



Code Switching Between Tagalog and English Languages in Children Younger than Five Years

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Introduction

Code-switching in bilingual speakers is a documented phenomenon whereby a fluent bilingual individual switches between their primary and secondary languages, in an appropriate and understandable manner that can be comprehended by others who speak the same languages (Younas et al. 2014). For simultaneous language learners reared in bilingual homes, this is a common phenomenon that must be considered as normal development.

According to 2010 census data, 2,555,923 Filipinos resided in the U.S., which was a 38.9% increase from 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) with continued expected growth by the time the 2020 census occurs. More than half of these individuals report speaking both Tagalog and English at home.

Bilingual language development requires study from a linguistic, cultural, and developmental perspective in order to provide an evidentiary base for clinical assessment and intervention of bilingual children. There is, however, a paucity of research on normal development of bilingualism and code-switching behaviors across languages. This study addresses this gap, specifically for Tagalog-English simultaneous language learners.

The purpose of this study was to describe Tagalog-English code-switching behaviors in a sample of children under 5 years old reared in the Philippines allowing for a natural observation of code-switching as part of bilingual language development. Specifically we describe:

- 1) the frequency of code-switching behaviors over time;
- 2) the types of code-switches;
- 3) the syntactic structure of code-switches; and,
- 4) the proportion of language content and function categories associated with code-switching.

This study utilizes the, "Filipino Early Language and Child Development Database" (Marzan, 2013) whereby six children participated in 10 to 15 observation sessions from which language samples were transcribed and coded using a form, content, use (Lahey, 1988) framework.

References:
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 - Younas, M., Arshad, S., Akram, K., Faisal, M., Akhtar, M., Sarfraz, K., & Umar, A. (2014). Code-Switching and Code-Mixing A Case of EFL Teachers Affecting L2 Learners' Learning. *Language in India*, 14(6), 518-530.

Sample

Child	# of Language Samples	Mean # of utterances across samples	Mean # of conversational partners across samples
1	16	259.31	4.6
2	15	331.33	5.1
3	10	273.5	3.7
4	11	397.91	4.9
5	14	380.5	3.9
6	12	285.33	3.5

Procedures

A coding system developed for this study was used to identify and describe instances of three types of code-switching patterns (Younas et al., 2014):

- Inter-sentential: occurs between sentences;
- Intra-sentential: occurs within a sentence;
- Tag: adding a chaser in the other language.

The coding system required that syntax (linguistic form) determines base language and consequently, the non-base language switched into.

Instances of code-switching were described in terms of linguistic content and use based on the Lahey (1988) content and function category guidelines.

Discussion

This analysis allowed for description of code-switching behaviors as part of typical development and contribute to the knowledge base on normal bilingual language development, specifically for Tagalog-English simultaneous language learners.

The coding system applied to language samples allowed for a description of code-switching in relation to language form, content, and use, which can be applied to similar datasets, across languages.

Findings about language form include:

MLU increased in participants over time, consistent with normal language development; however, the percentage of code-switched utterances observed did not exceed 25% of total utterances produced. The oldest participants had higher percentages of code-switches per utterance, 17% to 25%, whereas the younger participants did not exceed 12%.

Most instances of code-switching were embedded in utterances which utilized Tagalog syntactic structure.

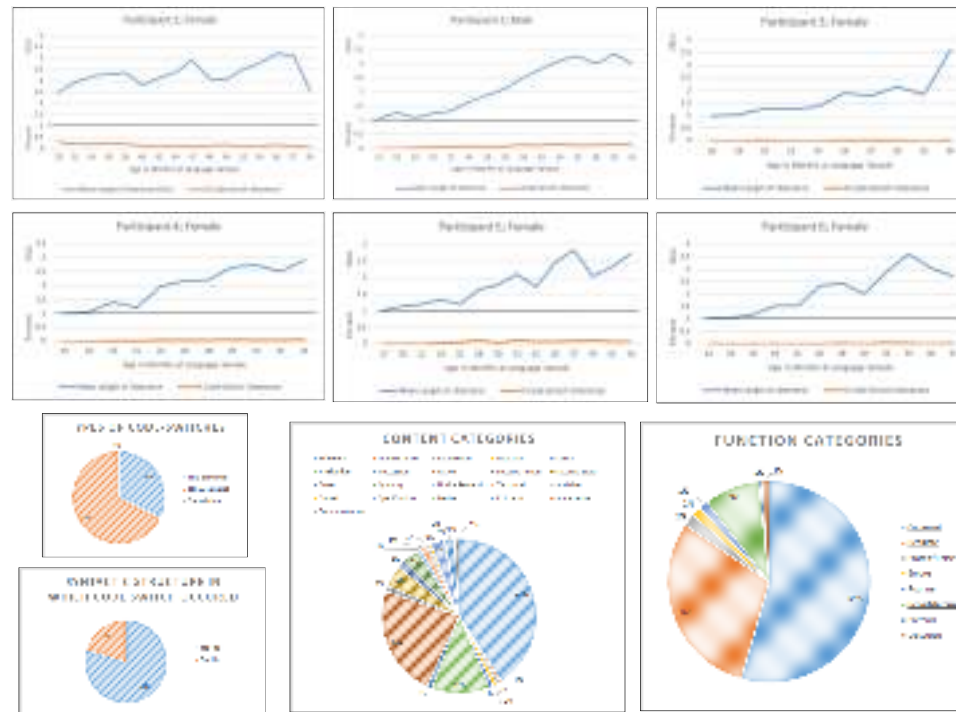
More than half of all the code-switched utterances utilized intra-sentential code-switching (67%) while tags were observed in 1% of instances.

An interesting finding across all 6 participants is the noted increase in code-switching around the age of 28 to 34 months. However, the lack of a consistent pattern suggests that an increase in MLU does not mean more instances of code-switching.

For language content, the most frequently observed content categories where a code-switch occurred included: Existence (41%); Action (23%); and, Attribution (12%), suggesting that content associated with these categories is more often code-switched.

For language use, the most frequently observed function categories where a code-switch occurred included: Comment (54%); Regulate (30%); and, Report/Inform (9%), suggesting that code-switching is more frequently used for these functions.

Results



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