Language separateness: A normative framework in studies of language alternation

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that, for a 'faithful' account of the orderliness of language alternation among bilingual speakers, an attitude of indifference must be adopted inapproaching the data. More specifically, I argue that bilingual speakers cannot be assumed to be 'normatively' speaking either language A or language B. They could also have adopted the use of both languages as the medium (Gafaranga, 1998, 1999, 2000). To demonstrate the need for such an attitude, the paper looks at four of the most influential accounts of language alternation, namely the work of Fishman, Gumperz, Myers-Scotton and Auer. It shows that these accounts fail to capture the orderliness of language alternation because they approach bilingual conversations, not with an attitude of indifference, but from a normative framework whereby every instance of language alternation is defined in terms of language separateness.
Key words: language alternation, language separateness, normative framework.

Resumo

Neste artigo sosterei que para dispormos dun informe ‘fidedigno’ sobre o funcionamento da alternancia de linguas entre falantes bilingües, debemos considerar os datos cunha actitude de indiferencia. Máis concretamente, argumentarei que non podemos asumir que os falantes bilingües falen ‘normativamente’nin a lingua A nin a lingua B. Tamén poden ter adoptado o uso de ámbalas dúas linguas como medio (Gafaranga, 1998, 1999, 2000). Para demostrar a necesidade de tal actitude, neste artigo consideraremos catro das propostas máis influentes sobre a alternancia de linguas, os traballos de Fishman, Gumperz, Myers-Scotton e Auer. Mostraremos que estas propostas non logran captar a mecánica da alternancia de linguas debido a que consideran as conversacións bilingües non cunha actitude de indiferencia, senón desde un marco normativo, de acordo co cal cada caso de alternancia de linguas é definido en termos da diferenciabilidade entre elas.
Palabras clave: alternancia de linguas, diferenciabilidade entre linguas, marco normativo.

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1. Introduction: the problem and its theorical background

A thread of uneasiness among students of language alternation[1] among bilingual speakers is whether that linguistic behaviour should be viewed as consisting of "two codes or one" (Swigart, 1992). One way this uneasiness is expressed is through the debate as to whether, in every bilingual conversation, there is a *base language* and how it can be identified (see Auer 2000 for a discussion). On one hand, for some researchers, the great majority to be sure, *code-switching* is "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to *two grammatical systems or subsystems*" (Gumperz, 1982: 56, my emphasis). In this line of reasoning, because languages are taken to be separate, it makes good sense to ask whether one of the two should be seen as the base language. On the other, authors such as Gardner-Chloros (1995) consider the "discreteness of linguistic systems" in bilingual contexts and in bilingual conversations to be only as a "myth". As a consequence, some researchers (e.g. Meeuwis & Blommaert, 1998) investigate bilingual interaction from the assumption that language alternation is "a variety in its own right". If language alternation is seen as a variety in its own right, it becomes nonsensical to ask whether one of the languages involved is the base code. The issue therefore is which of these two positions leads to a "faithful" account of language alternation, an account which is "true of" the world it accounts for (Sharrock & Anderson, 1986: 17).

My position is that neither of the above positions is adequate in all situations. Sometimes, *language separateness* may be an adequate starting point, but, some other times, it is not. It is for this reason that, in my own work (Gafaranga, 1998, 1999, 2000), I propose to observe bilingual conversations with an *attitude of indifference.* In this paper, I want to show how failure to adopt this attitude leads to 'ironical' accounts of the orderliness of language alternation. Language alternation, like any other social phenomenon, can be approached from either of two positions: it can be approached with an attitude of indifference and it can be approached from a *normative framework*. Therefore, my argument is going to be that any account of language alternation which adopts a normative orientation cannot be "faithful" to bilingual speakers' own language alternation practices.

In this discussion of accounts of language alternation I will draw on insights from ethnomethodology. According to ethnomethodologists, both the world of ordinary everyday members and that of social scientists are equal candidates for investigation. Both can be investigated in order to see how members, common everyday people on one hand and social scientists on the other, accomplish whatever they do in an orderly manner. More specifically, the ethnomethodological position is that, while accounting for *order in social action*, scientists themselves are involved in a specific type of practical social action, with its own discoverable sense of order.

[1] In this paper, I will adopt the term 'language alternation', instead of the more common 'code-switching', to refer to any occurrence of two languages within the same conversation.

As a consequence, the issue for ethnomethodology is whether the orderliness of social action as found in scientists' accounts matches the orderliness that members themselves orient to while accomplishing that action scientists account for. Therefore, my aim in this paper is to describe the orderliness of linguists' accounts of language alternation with a view to see if it is the same as bilingual speakers'own sense of order.

The second insight I will adopt from ethnomethodology is the notion of *social norm*. According to ethnomethodology, order in social action, whether everyday members' social action or scientists' accounts, results from social norms. By social norm, ethnomethodologists mean "a scheme of interpretation" (Garfinkel, 1967), a "grid" by reference to which whatever is done becomes visible, i.e. accountable (Heritage, 1984). Order in social action develops from social norms because whatever is done is either a direct application of an identifiable norm (normative conduct) or an instance of deviance from it (deviant conduct). Furthermore, social norms account for order in social action because, when deviance occurs, members, be they ordinary everyday people or social scientists, engage in "adhocing processes" (Garfinkel, 1967) meant to 'normalise'it. Through those same adhocing processes, members themselves reveal, to one another and to analysts as well, what the relevant norm is (see deviant case analysis in Heritage, 1988). Thus, in a normative framework, deviance is not seen as a challenge for the norm. Rather when deviance occurs, members undertake to accommodate it without "doubting" the norm. A normative framework does not allow any "time out" of the norm. As both the social world of ordinary everyday people and that of social scientists are normative each in its own right, in research, a normative framework may fail to account for the orderliness of the phenomenon it investigates even if it is orderly in itself. In turn, this may take either of two possibilities: a phenomenon is viewed as normative while, for ordinary members, it is deviant or else a phenomenon is seen as deviant while, for members themselves, it is normative. In either case, ethnomethodologists speak of an "ironical" account.

In this paper, I will look at current studies of language alternation in order to "witness" what norm(s) linguists orient to while accomplishing the practical activity of producing accounts of language alternation among bilingual speakers. As I have said above, studies of language alternation among bilingual speakers have been conducted from two main perspectives. On one hand, there is what I may refer to as the *language-separateness paradigm*. In this perspective, the starting assumption is that bilingual conversations are "basically in language A although elements from language B are also present in some way or other" (Auer, 2000: 130). On the other, there is what I may refer to as the *language-alternation-as-a-variety-in-its-own-right paradigm*. In this paradigm, no assumption is made that a bilingual conversation is 'basically' conducted in one language. The alternate use of two languages itself is assumed to be the starting point. To be sure, most current studies have been conducted within the first paradigm. Therefore, in this paper, I will be concerned only with studies which have been conducted within the language-separateness paradigm.

By showing that the problem in those studies is that they are conducted in a normative framework, it will be possible to draw conclusions about problems any perspective may face if it adopts a normative orientation.

Within the language-separateness framework, too many studies are currently available to be covered within the space of a paper. Therefore, I will limit myself to representative ones. These are studies by Gumperz (1982), Auer (1984, 1988, 1995, etc.) and Myers-Scotton (1993). I have decided to look at these three authors because of their outstanding contribution to the study of language alternation. All three have in common the fact that they approach language alternation from a socio-functional perspective. All three are interested in the social dimension of language alternation. However, these authors, drawing on different sociological paradigms, are different in the specifics of their approaches. While Gumperz and Myers-Scotton investigate language alternation from an "identity-related" perspective, Auer adopts a "sequential" perspective (Sebba & Wootton, 1998). Gumperz and Myers-Scotton aim to investigate the "social motivations for codeswitching" (Myers-Scotton, 1993) while Auer proposes "a conversation analytic approach" (Auer, 1988).

2. Language separateness: From a common sense view to a normative framework

The view that languages in a bilingual conversation are separate actually starts from a *common sense* conception of language choice practices. When we come across somebody we have not talked to before, it is customary and therefore polite to enquire about the language(s) they speak. If the answer to such enquiry is 'language A and language B', it is normally taken to mean 'either language A or language B separately', but not 'language A and language B at the same time'. Even if there are occasions when our interlocutor uses both language A and language B simultaneously, this possibility is often not reported.

Further evidence of language separateness as a common sense view of language choice practices can be found in metalanguaging activities researchers refer to as 'explicit' "language negotiation sequences" (Auer, 1995; Codó, 1999; Torras, 1998, 1999). These are sequences during which participants negotiate the "medium" (Gafaranga, 1998, 1999, 2000) of their forthcoming conversation. As extracts 1 and 2 below illustrate, in some cases, participants do not routinely envisage the possibility of using simultaneously all the languages they have access to, but rather the possibility of using one of them at a time. Consider the following exchange from a telephone conversation at a hospital in Montreal (Heller, 1982):

EXTRACT 1[2]

1. Clerk:	*Central booking, may I help you*?
2. Patient:	Oui, allô?
3. Clerk:	Bureau de rendez-vous. Est-ce que je peux vous aider?
4. Patient:	[French]
5. Clerk:	[French]
6. Patient:	[*English*]
7. Clerk:	[*English*]
8. Patient:	[French]
9. Clerk:	[French]
10. Patient:	Êtes-vous française ou anglaise? (Are you French or English?)
11. Clerk:	N'importe, je ne suis ni l'une ni l'autre (It doesn't matter. I'm neither one nor the other).

In the exchange, talk has been conducted in both English and French. However, in turn 10, Patient formulates her uneasiness towards this use of two languages in the same conversation. In other words, she confirms that, for her, orderly talk must be conducted either in English or in French. Also consider the following negotiation sequence recorded in a Scottish pub in Barcelona (Torras, 1999):

EXTRACT 2

1. A:	*Hola* (Hi)
2. B:	*Hola* (Hi) (.) Can I order in English
3. A:	*Si*
4. B:	(orders in English)

Here again, although it would appear that participants have access to both Catalan (italics) and English (plain), the fact that B enquires specifically whether he can order his drink in English reveals that he does not hold the use of both Catalan and English to be a possible option.

This common sense view of language choice was first adopted as a scheme of interpretation in accounts of language alternation among bilingual speakers by Weinreich (1953). According to Weinreich,

> the ideal bilingual switches from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in the speech situation (interlocutors, topic, etc.), but not in an unchanged speech situation and certainly not within a single sentence. (p. 73)

[2] Significant transcription conventions, notably those indicating language contrasts, will be indicated in the text itself. Therefore, I have not felt it necessary to include a separate list of transcription conventions.

That is, according to Weinreich, among bilingual speakers, only one language is used at a time. Accordingly, in this view, the use of two languages within the same conversation would be disorderly, i.e. impossible.

While Weinreich focuses on language choice among bilinguals from the perspective of individual speakers, other researchers have adopted the same principle of language separateness from a community perspective. Top among these is Fishman and his model of *diglossia*. In fact, the model of diglossia had been introduced into the literature by Ferguson (1959) in order to account for what he believed to be a "particular kind of [language] standardisation where *two varieties of a language exist side by side* throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play" (1972: 232, my emphasis). Ferguson argues that diglossia exists in those situations where "in one set of situations only one [variety] is appropriate and in another only the other [variety], with the two sets overlapping only slightly" (1972: 235-236).

Fishman adopts and extends Ferguson's model to cover, not only all monolingual situations, but also all bilingual settings as well. He writes:

> (...) diglossia exists not only in multilingual societies which officially recognise several languages and not only in societies that utilise vernacular and classical varieties, but also in societies which employ separate dialects, registers, or functionally differentiated language varieties of whatever kind. (Fishman, 1972c: 92)

In Fishman, language separateness is conflated into a social norm at three levels. First, at the level of the community, Fishman claims that language separateness is a pre-condition for the existence of bilingualism:

> A speech community maintains its sociolinguistic pattern as long as the functional differentiation of the varieties in its linguistic repertoire is systematically maintained. As long as each variety is associated with a separate class of situations, there are good reasons and established means for retaining them all (...). However, two or more varieties with the same societal function become difficult to maintain and, in the end, one must replace the other or a new functional differentiation must be arrived at between them. (Fishman, 1972b: 51, my emphasis)

Secondly, at the level of practical social action, Fishman holds language separateness or diglossia to be a scheme of interpretation:

> Once established, (...) bilingualism under circumstances of diglossia becomes an ingredient in the situational and metaphorical switching patterns available for the purposes of intra-communal communicative appropriateness.
> (Fishman, 1972c: 97-98)

> (…) without a (...) general norm assigning a particular topic or situation, as one of a class of such topics or situations to one language rather than to another, metaphorical purposes could neither be served nor recognised. (Fishman, 1972a: 28)

That is to say, according to Fishman, in talk, bilingual speakers either keep their languages separate, using each of them in "congruent" situations, or they deviate from this principle. In the latter case, bilingual speakers are said to draw on that same principle of language separateness and alternate between their languages functionally, i.e. to communicate meanings metaphorically.

Finally, the fact that language separateness is used as a scheme of interpretation in Fishman's account of language alternation can be seen in the "elaboration" he suggests for cases which do not seem to fall in neither of the above two categories. These are situations where bilingual speakers can be seen to have used both of their languages in the same conversation "without any obvious motivation" (Labov, 1972). Here is an example from Gafaranga (1998):

EXTRACT 3

Talk takes place in a family setting between two bilingual friends of Rwandese origin in Belgium. They are talking about the mistakes Rwandese authorities have made during the war period (1990-1994).

1. A: ba bata bataye ubutaka bwabo (.) bazarwana *avec*
(they who have lost their land will fight *with*)
2. B: // *pour reconquérir leurs terres*
(// *so as to win back their land*)
3. A: *voilà* (.) ubwo ba ba ba*recruta* aba*jeunes* ibihumbi bitatu
(*that's right* (.) they *recruited* three thousand *youths*)

Given the setting of this interaction, the nature of the relationship between participants and even the topic at hand, there is no obvious reason for participants to have used both French (italics) and Kinyarwanda (plain).

According to Fishman, this kind of language alternation obtains in situations where "(...) no well-established, socially recognised and protected functional differentiation of languages" exists (1972c: 104), i.e. in non-diglossic communities. In such situations, for the lack of norms, members are "particularly inclined to use their mother tongue and the other language for intra-group communication in a seemingly *random fashion*" (pp. 104-105, my emphasis). According to Fishman, this use of two languages is characteristic of "unstable" bilingualism and will hopefully disappear when "a new functional differentiation [has been] arrived at" (1972b: 51) either between the two languages or within one of the two. That is to say, although no functional motivation can be attributed to this type of language alternation, Fishman does not take it to represent a challenge for the principle of language separateness. Rather, that very same principle is used to explain away these apparently problematic cases.

Briefly, language separateness is a common sense view of language choice among bilingual speakers. This common sense view has been adopted by early researchers on language alternation, including Weinreich and Fishman, as a social norm, i.e. as a scheme of interpretation. That is, these early researchers categorise

every instance of language alternation either as a direct application of the principle of language separateness or as an instance of deviance from it. In turn, in the latter case, two situations may be observed. Language alternation is either an instance of functional deviance from language separateness (metaphorical code-switching) or it is an instance of repairable deviance from it (non-ideal bilingual speakers vs. transitional bilingualism). In the rest of this paper, I will focus on research which has specifically investigated the use of two languages within the same conversation in order to see if and to what extent they have overcome this normative framework.

3. Gumperz and the we- / they-codes language separateness

Fishman's account of language alternation as sketched above is based on Parson's action theory. In sociology, an alternative framework is symbolic interactionism. While the former emphasises the role of societal norms, the latter stresses the role of the actor who is seen as conscious and goal-oriented. In studies of language use, symbolic interactionism is represented by Gumperz and his interactional sociolinguistics. A clear evidence of this is the following from Gumperz himself:

> There is a need for a social theory which accounts for the communicative functions of linguistic variability and for its relation to *speakers' goals* without reference to untestable functionalist assumptions about conformity or nonconformance to closed systems of norms. (1982: 29, my emphasis)

In his own words, Gumperz sets out to study the "strategies" participants use to communicate with other participants and these are verbal and non-verbal "contextualisation cues" (chap. 6). Among such cues, according to Gumperz, is the phenomenon he refers to as *code-switching* (see definition above).

The above may sound as if Gumperz and Fishman stood poles apart, but, in fact, both researchers share the same assumption of language separateness in bilingual settings. Gumperz' version of language separateness reads: in bilingual communities, "the tendency is for the ethnically specific, minority language to be regarded as the 'we-code' (...) and for the majority language to be regarded as the 'they-code'" (1982: 66). As a consequence, in speech, as "speakers associate one alternative expression with the casualness or intimacy of home or peer-group relations and the other with the formality of public or out-group relations" (1982: 84), "participants are likely to interpret 'we-code' passages as personalised or reflecting speaker involvement and the 'they-code' passages as indicating objectification or speaker distance" (1982: 83). It is in that sense that, according to Gumperz, the 'direction' of language alternation has a "semantic value" (1982: 93):

> (…) the semantic effect of metaphorical code-switching depends on the existence of a regular relationship between variables and social situations (...). The context in which one of a set of alternates is regularly used becomes part of its meaning so that

> when this form is then employed in a context where it is not normal, it brings in some of the flavour of this original setting. (Blom & Gumperz, 1972: 425)

Drawing on this version of language separateness, Gumperz distinguishes two categories of language alternation, namely "situational" and "metaphorical code-switching" (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). An example of situational code-switching is the following from Torras (1999):

EXTRACT 4
This conversation occurs at an Irish pub in Barcelona between a British waitress (BA2) and two Spanish customers (CU1 and CU2).

1. BA2:	*hello*
2. CU1:	*hello* (.) // eh*:*
3. CU2:	(to CU1) // dues de negra no
4. CU1:	**quieres pequeña o grande** **(would you like it small or large)**
5. CU2:	**grande** **(large)**
6. CU1:	**grande** **(large)**
7. BA2:	mmm mmm
8. CU1:	*eh*: *one big* (.) *one half pint* (.) *for me* (.) // *one half pint for me*
9. BA2:	// *one half pint for you*
10. CU1:	// *and one pint for him*
11. BA2:	// *and one pint*
12. CU1:	*yeah*
13. BA2:	*OK* (.) *Guinness yeah*
14. CU2:	*Guinness*

In this extract, language alternation is situational because participants have moved from using English (italics) to using Castilian (bold) corresponding to the change in the speech situation. English is used while talking to the bar attendant (BA2) and Castilian is used by customers (CU1 and CU2) when they are talking between themselves. As for metaphorical code-switching, it can be illustrated by the following from Gafaranga (1999):

EXTRACT 5
Civil war has just erupted in Zaire and participants (three Rwandese refugees in Belgium) are talking about the consequences this is going to have on Rwandese refugees in that country.

1. A: ubu rero ab (.) [C helping him to wine] buretse (.) abazayuruwa bagiye gutangira ngo (.) **fukuza munyarwanda**
(now Zairians Zair (.) [C helping him to wine] wait a minute (.) Zairians are going to start saying **kick out Rwandese**)

2. B: // *avec raison puisque* turi imbwa
(// *rightly so as* we do not deserve any respect)
3. A: // xxx (laughter) ariko
(// xxx (laughter) but)
4. C: *avec raison* (.) none se none wanzanira ibibazo iwanjye
(*rightly so* (.) if you brought problems to my door)
5. A, B, C: laughter

In this instance, the use of Swahili (bold) in turn 1 can easily be explained in terms of metaphorical meaning. Participant A uses Swahili in reporting Zairians' hypothetical talk. Through language choice in direct speech reporting, speaker A intended to elicit laughter (see turns 3 and 5) by drawing on the association Rwandese make between Zairians and the use of Swahili. In this sense, Swahili can be seen to have been constructed as a 'they-code' in this context.

However, Gumperz' version of language separateness, like any other social norm in social action, is "essentially insufficient" (Heritage, 1984). In extract 5 above, for example, assuming that Kinyarwanda (plain) is the 'we-code'among these bilingual Rwandese, it is not clear what metaphorical functions the use of French (italics) would have been intended to mean. In Gumperz, as in Fishman, this type of language use is not seen as a challenge for the version of language separateness he is working with. Rather, an attempt is undertaken to account for deviance in terms of the norm. Referring to this type of language use as *conversational code-switching*, Gumperz says that it obtains in contexts where "individuals live in situations of rapid transition, where traditional inter-group barriers are breaking down and norms of interaction are changing" (1982: 64). It "occurs in conditions of change where speakers' ethnic identities and social background are not matters of common agreement" (p. 70). That is, in Gumperz as in Fishman, the hope is that, once society has stabilised again, language separateness will be strictly adhered to.

At this juncture, it is important to highlight the inadequacy of the elaborations proposed by Fishman and Gumperz as accounts of order in language choice among bilingual speakers, especially as regards the frequent use of two languages within the same conversation. As it might have been gathered from the discussion above, both authors' accounts are meant to preserve the norm. In both cases, language alternation is explained away in terms of change in progress. While language alternation may or may not indeed be an indication of on-going societal changes, such an explanation leaves the issue of order in language alternation, as practical social action, untouched. As ethnomethologists tell us, without order, social action is impossible. On the other hand, Fishman's and Gumperz'explanation is that, in those cases where no functional motivation can be found, language alternation is disorderly. The issue therefore is how the possibility of this type of talk, i.e. its orderliness, can be accounted for. Whether this specific type of language use will or will not be observed in the future (when society has stabilised), the issue of how it is possible in the present remains.

4. Myers-Scotton and the markedness model of code-switching

One of Myers-Scotton's major contributions to the study of language alternation is that she has explicitly sought to tackle the problem of frequent language alternation in bilingual interaction. Myers-Scotton's version of language separateness is summarised in her concept of *markedness metric*. Speaking of this metric, Myers-Scotton writes:

> Speakers have a tacit knowledge of this indexicality [each language indexes a specific set of rights and obligations] as part of their communicative competence. They have a natural theory of markedness. The result is that all speakers will have mental representations of a matching between code choices and rights and obligations sets. That is they know that for a particular conventionalised exchange, a certain choice will be the unmarked realisation of an expected rights and obligations set between participants. (1988: 152)

This general framework allows Myers-Scotton to propose four main types of language alternation, namely sequential unmarked code-switching, code-switching itself as an unmarked choice, code-switching as a marked choice and code-switching as an exploratory choice. Meeuwis & Blommaert (1995) have amply discussed this framework, pointing out, among other things, issues regarding the lack of systematicity in the above categorisation. In this section, I will mainly be interested in the category of code-switching as an unmarked choice (*unmarked code-switching* for short) for, as the discussion in the last two sections shows, here is where models of language alternation based on language separateness experience difficulties.

Some of the examples we have looked at in the previous sections can be used to illustrate how the markedness model of code-switching works. In extract 4 for example, the orderliness of language choice can be easily explained in terms of the markedness metric. In the extract, the choice of English in the part of the interaction which involves the British bar attendant is unmarked, i.e. could have been expected. Similarly, the choice of Castilian by customers is normative for it would have been marked for Spanish friends to use English among themselves. In extract 1, on the other hand, the problems participants have had to solve can be accounted for in terms of the same markedness metric. In the Canadian context, it is unmarked (i.e. normal) to accommodate the language preference of the interlocutor. In the extract, because participants do not know each other's preference, they locally negotiate it. In extract 2, the customer's request to use English can be understood in terms of the lack of a previously shared markedness metric. This is a first time encounter. As a consequence, participants need to negotiate locally which language to use now. Finally, the choice of Swahili in extract 5 can be accounted for in terms of marked code-switching. Among Rwandese, Swahili is not an expectable choice. Therefore, its use leads to interactionally relevant inferences.

Since, in bilingual communities, particular language choices are "indexical" of particular "rights and obligations sets", Myers-Scotton's version of language separateness can easily account for participants' work in realising intersubjectivity.

Here is an example from Myers-Scotton's own data:

EXTRACT 6
Talk takes place on board a bus in Nairobi. Participants, the bus conductor and a passenger, come from the same region of Kenya where Lwidakho (plain) is used. In Nairobi, Swahili (bold) is the language often used in public settings.

1. Passenger: (speaking in a loud voice and addressing the conductor) Mwana were, vugula khasimoni khonyene
(*dear brother, take only fifty cents*)
[laughter from other passengers – no response from the conductor]
2. Passenger: Shuli mwana wera mbaa
(*aren't you my brother*?)
3. Conductor: **apana** ...**mimi si ndugu wako, kam ungekuwa ndungu wangu ningekijua kw jina** …**lakini sasa sikujui wala sikufahumu**
(*I am not your brother. If you were my brother, I would know you by name. But I don't know you or understand you*)
4. Passenger: **Nisaidie tu bwana** …**Maisha ya Nairobi imeshinda kwa sababu bei ya kila kitu imeongezwa** …**mimi ninaketi Kariobang'I pahali ninapolipa pesa nyingi sana kwa nauli ya basi**
(*Just help me mister. The cost of living in Nairobi has defeated me – the price of everything has gone up – I live at Kariobang'I – the bus fare to get there is very high*)
5. Conductor: **Nimecukua peni nane pekee yake**
(*I have only taken eighty cents*)
6. Passenger: <u>Thank you very much</u> …**Nimeshukuru sana kwa huruma ya huyu ndugu wango**
(*I am very grateful for the pity you have showed me, my brother*)

Drawing on the association between Lwidakho and coming from a particular region of Kenya on one hand and that between Swahili and public settings and social distance on the other, participants have used language choice to negotiate whether to interact either as 'brothers' (coming from the same region) or as strangers.

As we have already seen, all the cases I have just discussed can also be accounted for in terms Fishman's and Gumperz' versions of language separateness. The issue therefore is whether Myers-Scotton's framework overcomes the problems these other perspectives were shown to face, whether it provides a "faithful" account of all instances of language alternation. As we have seen, problems in these perspectives result from the fact that language separateness is adopted as a social norm, i.e. from the fact that these perspectives are normative in nature. Concerning the category of language alternation Myers-Scotton refers to as unmarked code-switching, she states that it is adopted when participants

> (...) are not satisfied with either the identity associated with speaking [one language] or that associated with speaking [the other] alone when they are conversing with

> each other. Rather, they see the rewards in indexing both identities for themselves. (...) Thus, code-switching becomes their unmarked choice for making salient simultaneously two or more positively evaluated identities. (1993: 122)

According to Myers-Scotton, in unmarked code-switching, "each switch (...) does not necessarily have a special indexicality, rather it is the overall pattern which carries communicative intention" (1993: 117). Thus, in extracts 3 and 5, the use of both French and Kinyarwanda can be explained, not in terms of the functions of specific instances of language alternation, but in terms of the overall pattern of using both languages.

An important difference between Myers-Scotton and the other researchers whose work I have reviewed above is that, unlike Fishman and Gumperz, she makes an effort to account for frequent language alternation in the same conversation from a synchronic perspective. As we have seen, in Fishman and Gumperz, language alternation is seen as an indication of societal changes in progress. In Myers-Scotton on the other hand, language alternation is explained in terms of current sociolinguistic situation in the community. However, despite that difference, Myers-Scotton's framework too is normative, does not allow any "time out" of language separateness. Faced with a situation where language separateness does not obtain, Myers-Scotton advocates an adhocing process which, to simplify somewhat, may be equated with a simple mathematical rule of addition. According to Myers-Scotton, each of the languages involved in language alternation is associated with a particular identity on the level of the community. As a consequence, in using both languages, speakers make "salient simultaneously both identities". In other words, according to Myers-Scotton, frequent language alternation is not a challenge for, a "time out" of, the norm.

Myers-Scotton's normative framework presents a particular difficulty as regards the orderliness of language alternation. According to the markedness model, some language choices are unmarked in some situations and some other choices are unmarked in some other situations. Here one can speak of normative conduct on the part of participants. In the case of unmarked code-switching, participants'conduct is said to be normative, not in itself, but with reference to the choices speakers make in different contexts. That is to say, according to Myers-Scotton, unmarked code-switching is in reality deviant conduct. This view is even explicitly stated through Myers-Scotton's notion of *matrix language*. According to Myers-Scotton (1995: 237), the matrix language is "the language which is the *more unmarked* (...) for the interaction type in which code-switching occurs" (1995: 237, my emphasis). She refers to this as the sociolinguistic basis of the matrix language. In other words, in those contexts where unmarked code-switching is used, normative conduct would be to choose the matrix language. Language alternation can be seen as unmarked, i.e. as normative language choice, only for all practical purposes.

This view of unmarked code-switching as deviant, as unmarked only for all practical purposes, is actually inconsistent with Myers-Scotton's own other claims.

As frequently reported in the literature, among bilinguals, this type of language alternation is very frequent. This is consistent with Myers-Scotton's claim that "unless accepting the unmarked RO set is especially onerous, the speaker will take the 'safe' course and make the unmarked choice" (1993: 115). That is, the model predicts that the most unmarked choices, like any other normative conduct, will be the most frequent. As I have indicated, according to Myers-Scotton, in those contexts where frequent language alternation is observed, the matrix language is the most unmarked choice. Therefore, it is not clear why, in reality, the least unmarked choice, language alternation, turns out to be the most frequent.

Briefly, Myers-Scotton's account of language alternation goes someway towards explaining different aspects of bilingual speakers' linguistic behaviour, but it also reveals important shortcomings. Not only does the markedness model show some internal inconstencies, i.e. is lacking in terms of its own orderliness as practical social action, but also it is not faithful to the reality it attempts to account for. It presents some instances of bilingual speakers' conduct as deviant while, in reality, they are not. More specifically, it predicts frequent language alternation, like any other instance of deviant conduct, to be rare while, in reality, it is very common.

5. Auer and the sequential analysis of language alternation

Gumperz' and Myers-Scotton's accounts of language alternation as discussed in the last two sections are conducted from a community perspective. In these frameworks, the meaning of language alternation is said to derive from community's patterns of language use. Auer rejects these community-based accounts and argues that "any theory of code-alternation is bound to fail if it does not take into account that the meaning of code-alternation depends in essential ways on its sequential environment" (1995: 116). Thus, his perspective is known as "a sequential approach" (1995). Furthermore, he holds his account to be "faithful" to the world it accounts for since he says that he investigates "members'(own) procedures to arrive at local interpretation of language alternation" (1984: 3).

Auer summarises his overall framework in the following:

> (...) in many bilingual communities, there is *preference for same language talk*, code-switching (...) runs counter to this preference.–which of course only heightens its signalling value– while transfer is neutral vis-à-vis questions of negotiating the language-of-interaction. (1984: 28-29, my emphasis)

According to Auer, it is on the basis of this preference for same language talk that language alternation makes sense both for analysts and for participants themselves (1984: 28). However, Auer seems to be aware of the limits this preference would face if it were adopted as a normative framework. As a consequence, after he has formulated the general principle, he goes on to add:

> (...) if more than one participant frequently switch languages within turns (...), it becomes less and less relevant to speak of a language-of-interaction forming the background against which instances of language alternation must be seen. (1984: 84)

In this case, he says, there is "no code-alternations any longer: it is a *new code*" (1991: 343, my emphasis) "with rules and regularity of its own" (1984: 9). That is to say, Auer's work opens up the possibility of a "time out" of the normative framework of language separateness.

Auer's principle of preference for same language talk, together with the possibility of viewing language alternation itself as the code speakers are using, can account for language choice in all the extracts I have already discussed. In extract 1, language alternation is experienced as a problem because it deviates from the above principle of preference for same language talk. Similarly, in extract 2, the customer's request reflects an orientation to the same principle. In extract 4, the principle applies because, at each stage, participants are using one language, namely Castilian among customers and English between customers and the bar attendant. In 6, preference for same language talk has led to the consecutive use of Lwidakho and Swahili. On the other hand, in extracts 3 and 5, the choice of French and Kinyarwanda can be understood as an instance of the "new code". Even, in 5, the choice of Swahili can be explained in terms of 'transfer', i.e. in terms of functional deviance from the 'base code', in this case the alternate use of French and Kinyarwanda.

However, a recent move by Auer (2000) seems to undermine the potential of his approach as I have summarised it above. In a recent paper, Auer revisits the concept of the 'base language'and raises the question of whether it is always possible to tell which of the two languages involved in language alternation is the 'base language'. Precisely because, as Auer himself states in his earlier work (see above), in some cases, language alternation itself is the code participants are using, he comes to the conclusion that it is not always possible to tell the base language of a bilingual conversation. At this juncture, a respecification of the issue was necessary. As I have indicated elsewhere (Gafaranga, 2000), the issue is, not which of the languages involved in language alternation is the base language, but rather which medium, i.e. which code, speakers are using and whether it is monolingual or whether it is bilingual. Instead, Auer writes:

> (…) I want to argue that rather than dealing with language choice on the macroscopic level of the base language of a whole episode or a major part of it, and rather than separating code-choice (of the base language) and code-switching (below it), *we should look at language choice on a turn-by-turn basis level* in order to do justice to bilingual participants' conversational practices. This means describing and explaining patterns of conversational code choice on a local basis, i.e. by *analysing speakers' language choices for one particular turn or turn constructional unit* with reference to the language choices directly or indirectly preceding it, as well as in their consequences for language choice in the turns to follow. (2000: 137, my emphasis)

In the above, Auer restates the legitimate and indeed robust procedure of warranting claims about language alternation by means of participants' own orientation to it. However, the details of the statement are worrying. The idea that it would be possible to determine the nature of language alternation by looking at turns and turn constructional units seems to take us back to Gumperz' claim that, in some cases, the mere juxtaposition of languages can force interpretation (1982: 83). Obviously, for languages to be juxtaposed, they must be seen as separate in the first place.

Two problems can be detected in the local analysis Auer seems to suggest. To start with, there is a theoretical problem. A turn component-by-turn component analysis does not necessarily reflect participants' own methods. More specifically, such a view is based on a rather extreme conception of sequentiality in language choice. As revealed in "language negotiation sequences", while talking, bilingual participants orient to a sense of overall order on the level of language choice. If a turn component-by-turn component analysis were participants' own method, language negotiation sequences would be pointless, each choice having to be negotiated locally when it occurs. In other words, the risk for Auer's approach is to present bilingual conversations as if they lacked any sense of overall order, as if they were disorderly. The issue of whether a bilingual conversation consists of "two codes or one" belongs, not to the level of turns and turn-components, but rather to the level of the overall order of talk organisation.

Secondly, there is a practical problems. That seemingly sequential choices are observed does not mean they are real, that they are oriented to by participants themselves as different choices. If language alternation itself has been adopted as the medium (Gafaranga, 1999, 2000), i.e. in the case language alternation is a "new code", whole stretches of talk can occur in the same language and seem to contrast with previous choices. Consider extract 3. At the end of turn 1, participant A seems to be departing from the immediately preceding use of Kinyarwanda. In turn 2, participant B seems to be "following the leader" (Zentella, 1982) and using French. At the beginning of turn 3, participant A seems to ratify B's choice of French. That is, up to this point, one may think that participants have adopted a new medium. However, right after in the same turn, participant A himself goes on to use both French and Kinyarwanda. In other words, although a strictly sequential analysis would suggest that, at some point participants have switched from using one code to using the other, it is not clear why they would have done so. On the other hand, if language choice in the sequence is looked at within the overall order of talk on the level of language choice, it becomes clear that, for participants, nothing note-worthy has occurred. Participants are using both French and Kinyarwanda as the medium and alternation between the two languages can normatively occur within turns and between turns, can consist of single words or of longer stretches of talk. In other words, a turn-by-turn analysis which does not take account of the overall order of talk may be misleading. To avoid the issue of the overall order of bilingual conversation

simply because it is impossible to handle it within a language-separateness framework reflexively reveals analysts' commitment to language separateness.

Briefly, Auer's approach to language alternation offers an interesting way out of the language separateness normative framework. It caters for the possibility of using two languages normatively. It is following from this opening that, as I have argued elsewhere, bilingual conversations must to be approached indifferently in order to discover whether a particular instance is an instance of language separateness or whether it is not. However, there is a risk for Auer's more recent ideas to be seen as a reinterpretation of language separateness. As these new ideas are still to be implemented, I can only warn against adopting them as evidence of the adequacy of the language separateness normative framework.

6. Summary and conclusion

The phenomenon of language alternation has been approached from a variety of perspectives. However, despite that diversity, a general feeling is that they do not provide a "faithful" account of bilingual speakers'conduct. More specifically, there is a general debate as to whether, in language alternating, speakers should be seen as 'basically'using 'two codes or one'. As I have said, my position is that it can be either one or the other. In this paper, I have looked at one side of the argument, namely the line of research according to which, in language alternation, the languages involved can be seen as two separate entities. I have shown that, although language separateness can allow analysts'to account for some instances of language alternation, it does not cater for all instances. Therefore, my argument has been that current accounts of language alternation fail to account for the totality of the data, not because they start from the assumption of language separateness, but because they use language separateness as a normative framework.

In the paper, I have looked at the work of four main authors in some detail. These are Fishman, Gumperz, Myers-Scotton and Auer. I have shown that the work of the first three, although it draws on different sociological approaches, shares a strong normative orientation. In all three cases, language separateness allows analysts to categorise instances of language alternation either as direct application of language separateness or as deviance from it. In all three, deviance from language separateness is not felt to be a challenge for the norm, but rather an opportunity to re-assert it through "secondary elaborations" (Garfinkel, 1967). As I have shown, Gumperz' and Fishman's elaboration is that frequent language alternation is evidence of societal changes in progress. It is that, once society has stabilised again, speakers will display language separateness in their conduct. The problem with this type of account, as I have noted, is that it side-steps the issue of the orderliness of language alternation as it is observed in the present. And it is in that sense that Myers-Scotton's elaboration can be seen as a step forward. However, Myers-Scotton's elaboration was found to side-step the issue of the orderliness of language

alternation in a different fashion. Although it does not place that order in a different temporal dimension, it situates it in a different socio-spatial context. The orderliness of language is said to derive from what speakers do in contexts other than the one they are currently engaged in.

Of the four authors mentioned above, I have argued that Auer offers the best alternative to the normative framework of language separateness. Auer's work represents a "time out" of the language-separateness normative framework for he explicitly says that language alternation can be a code in its own right. As a consequence, language alternation need not be understood in terms of deviance from language separateness. However, I have also warned that Auer's recent ideas may be rightly or wrongly construed as a reinterpretation of language separateness. These ideas are that language alternation can be investigated on a turn component-by-turn component basis. I have shown that this view fails to account for speakers'own need for an overall sense of order at the level of language choice. The possibility for bilingual speakers to adopt language alternation itself as the code is not a matter of the local order; rather it is a matter of the overall order. That is to say, the possibility for language alternation not to be seen as an instance of deviance from language separateness cannot be captured by looking at turns and turn constructional units, but rather by investigating language choice at the level of the overall order of talk organisation.

Where do we go from here? As I have said in the introductory section, two lines of research have so far been followed, although unequally. I have referred to these lines of research as the language-separateness paradigm and the language-alternation-as-a-variety-in-its-own-right-paradigm. This discussion of the language-separateness paradigm allows me to draw one general conclusion, namely the need to refrain from any normative framework in approaching language alternation. Language alternation may be an instance of deviance from language separateness, but it may also be a code in its own right. Therefore, as Alvarez-Cáccamo (1998) argues, in order to determine the status of a specific instance of language alternation, it is necessary to be clear about the code, not the language, participants are currently using. In turn, this is possible only if bilingual conversations are observed indifferently, i.e. away from any normative framework.

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