ABSTRACT

Pragmatics of inter-sentential code-switching in CMC:
Case study of English-Slovak language alternation in workplace email communication vs. Facebook and WhatsApp interactions

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Studies of code-switching (CS) in computer-mediated communication (CMC) have identified CS patterns in a range of different media modes, social settings and linguistic contexts. However, we argue that not enough attention has been paid to understanding language choices of non-native English speakers in monolingual communities using English as a Lingua Franca, the global medium of communication. Drawing on widely accepted classifications of conversational CS and a number of discourse functions that CS serves in CMC (Androtsopoulos, 2013; Gumperz, 1982), the purpose of this paper is to examine practices of language alternation (particularly CS) in online communication among colleagues in a multilingual workplace environment of a hospitality company in Slovakia. In this context, the research presented in this paper aims to identify how our participants draw upon their linguistic resources and how different codes take on pragmatic functions and identity values. Thus, focusing on inter-sentential switching between Slovak and English in particular, our research questions attempt to identify and analyze the forms and functions of CS in online communication and the interrelation of linguistic choices, communicative practices and media affordance. Data collection follows an online ethnography approach and an interpretive approach to CS by means of descriptive analysis of data collected from two CMC settings: workplace email communication (the primary corpus consisting of 1548 email messages) and digital data from Facebook and WhatsApp interactions (the secondary corpus consisting of 8923 messages) used for selected comparative analyses only. Preliminary findings of the pragmatically informed analysis of data examined in this paper suggest that the hybrid linguistic performance of our participants and localized instances of inter-sentential CS appear to be partly medium and identity-related, serving a variety of different discourse functions.

References:

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