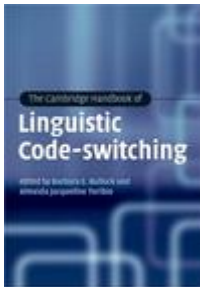# Encompassing Multiple Perspectives in Code-Switching Research

A review of

The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-Switching

by Barbara E. Bullock and Almeida Jacqueline Toribio (Eds.)

New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 422 pp. ISBN

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A good indicator that an emerging area of study is gaining importance in the research community is the publication of a handbook that unites leading scholars in that area to provide a broad review of the current state of the science. Bullock and Toribio's *Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-Switching* does precisely that.

The handbook brings together the work of 28 leading scholars to illustrate the empirical research that has been conducted on code switching in the past decades. Bullock and Toribio embrace a broad definition of linguistics, allowing for the inclusion of different types of research approaches and paradigms under one umbrella. The result is a volume with contributions that span current research at numerous linguistic levels (including phonology,

syntax, sociolinguistics, the lexicon, and semantics) and include state-of-the-art experimental research in psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics while remaining thematically cohesive.

The volume is organized into five sections: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations in Code-Switching Research, Social Aspects of Code-Switching, The Structural Implications of Code-Switching, Psycholinguistics and Code-Switching, and Formal Models of Code-Switching. An introductory chapter by Bullock and Toribio provides a broad definition of code switching (the ability of bilinguals to alternate effortlessly between two languages, often within the same utterance), highlights stereotypes and misconceptions about people who code-switch, and discusses code switching as a linguistic phenomenon.

This introduction is aimed at dispelling the empirically unfounded yet popularly held belief that code switching is an aberrant and random linguistic phenomenon, signaling agrammaticism and indicating a lack of full competence of the speaker's languages. In addition, Bullock and Toribio set code switching within a general framework of contact linguistics, providing a useful comparison with other contact phenomena such as established borrowings and loan translations.

As it stands, the introduction gives an excellent overview to the layperson of the different definitions of code switching, the linguistic characteristics of individuals who engage in code switching, and the reasons bilinguals and multilinguals code-switch. However, the introduction falls short of providing a general overview that would have served to equip the intended readership of "advanced undergraduate students and [specialized] researchers" (p. xii) with the requisite knowledge to understand and appreciate the issues that continue to be debated in the field after decades of intense research.

To illustrate, in the introduction to his chapter, Brian Hok-Shing Chan provides an outstanding synthesis outlining the intricate empirical and theoretical problems that surround the grammatical study of code switching: how to constrain code switching while capturing widely diverse data sets, whether code-switching patterns are better understood from a variationist or a syntactic perspective, whether to adopt a universalist theory of code switching, or whether a typological approach is more adequate. These issues are at the forefront of topics that matter to code-switching researchers. They bring to light the differing perspectives and approaches to code-switching research, which in and of themselves motivate the need for a handbook on code switching. Yet readers must wait until Chapter 11 to read an engaging discussion about them.

The inclusion of contributions that focus on the study of code switching from widely distinct research angles shows the maturation and diversification of this fledgling topic within language contact phenomena. We particularly commend the coeditors for including chapters that reflect this diversity in research questions and approaches—for example, code switching and sign languages (Quinto-Pozos), code switching and the Internet (Dorleijn and Nortier), and code switching and the brain (Kutas, Moreno, and Wicha). Each chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings in depth; when issues are discussed more

superficially, they are mentioned with sufficient pointers to the literature to allow interested readers to pursue them further.

Despite this accessibility, the handbook reads more as a collection of stand-alone articles than as a unified piece. Inevitably, some authors argue for disparate definitions of code switching, favor some approaches over others, and provide different interpretations of outcomes. Given these differences, an introduction to each of the five sections examining conflicting issues in each subfield and employing each chapter as illustrations of these differences would have been welcomed. To the newcomer in the field, some chapters may appear to contradict one another (e.g., Miccio, Hammer, and Rodriguez; Bolonyai), whereas others may appear to repeat the same material (e.g., Wei; Myers-Scotton and Jake). For instance, Miccio et al. argue that code switching should be taken as a sign of proficiency in the bilingual child's languages and as a marker of continued acquisition in both languages (p. 244). On the other hand, Bolonyai suggests that code switching can be an indicator of imperfect acquisition or language attrition (p. 253). While any handbook should not exclude contradictory views, in the absence of an introduction for each section, it leaves much unclear for the reader.

One gap in the psycholinguistic section of the handbook is a discussion of the work that has been conducted on the processing of code switches at the sentence level (e.g., as exemplified in the work of Aravind Joshi). In a 2006 article, Carol Myers-Scotton aptly pointed out the importance of such work: "Psycholinguists are not getting a very full picture of the flexibility of the bilingual's processing system unless they can devise experiments that mimic natural codeswitching" (p. 211).

Naturally occurring code switches involve not only the presence of a speaker (or writer) but also of a listener (or reader). From a psycholinguistic point of view, code switching carries important implications for the comprehension system. Unlike production, which is under the control of the speaker, code switches might be unexpected for the bilingual listener or reader and might therefore be more difficult to process than are corresponding unilingual sentences. Discussion of the psycholinguistics of code switching from a sentence-processing perspective would have provided a more complete and representative section on psycholinguistics and code switching.

A number of improvements could be suggested at the editorial level to heighten readability. The handbook lacks a uniform format for illustrating examples across chapters. In certain chapters, examples are presented only with direct translations; in others, glosses are provided with no grammatical information.

Additionally, some chapters are presented with what we consider an ideal format: examples followed by detailed glosses (i.e., including grammatical information) followed by translations. Given that many authors use their examples to underscore theoretical instantiations, we believe that all chapters could have adopted the most detailed version of illustrating examples. As the handbook presents examples of code switching with varied

language pairings, detailed examples could facilitate the reader's comprehension throughout the chapters.

In addition, the handbook also has several noticeable typographical errors. These include errors in bolding (pp. 61, 89, 280, 345) and italicizing (pp. 287, 338, 352), numbering (p. 10), and citations (pp. 296, 312, 318).

The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-Switching is an extremely important contribution to the field. It reflects the multiplicity of approaches to the study of code switching as well as the diverse theoretical ramifications of this rapidly growing field. Although some background in linguistics and code switching is required to read the chapters in order (e.g., references to the concept of matrix language and to Myers-Scotton and Jake's Matrix Language Frame Model on pages 42, 66, 77, 80, 171, and 184 precede the first explanation of the model on pages 273–287), the volume achieves the right balance between being accessible to the unfamiliar reader yet being highly informative to scholars in the field. We welcome its publication and look forward to the publication of future handbooks.

Reference

Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). Natural code-switching knocks on the laboratory door. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *9*, 203–212. doi:10.1017/S1366728906002549

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