

# The Other Within

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## Code-switching Among Primary School Pupils: Three Languages in Contact\*

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### INTRODUCTION

A considerable number of studies have been conducted in the area of code-switching over the years. Code-switching is defined as "the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode" (Heller 1988) and it is considered as a "central part of bilingual discourse" (Appel & Muysken 1987, as in Poulisse & Bongaerts 1994).

Roughly speaking, code-switching among bilingual speakers has been examined from two viewpoints: (a) that of formal syntax focusing on investigating the syntactic constraints to which code-switching is subject (see Halmari 1993); (b) the sociolinguistic perspective of code switching investigating the role with the emphasis on its functions and meaning in the discourse (for example, Auer 1984; Blom & Gumperz 1972; Hymes 1974; Gardner-Chloros 1985, 1991; Gumperz 1982; Li Wei & Milroy 1995; see also an extensive collection of articles on, and anthropological perspectives of, code-switching in Heller 1988).

The aim of this case study is to examine the code-switching practices of bilingual (Turkish- L1 and Greek- L2) primary school pupils learning a foreign language (in this case English) and suggest a discourse-based analytical and interpretive framework that takes into account both macro- and micro-linguistic dimensions of code-switching (cf. Heller 1988; McClure & McClure 1988). In particular, the macro-linguistic parameters include the language practices and preferences concerning language choice of these bilingual speakers as well as their attitudes towards clarification requests. The micro-linguistic parameters include the domain of discourse, the setting, the participants, the topic, and the short-term interactional goals of the speakers negotiated during the on-going interaction.

Consequently, the framework of analysis proposed in this case study draws from the ethnography of speaking (Hymes 1974), conversation analysis (Li Wei & Milroy 1995) and interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz 1982). The

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ethnography of speaking investigates how shared "rules of speaking" guide speakers from various linguistic groups in communicating among themselves and others (Hymes 1974: 62). These "rules of speaking" are based on the sociocultural values and patterns of language choice shared by the members of each linguistic group.

Conversation Analysis, on the other hand, investigates in detail the sequential organization of conversational discourse in order to interpret functions and meanings found locally in the discourse. For this purpose, in examining instances of code-switching, it focuses on the location of alternative language choices in the turn-by-turn organization of the interaction. Lastly, interactional sociolinguistics examines situational factors such as topic, participants and setting as well as other factors such as the degree of familiarity of the speakers or the degree of power and solidarity among the speakers and how these factors interact with the speaker's language choice. In this context, the speaker is seen as a participant in an ongoing interaction who exploits code choices as discourse strategies to signal speaker intentions and interactional goals whether short-term or long-term.

#### THE DATA

The data under investigation were collected by the researcher, a Greek-English bilingual who also speaks Turkish, using two methods: (a) audio-recordings and (b) structured interviews. I was able to audio-record the data while tutoring English and Greek to bilingual Turkish-Greek primary school children as a volunteer tutor for the Volunteer Program of the Municipality of Athens (a non-profit organization based in Athens) in the area of Gazi. The data collected include approximately 24.5 hours of tape-recorded discourse of classroom interactions. Most of these recordings (18.5 hours) are between the researcher and one pupil. The remaining are between the researcher and more than one pupil (6 hours). The data have been collected over a period of eighteen months and transcribed orthographically.

As for the structured interviews regarding the language practices and preferences of these bilingual pupils about language choice as well as their attitudes regarding clarification requests, I conducted them with community members (adults and children), educationalists, psychologists, sociologists and social workers.

#### COMMUNITY PROFILE

Before the data are discussed, based on the theoretical framework briefly referred to earlier, I will describe the Greek Muslim community of Gazi since it provides the social context of this study and has never been studied before from a sociolinguistic perspective. This community which resides in the area of Gazi (that is Kerameikos, Votanikos, Metaksourgio) is estimated in the region of 3,000 to 4,000 people. It is part of a larger Muslim Greek community residing in Attiki (mainly in Drapetsona, Eleusina and in a few other in-

