Code-switching and Code-mixing in Welsh Bilinguals’ Talk – Confirming or Contesting the Boundaries between Languages?

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We should make an effort instead of being someone like "Ooh I'm not gonna learn your language!"

Overview
- Background (the Welsh Context)
- Code-alternation
- Subjects & Data
- Examples
- Conclusions

Percentage of Welsh Speakers 2001
(National Census Figures)

The Nature of Language
Operating within a post-structuralist paradigm:
- the concept of language as a finite and enumerable quantity of discrete languages, each with their own lexis and a delimited set of grammatical structures, must be seen as a socially, culturally and historically contingent construct
- language(s) are rather to be seen as an emergent by-product of embodied social (including linguistic) practices which are continually sedimenting over time

Code-alternation 1
the ‘alternating use of two or more “codes” within one conversational episode’
(Auer 1998: 1)

Code-alternation 2
Sociolinguistic approaches fall into two broad categories
(Stroud 1998: 322):
- Organisational approach: oriented to the management & sequential organisation of conversation, i.e. code-alternation as a contextualisation cue used to signal "what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows" (Gumperz, 1982: 131)
- Identity-oriented approach: oriented to the social identities of speakers and the relationship between speakers (along with the rights and obligations governing those relationships)
**A Typology of Code-alternation**

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  code-alternation
     /  \   /
    /    \ /    \
   unmarked   marked
       \   /  \
        medium

mixed medium

medium repair  medium switching  medium suspension

Revised taxonomy of code-alternation based on Gafaranga & Torras' taxonomy (2002: 19)
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**Mixed Medium**
- “bilingual medium” (e.g. Welsh and English) as a default option
- unmarked choice (i.e. no additional local meaning) (Myers-Scotton 1993)
- code-mixing (e.g. Auer 1999)
- there may be an identifiable pattern of “insertional” or “alternational” mixing (Auer 1999: 315)
- it may (or may not) signal group identity (Auer 1999: 318)

**Medium Suspension**
- code-switching proper
- may be accompanied by “prosodic cues (extra emphasis, preceding pause) and verbal markers (metalinguistic comments, hesitation)” (Auer 1999: 314)
- marked language choice (cues “interactional otherness”)
- “sequential implicativeness of [medium] choice”: returns to previous medium within the interactional sequence

**Subjects & Data**

*Subjects*
- 4 focus groups (4-6 participants in each)
- from one bilingual secondary school in Mid-Wales (17-year-olds)

*Data*
- Focus-group discussions – video recordings
- 3 groups carry out their discussions primarily in Welsh and 1 in English

**Conclusions**

**Confirming or contesting the boundaries between languages?**
- The default informal Welsh spoken by these young people is essentially a mixed medium, characterised by mainly by insertional code-mixing boundaries are therefore only loosely maintained
- However, since code-alternation may also be used as a contextualisation cue (signalling additional meaning), i.e. code-switching, the boundary between a default mixed-medium Welsh and English confirms a boundary

**References**