

Social Motivations and Developments of English/German Code-Switching Patterns:

Formal and Functional Analysis of L1 German Speakers' Language Practices

'Code-switching' is a linguistic phenomenon that frequently occurs in the speech of bi- or multilingual speakers and has been thoroughly researched, especially in the field of sociolinguistics. 'Code-switching'- that is, the juxtaposition of various linguistic units such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences which belong to at least two varieties of language co-occurring within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent – is said to take different forms and fulfill numerous socio-pragmatic functions (cf. Poplack 1980: 581, 600–602; Gumperz 1982: 75–80; Fought 2006: 25; Bullock and Toribio 2009: 10; Gardner-Chloros 2009: 42; Wei 2013: 43). A prominent formal distinction is made between 'intersentential' and 'intrasentential' code-switching, in which switches occur either across sentence boundaries or within a single sentence (cf. Myers-Scotton 1993: 480). Among frequently ascribed socio-pragmatic code-switching functions are the expression of speakers' bi- or multilingual identities, the expression of humor and jokes, emphasis, and group-identity marking, for instance. This paper examines the social motivations and developments of English/German code-switching patterns in the discourse of three L1 German speakers with different linguistic backgrounds, who exchanged WhatsApp messages. The results concur with prior findings (cf. Poplack 1980: 581, 601; Montes-Alcalá 2001: 198–210; Fought 2006: 25; Auer and Eastman 2010: 98; Wei 2013: 43) and show that English/German code-switching seems to become conventionalized in the speech of L1 German speakers. The three speakers produced more inter- than intrasentential switches, and primarily code-switched for idiomatic expressions, the expression of their bi-/multilingual identities, the expression of emotions, and out of lexical need. It should be considered that the findings of this study are based on a subjective research method. Since few researchers have investigated the kind of English/German code-switching that was found in the examined data set, further research on the forms and functionality of English/German code-switching is needed. Lastly, this study demonstrates that using WhatsApp chats as linguistic data is a valid alternative to other methods such as sociolinguistic fieldwork.

References

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