Code-switching: Amharic-English

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# Abbreviations

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<td>2nd person singular</td>
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<td>3FS</td>
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<td>3MS</td>
<td>3rd person singular</td>
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Abstract
This paper addresses different issues in related with Amharic-English code-switching. Amharic is SOV language, whereas English is SVO language.

Since Ethiopia is a multilingual country, code-switching is obviously known between different language speakers. Especially the educated people is mostly switch a code to English while speaking Amharic. And Amharic is serving as a lingua franca and the working language of the federal government for this multilingual nation-Ethiopia. Therefore, some linguistic issues in Amharic-English code-switching are raised in this paper.

Key words:
Interjection
Inter-sentential code-switching
Intra-sentential code-switching
Reiteration
The matrix language
1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to give some information about Amharic-English code-switching. Code-switching is switching a language between bilingual or multilingual speakers in a single conversation. This may occur when bilingual or multilingual speakers substitute a word or phrase from one language with a phrase or word from another language. “Code switching is defined as the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction.” (Nilep, 2006:1)

Code-switching is commonly practiced in bilingual and multilingual communities. This is because when languages are in contact they may influence one another. This switching may occur in syntax, phonology and morphology. “Code switching can be described as a means of communication which involves a speaker alternating between one language and the other in communicating events.” (Taiwo & Taiwo, 2009:2). According to Kiranmayi, N.C (2010) code-switching is mixing more than one language by bilinguals or multilinguals in a discourse. Code-switching is existing between two or more bilingual or multilingual speakers. When they are speaking together they may use different languages in alternative way. Someone may code-switches using two different languages (Interlingua) or different dialects of the same language (intralingua) interchangeably in a single communication.

Code-switching may occur in different linguistic aspects in both conversational functions and structural aspects like to indicate a direct quotation, reported speech, interjection, reiteration, message qualification, referential and idiomatic expressions, content and system morpheme distinction, syntactic categories and frequency of switched segments, universal constraints, etc. Some of them are as follows:

2. Intra-sentential code-switching

In intra-sentential code-switching, speakers switch from one language to another within the same sentence. (Kebeya, 2013; Boztepe, 2003; Kesraoui, A.B, 2016-17). In intra-sentential code-switching we can’t make a clear boundary between sentences of the two different languages, because the two languages are mixed in every place of the sentence. Look at the following examples for a better understanding about it:
1. “bet wəst' oromŋna wətʃ' kə-gʷaddəŋ-otʃf-e gar mənəmən
   house in Afan-Oromo out with-friend-PL-my with something
dəmmə ‘mix’ bə-m-adrəg ‘especially’ ?amarŋna-n ənna
whereas mix by-to-do especially Amharic-Acc. and
oromŋna-n nəw s-tə'ak'kəm jə-nəbbər-əw’”
Afan Oromo-Acc. is Prog.-use-1S that-was-Obj.

‘At home, I spoke in Afan-Oromo while I communicate with my friends outside of home, I use
especially Afan- Oromo and Amharic by mixing.’

2. ‘university’ sə-təmmnar ‘academic’ rasu ‘influence’ j-adərg-h-all
   University that-learn-2MS academic itself influence 3MS-do-2MS-Aux.

‘When you are learning in a University, the academic activity itself influences you.’

3. lə-kʷaŋkʷa ‘expose’ əŋdəttə-hon j-adərg-all
to-language expose 2MS-being 3MS-do-Aux.

   ‘It makes you be exposed to the language.’

4. ‘especially’ əŋglizŋna kʷaŋkʷa əŋdəttə-wər-a ‘or’ dəmmə satt-assəb-əw
   especially English language 2MS-talk-2MS or whereas Neg.- think-2MS
‘knowingly’ ‘or’ ‘unknowingly’ ‘by default’ əŋglizŋna jə-tə-kəlak'kəl-ə-bət
knowingly or unknowingly by default English that-2MS-mix-3MS-Aux.
?amarŋna nəw jə-mmətt-awər-əw
Amharic is that-2MS-talk-2MS

   ‘Knowingly or unknowingly, you are talking either in English or in Amharic
language with mixed English.’

5. ‘basically’ əhun ‘indigenous’ sibb-al jə-ras-ətʃfín jə-hon-ə
   basically now indigenous which-says-Aux. who-self-1PL that-be-3MS
malət nəw ənə ‘understand’ əŋdəmə-ma-dərg-əw
mean is I understand as-1S-do-Obj.

   “Basically, I think indigenous means something which is originating locally.”

6. itiopə-də directly əŋglizŋna speaker əjdəllətʃfim
Ethiopia directly English speaker is-not-3FS

   “Ethiopia is not a direct English speaker country.”
The examples are typical Amharic structure, but the quoted English words are used within the Amharic sentences.

3. Inter-sentential code-switching

“Inter-sentential code-switching is switching from one language to another at a sentence boundary.” Anwar (2007:3). As it is shown in the following examples, the two languages are switched inter-sententially, i.e. there is a clear boundary between the two languages.

7. ləkk həzb kə-mmi-k'ə-bbə-l-əh wət'a ja-l-ə nəgər
   just people Pp.-3MS-accept-3MS-Obj. to-out that-is-3MS matter
   malət nəw ‘it is unacceptable behavior’
   mean is it is unacceptable behavior
   ‘Just it is unique, which is unacceptable by the community.’

8. mə-k'ə-bəl-əmm all-ə alə-mə-k'ə-bəl-əmm all-ə ‘it is based on condition’
   to-accept-Conj. there-is Neg.-to-accept-Conj. there-is ‘it is based on condition’
   ‘There is either an acceptance or not, it is based on the condition.’

9. ləmn ʔəmarənə jə-mmə-awk'u-t orənən aj-awk'u-m
   Why Amharic Pp.-3MS-know-3PL-Obj-3MS Affan Oromo Neg.-know-3PL-Neg.
   ‘Why don’t they speak Affan Oromo’
   ‘Why not Amharic speakers speak Affan Oromo’

10. ʔəlləbab-əs-atʃfin jə-mmə-awə-an-u ʔəlləbab-əs jə-bahl
    wearing-Nom.-1PL of-west-adj.-PL-Art. wearing-Nom. of-culture
    təs'əno nəw ‘it is very difficult’
    influence is ‘it is very difficult’
    ‘Our wearing style is very difficult because of the influence of western culture.’

11. ʔən orənən kʷankʷa gudət jə-lellə-k-ət ənna hassab-e-n
    but Affan Oromo language problem that-Neg.-has-3MS-Obj. and idea-my-Acc.
    məmm sal-jərarr-əf məgələs' ənə孖-3MS-tʃl jəgəb-ənə-all ‘have no any problem’
    nothing Neg.-nibble-1S to-express as-to-can-1S which-understand-Aux. ‘have no any problem’
    ‘But I know that Affan Oromo have no any problem and can express any idea in a good way.’

In the above examples, the switch is at the end of each sentence. According to Taiwo, E. & Taiwo, R. (2009:3), in inter-sentential code-switching the switching occurs after the first language’s
sentence is completed and the next sentence starts with a new language. And also the two languages (Amharic and English) are clearly bounded in a separate way without mixed up each other as shown in all the above examples.

4. English noun + Amharic plural marker

12. ‘style’-otʃtʃ
   style-PL
   ‘Styles’
13. ‘word’-otʃtʃ
   word-PL
   ‘Words’
14. ‘meaning’-otʃtʃ
   meaning-PL
   ‘Meanings’
15. ‘teacher’- otʃtʃ
   teacher-PL
   ‘Teachers’
16. ‘idea’-wotʃtʃ
   idea-PL
   ‘Ideas’
17. ‘summary’-wotʃtʃ
   Summary-PL
   ‘summaries’
18. ‘banana’ - wotʃtʃ
   banana-PL
   ‘bananas’

In the above examples, the Amharic plural markers (otʃtʃ) and (wotʃtʃ) are attached with the English nouns. In Amharic language, there are two basic plural markers, which are (otʃtʃ) and (wotʃtʃ). If the last symbol is the 6th order, the plural marker would be (otʃtʃ) whereas if it is other than the 6th order it would be (wotʃtʃ). In (12), (13), (14) and (15), since the last symbols are the 6th orders which are (lɘ), (dɘ), (gɘ), and (rɘ) respectively, the plural marker is (otʃtʃ) however in (16), (17) and (18) since the last symbol is not the 6th order, i.e. (ja), (ri) and (na) the plural marker is
In all examples, the switched English morphemes are free morphemes whereas the plural markers of the Amharic morphemes are bound morphemes. In Amharic it is possible to switch a code when the Amharic bound morpheme is attached to an English free morpheme. But it is impossible when an English bound morpheme is attached to the Amharic free morpheme. No Amharic-English bilinguals switch English bound morphemes into the Amharic free morphemes, as the following examples.

19. səlt-‘s’
   style-PL
   ‘Styles’
20. k’al-‘s’
   word-PL
   ‘words’
21. fəʃʃi-‘s’
   meaning-PL
   ‘Meanings’
22. məmhrə-‘s’
   teacher –PL
   ‘teachers’
23. hassab-‘s’
   idea-PL
   ‘Ideas’
24. mat’t’ək’alʒa-‘s’
   summary-PL
   ‘summaries’
25. muz-‘s-
   banana-PL
   ‘bananas’

5. **English noun + Amharic article**

26. ‘word’-u
   word-Art.
   ‘The word’
27. ‘potential’-u
potential-Art.
‘The potential’
28. ‘people’-u
People-Art
‘The people’

In (26), (27) and (28), the Amharic Def. Art. (u) is attached with the English nouns ‘word’, ‘potential’ and ‘people’.

6. English noun + Amharic verb

29. ‘peer pressure’ all-3
Peer pressure there-is
“There is a peer pressure.”

30. ‘blood relation’ all-3
blood relation there-is
‘There is blood relation.’

31. jër-ma-lət ‘probability’ all-3w
which-to-say probability has-3MS
‘He has the probability to say something.’

32. lə-mənəmm ‘purpose’ ajdəlləmm
for-nothing purpose is-not
‘It is not for any purpose.’

33. ‘comfort’ aj-sət’-əh-əmm
comfort Neg.-give-2MS-Neg.
‘It doesn’t give you comfort.’

Here, the English nouns are attached with the Amharic verbs.

7. Adverb level switching

34. ‘even’ amerika-wi-jən jə-ras-atʃəfin nəw lil-u jə-tʃil-all-u
even America-Adj.-PL of-self-1PL is to-say-3MS-3PL 3MS-maybe-Aux.-3PL
‘The Americans even want to take it for themselves.’
35. ‘may be’ ëne mɘŋdɘn nɘw ma-ssɘb-3w
   maybe I what is 1S-think-Obj.
   ‘Maybe, what I think is.’
36. ëne ‘personally’ al-adɘrɘm
   I personally Neg.-do-1S-Neg.
   ‘Personally, I don’t want to do.’

In the above examples, the English adverbs are attached with the Amharic sentences.

8. Adjective level switching

37. hullumm wɘdɘ ‘relative’ jɘ-mɘ-t’ɘgat sɘmmet all-3w
   all to relative that-to-close feeling has-3MS
   ‘All are closed to relative.’
38. ‘fluent’ natʃʃ3w
   fluent they-are
   ‘They are fluent.’
39. ‘expensive’ nɘw
   expensive is
   ‘It is expensive.’
40. ‘pure’ jɘ-hon-ɘ ?amaɾnɘa al-a-wɘr-amm
   pure that-be-3MS Amharic Neg.-1S-talk-Neg.
   ‘I don’t speak pure Amharic.’
   “Here, we find English adjectives attached to the Amharic sentences.”

9. Reiteration

“Reiteration occurs when a message is repeated in other language. This repetition may serve as a
clarification of what has just been said but often it also carries additional meanings in that it
strengthens or puts emphasis on the message.” Bikila (2008:29). In reiteration, the speaker
translates what they have already said in one language in to the other, i.e. the two languages have
similar idea. The following examples are switched in that way.
41. wɘt’a arg-3w nɘw mɘ-ssɘb-u-h ‘in the deviance
   to-out do-3PL is 3PL-consider-3PL-2MS in the deviance
   ‘They consider you as a deviant.’
42. lọkk  həzb  kə-mmi-k’k’-bbɔ-l-əh  wət’a  ja-l-ɔ  nəgər
   just  people  Pp.-3MS-accept-3MS-Obj.  to-out  that-is  matter
   mean  is-3MS  it  is  unacceptable  behavior
   ‘Just  it  is  unique,  which  is  unacceptable  by  the  community.’

43. bət’am  ‘intentional’  nɔŋ  səmmetawi  nɔŋ
   very  intentional  am  intentional  am
   ‘I  am  very  intentional.’

44. lə-ɔzza  nəw  ‘that  is  case.’
   for-there  is  that  is  case
   ‘That  is  the  case’

45. səw  əŋdet  ja-jɔŋ-all  ‘how  people  reflect  me.’
   person  how  who-see-3MS-1S-Aux.  how  people  reflect  me
   ‘How  people  look  and  reflect  me.’

46. səw  əŋdet  ja-jɔŋ-all  ‘how  people  reflect  me.’
   person  how  who-see-3MS-Aux.  how  people  reflect  me
   ‘How  people  look  and  reflect  me.’

10. Interjection

“Interjection  occurs  when  code-switching  is  used  to  mark  an  interjection  or  when  it  serves  as
sentence  filler.”  Gumperz  (1981)  cited  in  Bikila  (2008:27).  Interjection  is  a  sound,  word  or  phrase
that  expresses  emotional  actions  or  feelings,  as  the  following  examples.

47. ‘no’  ləmən
   no  why
   ‘No,  why!’

48. ‘ok!’  əne  mələt  jə-mməfɔɔləg-əw  məjəɔn  nəw
   ok  I  mean  that-1S-want-Obj.  what  is
   ‘Ok!  what  I  want  to  say  is.’

49. jə-ʃə-pəh  bahl  jə-mma-ʃək’-əm  allə  ‘you  see!’
   of-self-2MS  culture  Neg.-3MS-important-Neg.  there-is  you  see!
   ‘You  see!  there  is  a  culture  which  is  useless.’
11. The matrix language

“The matrix language is the language that sets the morpheme order or, rather, the overall frame; it is the main language of the speaker (his/her native language or the language he/she knows best.” Eastman (1992:76). In this study the matrix language is Amharic and the embedded language is English. Since the study deals with English into Amharic code-switching, the number of Amharic morphemes is greater than that of English. In addition, the word order is S-O-V, i.e. the Amharic sentence structure and follow the Amharic pattern. The following examples are taken from the previous examples.

50. bət’am ‘intentional’ nəɲ
very intentional am
‘I am very intentional.’

51. əne ‘personally’ al-adərg-əmm
I personally Neg.-do-1S-Neg.
‘Personally, I don’t want to do.’

52. əŋdəs-zza ajət eksperjäŋs jəll-əɲ-əmm
as-there type experience neg.-have-neg.
‘I haven’t such experience like that’

In the above examples, the number of Amharic morphemes is greater than the number of English. The word order is also S-O-V. In (50), and (52) the subject is not clearly stated, but the verb itself indicates the subject, i.e. nəɲ ‘am (1S)’ and jəll-əɲ-əmm ‘I haven’t’ (1S) respectively. In (50), the object is the English word ‘intentional’. In (51), the subject is əne ‘I’, the object is the English word ‘personally’ and the verb is al-adərg-əmm ‘do not do (1S)’.

12. Conclusion

This article can be important for the field of linguistics to know how people switch a code in their conversation. Most people especially educated people using Amharic-English code switching in their speech for different purposes. Since non-Amharic native speakers usually face problems to express their thought while they are speaking in Amharic, they usually tend to switch English. Switching a code is considered as a symbol of modernization and intellectuality, as a matter of habit, there is also difficulty of words to express something by Amharic or other indigenous language (s) especially scientific and professional words, lack of common language between the speakers. Besides, English as being the medium of instruction for academic purpose influences the
people. Some people also switch a code when they are emotional because they believe that there are some words that express emotionality in foreign language like English. The other reason is to switch a code gives them good feeling. Peer influence is also another reason i.e. when their friends switch a code, they also do the same as their friends do. There are some words borrowed from foreign languages especially from English language which have not Amharic or other indigenous languages versions like television, internet and others. Those who can speak more than one indigenous language never switch them (the indigenous languages) in conversation rather they switch foreign language(s) especially English.
References


