

LANGUAGE CHOICE AND CODESWITCHING BEHAVIOR OF EIGHT KOREAN BILINGUAL CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

During the last two decades numerous studies have been conducted regarding second language acquisition and the factors influencing education for bilingual students (Cummins, 1989b; Diaz, Moll & Mehan, 1986; Hakuta, 1986; Heath, 1986, 1976). Studies have brought into focus the importance that native language, culture, and societal status have on second language acquisition. Further, it has been suggested that valuing students' home language and culture can strengthen the ties between home and school and promote successful schooling for bilingual students.

Ethnographic works in sociolinguistics and anthropology have investigated the characteristics of the interactions both within and between homes and schools (Boggs, 1985; McDermott & Hood, 1982; Mehan, 1982; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981). Due to them, it has been understood that bilingual students' academic progress can be affected by the difference in the ways in which language is used and questions are posed in homes and schools. However, there is a paucity for studies that demonstrate the bilingual students' behavior in this process in relation to language, in the context of home and school.

This study investigates bilingual behavior employed by Korean children

attending prekindergarten as they learn English as a second language. The focus will be put on how they choose one language over another and in what way they utilize codeswitching--one of the most significant bilingual behaviors, referring to the alternation of two languages within a speech event--in order to function in and out of school. The nature of language choice and codeswitching behavior at home and at school will be described and analyzed to examine its role in developing English proficiency, as they differ in the two settings.

Research Questions

The specific questions addressed in the present study were as follows:

1. How does the language choice of Korean bilingual children differ at home and at school?
2. How does the codeswitching behavior of Korean bilingual children differ at home and at school?

Definition of Terms

Several terms are extensively used in this study and they are defined as follows:

Bilingual refers to the person who has a minimal competence in one of the four language skills, i.e. listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing in a language other than his/her native tongue.

Balanced bilingual refers to the person who has approximately the same language competence in both languages.

Unbalanced bilingual refers to the person who is more fluent in one language than in the other.

Creative constructions refer to those which are produced as a result of the learner's rule system.

Routines refer to unanalyzed whole phrases or sentences used as single items (e.g., "How do you do?").

Patterns refer to partly fixed and partly analyzed phrases or sentences with an open slot (e.g. Do you want ___?).

Codeswitching refers to the alternation of two languages within a speech event (e.g. el porque y how-not-to).

Intersentential codeswitching refers to a switch at a clause or sentence boundary, where each clause or sentence is in the first language or the second language.

Intrasentential codeswitching refers to switching within the clause or sentence boundary.

Situational codeswitching refers to switching that reflects a change in a particular situation.

Stylistic codeswitching refers to switching employed to achieve a desired stylistic effect.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Three boys--JW, JM, and SW-- and five girls--CH, HA, TE, JY, and AY-- participated as subjects in this study. A boy, SW, and a girl, TE, were born in America, while the other six children were born in Korea and came to the U.S. with their families at an early age. When this study began in May 1991, they were between the ages of four years, eleven months (4;11) and five years, seven months (5;7) and were attending prekindergarten. All subjects reflected language competence groups of balanced or unbalanced bilinguals (JW, JM, SW, and TE in a "balanced bilingual group" and JY, CH, HA, and AY in an "unbalanced bilingual group"). All of the subjects were tested to determine their language dominance and oral language proficiency in Korean and English. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Tests (PPVT) were conducted both in English and in Korean to assess Korean-English bilingual proficiency.

The data for this study consisted of spontaneous speech samples and various observational records of the children collected from each subject in the prekindergarten classrooms and in home settings. They were collected over a period of two months by means of observational note-taking, audiotaping, and videotaping in home and school setting. The recorded speech utterances were carefully transcribed in English orthography, accompanied by notes on nonverbal behavior and the setting and background information shared by the participants. The utterances in Korean were transcribed in Roman alphabet and translated into English.

In order to answer the first research question regarding the language choice of the subjects, the frequency and distribution of the utterances in Korean or in English were counted. The data was, in turn, compared in relation to the setting in order to determine whether or not there was a difference in

language choice at home and at school. Then the same data was compared concerning the language competence of the subjects related to balanced versus unbalanced bilingual.

The frequency and distribution of defined and categorized codeswitching were examined in terms of syntactic and sociolinguistic aspects. In order to examine the home-school differences in codeswitching behavior, all the identified and categorized codeswitching data related to home setting were compared to the school setting in terms of frequency and distribution. The same data was also compared across the subjects, focusing on their bilingual competence.

RESULTS

The major findings of this study were summarized as follows:

RESEARCH QUESTION 1. HOW DOES THE LANGUAGE CHOICE OF KOREAN BILINGUAL CHILDREN DIFFER AT HOME AT SCHOOL?

1. In a school setting, there was a clear perception among the Korean bilingual children of English as the "school language," which resulted in a difference in verbal interaction and language choice. The balanced bilingual subjects chose English as a means of communication almost exclusively, even with the Korean-speaking classmates, while the unbalanced bilingual subjects remained silent in many cases. Accordingly, the former had more verbal interactions than the latter. On the other hand, there was no equivalent degree of perception of Korean as the home language. The subjects were not confined to any single language and, accordingly were allowed to verbally interact in any language in the relatively stress-free environment, having no reason to remain silent unless they chose to.

Tables 1 and 2 show the distribution of language used by the subjects in school and home respectively as follows:

TABLE 1
Distribution of Language in School Setting
in Regard to Bilingual Competence (%)

Language	Balanced Bilingual				Unbalanced Bilingual			
	JW	JM	SW	TE	JY	AY	CH	HA
English	97	86	98	97	76	52	30	4
Korean	3	14	2	3	24	48	70	96
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

TABLE 2
Distribution of Language in Home Setting
in Regard to Bilingual Competence (%)

Language	Balanced Bilingual				Unbalanced Bilingual			
	JW	SW	TE	JM	JY	AY	HA	CH
English	77.5	64.9	49.6	47.8	18.7	15.0	5.2	4.2
Korean	22.5	35.1	50.4	52.2	81.3	85.0	94.8	95.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

2. As the influencing factors for language choice, setting, participants' language competence and language preference, and message form affected the Korean bilingual subjects in both settings, home and school. Setting affected language choice of the Korean children in school more than in home, whereas subjects' own language competence and language preference affected more significantly in home than in school.

3. All the Korean bilingual children preferred to use English for certain

words such as number, color adjectives, and exclamations in both settings. Even though they learned those words in their native language before the second language and still knew them in both languages, they chose English over Korean.

4. The interaction pattern had an influence on the subjects' language use as well as their second language development. Balanced bilingual subjects had frequent interaction with the English-speaking peers and the teacher, while the unbalanced bilingual subjects interacted with the Korean-speaking peers. The balanced bilinguals' frequent interaction with the second language models have benefited them in learning the language, as compared to the unbalanced bilingual subjects.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2. HOW DOES THE CODESWITCHING BEHAVIOR OF KOREAN BILINGUAL CHILDREN DIFFER AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL?

1. In school setting, unbalanced bilingual children codeswitched more frequently than balanced bilingual children in order to communicate with each other, average frequency 32.5% versus 8.9%. This is due to their interaction pattern: the balanced bilingual children interacted with the monolingual English speakers dominantly, while the unbalanced bilingual children interacted with the other bilingual as well as Korean-dominant speakers. On the other hand, in home setting, balanced bilingual children codeswitched more frequently than unbalanced bilingual children. Tables 3 and 4 show the proportion of codeswitched utterance spoken at school and at home respectively.

TABLE 3
The Proportion of Codeswitched Utterance in School

Codeswitching	Balanced Bilingual				Unbalanced Bilingual			
	JW	SW	TE	JM	JY	AY	HA	CH
N ¹	6	17	7	12	54	8	33	14
T ²	115	186	151	72	293	22	131	28
% ³	5.2	9.1	4.6	16.7	18.4	36.4	25.2	50.0

1 indicates the number of frequency of codeswitching.

2 indicates the number of total utterance.

3 indicates the proportion of codeswitching in the total utterance.

TABLE 4
The Proportion of Codeswitched Utterance in Home

Codeswitching	Balanced Bilingual				Unbalanced Bilingual			
	JW	SW	TE	JM	JY	AY	HA	CH
N	376	97	147	226	92	82	40	38
T	1255	452	564	1074	627	614	737	612
%	30.0	21.5	26.1	21.0	14.7	13.4	5.4	6.0

2. In regard to the distribution of codeswitching, there was no significant difference in the two settings. Syntactically, there were intersentential codeswitching more than intrasentential codeswitching. It was mainly due to

the subjects' linguistic immaturity since they were young aged children. In school, Korean bilingual subjects switched intersententially more frequently than intrasententially, 66.9% versus 33.1%. Language competence of the subjects did not greatly influence codeswitching behaviors in terms of syntactic categories and the language structure in which codeswitching occurred. However, balanced bilingual subjects showed a slightly higher frequency of intrasentential codeswitching than unbalanced bilingual subjects, average frequency 43% versus 35.8%.

Sociolinguistically, there were situational codeswitching more than stylistic codeswitching, 73.5% versus 26.5% in school setting and 80.1% versus 19.9% in home setting. This was true of all the subjects, regardless of their language competence. Tables 5 and 6 show the distribution of codeswitching in school setting and in home setting respectively.

TABLE 5
Distribution of Codeswitching at School

	Situational		Stylistic		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Intersentential	70	46.4	31	20.5	101	66.9
Intrasentential	41	27.2	9	6.0	50	33.1
Total	111	73.5	40	26.5	151	100.0

TABLE 6
Distribution of Codeswitching at Home

Codeswitching	Situational		Stylistic		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Intersentential	448	40.8	203	18.5	651	59.3
Intrasentential	431	39.3	16	1.4	447	40.7
Total	879	80.1	219	19.9	1098	100.0

3. In both settings, intersententially, sentence was the most frequently switched category, followed by noun, verb, adjective, and exclamation. The following examples illustrate the intersentential codeswitching of sentence:

(1) From Korean to English (Sentence)

(JM was looking around the class through the video camera set up for the data collection and JW joined him.) (> indicates a codeswitching.)

JW:JM NADO BOLLE.

(I want to see it.)

> JW:EBs Hey guys, do you wanna see inside the camera?

(2) From English to Korean (Sentence)

(JW, JM and some other boys were playing with the toy cars that JW brought from home. One of the English-speaking boys was trying to grab one of the toys and JW stopped him.)

JW:EB You, don't have my car.

> JW:JM EOMMAHANTE GASEO NA NEO ZIBE GADO DWENYAGO MUREO BWA.

(Go to my Mom and ask her if I could go to your house.)

Intrasententially, noun was the most frequently switched item, followed by exclamation, kinship term, and adjective. Intrasentential codeswitching occurred within Korean structure mostly by inserting English words. Switching occurred within an English structure was shown only in the balanced bilingual subjects' speech. Unbalanced bilingual children used Korean as the base language exclusively. However, number words and color adjectives were used by all the subjects. The switched items were mostly those which were recurrent in school language. The examples are as follows:

(3) Intrasentential Codeswitching (K-Noun)

(JW and JM were looking at the caterpillars which were placed in the classroom as a part of science project.)

- > JM:JW WE cocoon AN DWEZI?
(Why hasn't it become a cocoon yet?)
- > JW:JM MWE0, cocoon?
(What, cocoon?)

(4) Intrasentential Codeswitching (K-Noun)

(CH and HA were coloring together.)

- > CH: YEOGIDA number-DU S'UGU, color-DU S'UGU, game-HANEUN GEOYA.
(Here we write down the numbers, color them, and play the game.)

4. In both settings, there were situational codeswitching more than stylistic codeswitching. Situationally, participants' language competence affected the codeswitching the most, followed by adaptation of other's

language use, and message form. Stylistically, codeswitching occurred for expression the most, followed by attention, interjection, focus, and quotation. For this stylistic purpose, English exclamations and some formulaic expressions were selected between or within a Korean structure but not conversely.

The examples of situational codeswitching and stylistic codeswitching are presented below:

(5) Situational Codeswitching (Language Competence)

(JM was talking to Mrs. S, a bilingual teacher's aide about the trip that his family planned to take.)

JM:Mrs. S We're going far away trip.

Disney World.

BAMENEUN GUKKUN NORIHE.

(We're going to play a soldier game at night.)

(6) Situational Codeswitching (Same Language Use)

JY:JW BAKSU CHEO. NA INZE GALLE.

(Clap for me. I'm going now.)

JW:JY Yeh, yeh, JY.

> JY:JW O.K. JW. I, I'll help you.

(7) Stylistic Codeswitching (Expression)

Mrs. S:HA What are you making? Tell me.

HA:Mrs. S NNIYA. (No.)

Mrs. S:HA I wanna know. Tell me.

> HA:Mrs. S No!

(8) Stylistic Codeswitching (Attention)

JY:MO EOMMA, EOMMA, Mommy, Mommy!

5. In both settings, there was no significant difference in the order of frequently switched category. However, balanced bilingual children employed codeswitching with more diverse categories and words, while unbalanced bilingual children switched a small number of category and words repeatedly.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn based on the major findings described above:

1. The present study extends the findings of other studies of bilingual children and their language choice, to a new subject population. A large number of studies investigated the bilingual speakers of Indo-European languages and showed the major factors affecting their language choice: setting, speaker's own language competence, addressee's identity and language competence, language preference, and message form. The present study showed that the same factors also played an important role in language choice of the bilingual speakers of non-Indo-European language, i.e., Korean-English bilingual children.

2. The linguistic environment had a great influence on the children's language use. The children used the English words, routines, and patterns that were mostly recurrent in the school setting. They acquired the language and its usage out of interaction with the native speakers. On the other hand, in a school setting, the instruction language, material, activities, and

classroom displays all in English operated as a pressure on the children, which forced them not to use their first language frequently in favor of the second language. Compared to the school setting, in a home setting, there was no such a pressure on children's language use so that the children demonstrated their proficiency in both languages as well as their preference of English to Korean in many cases.

3. This study shows the findings in congruence with those suggested by the other studies of children's codeswitching behavior: first of all, codeswitching is not a result of children's inability to separate the two languages, evidenced by its systematicity and regularity; Second, codeswitching is affected by social and situational factors; Third, codeswitching functions as a second language learning strategy as well as a communicative strategy among the bilingual children.

Educational Implications of the Study

The findings in this study have educational implications for teaching second language learners:

1. Create an environment in the classroom to accommodate and promote the use of first languages and codeswitching in a school setting. Bilingual educators should encourage the use of the students' first language or codeswitching as an effective cooperative learning strategy and a communicative strategy essential for learning.

2. Provide flexible classroom arrangements for second language learners in order to provide opportunities for the interchange of ideas, peer interactions, exchange of cultural backgrounds, and values.

3. Use a more effective means of assessing and evaluating language proficiency to incorporate a more holistic way of assessing language

development, such as the use of observation tools and portfolio methods. The students' proficiency should not be measured simply on a numerical scale because of factors that influence usage, such as students' attitudes towards themselves, their families, and their two languages. The possibility exists of assessing language proficiency accurately by observing students in other environments, such as in school and home settings (Commins, 1989).

4. First language and culture need to be integrated into the curriculum for educating second language learners in order to cultivate academically successful bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural learners.

Suggestions for Further Research

Bilingual behavior needs further investigation. This study focused on the observation of young Korean children's language use and codeswitching behavior in two settings, home and school. The socio-economic status related to bilingual language behaviors could also be studied.

Second, the relationship between bilingual behavior and academic achievement could be studied, especially as it related to a specific discipline, such as reading, math, and science.

Third, teacher education could be studied as it applies to teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and academic expectations of bilingual children especially children who codeswitch languages in diverse settings.

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