>υπάρχουν .. ((γελώντας)) melons</i>
4Τουτζάι	χχχ πεπόνια χχχ πεπόνια λέει χχχ
<i>4Tuncay</i>	<i>hahaha πεπόνια hahaha he said πεπόνια haha</i>

² Transcription conventions: (()) : transcriber's comments; [: overlapping speech; . (...): pause(s); ha(haha): laughter; = : latching; bold: original; italics: translation

5 Νώντας	κυρία .. κυρία να πο;=
5Nondas	Ms .. Ms=
6 Δασκάλα	=πώς θα το πεις Νόντα; .
6Teacher	=how do you say it ((in English)) Nonda? .
7 Nondas	melons
7Νώντας	πεπόνια
8 Teacher	μπράβο Νόντα .
8Δασκάλα	well done Nondas .

Although there is no visual record of the teacher's reaction, one could argue that her lack of response to Husein's contribution as opposed to her scaffolding him (line 2) and the allocation of the next turn to another pupil signals her disagreement with Husein's switch to Greek (line 3). The teacher's reaction suggests that Husein's response is interpreted as an attempt to shift the interactional frame from instruction to play. This appears to be collaborated by the pupils' responses: Tuncay's teasing comments (line 4) and Nondas' bid for the next turn (line 5). Indeed, the interpretation of Husein's code-switching as an attempt to renegotiate the interactional frame is, also, grounded in observations of past classroom interactions, where Husein repeatedly resorts to play to address his lack of knowledge or possible disfluencies in the FL. In effect, the code-switch to Greek is regarded as a marked choice, as the constraints of the language drill demand that pupils use English. It is worth-mentioning that such situational constraints do not seem to apply to the teacher who uses Greek to allocate next turn (line 6) and assess pupil performance (line 8).

From the part of the bilingual pupil, one could claim that, his code-switching to Greek and his attempt to shift the interactional frame from instruction to play illustrates a certain degree of linguistic and socio-cultural dexterity. As Husein does not know or cannot remember the necessary vocabulary item to complete the sentence in English, his switch to Greek gives him the opportunity to shift the other participants' attention from his lack of knowledge to his incongruent answer that temporarily generates commotion and mirth. In this sense, his code-switch may serve as an attempt to save face, maybe not as a 'competent' language learner in the eyes of his teacher but certainly as being capable of producing a good laugh in the eyes of his classmates. As a result, through this code-switching to Greek Husein seems to be highlighting his personal and peer-group identities over his institutional identity of the foreign language learner.

Overall, the data analysis points to the centrality of Greek in FL instruction and its strategic use to make non-institutional identity displays by both pupils and teacher, in the context of bilingual/bicultural classrooms.