A STUDY OF CHILD-DIRECTED SPEECH IN A SINHALA-ENGLISH BILINGUAL HOUSEHOLD

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Abstract

This study investigated parents talk to a young child in a Sinhala/English bilingual household in Sri Lanka. The household consists of two children but the recorded data mainly consists of interactions between the parents and one child. I was interested in exploring the type of language used in speaking to children in a bilingual household where English is the mother's second language. Using spontaneous language data collected by the parents over one month, the language used by the mother, especially Sinhala child directed speech and the type of grammatical features and phonological modifications made to English were examined. The mother's language was important in determining the potential influence of the input on the output of the children. The findings suggest that there is a tendency to use code-switching when the children switch to Sinhala. Although at times the father appears to encourage a more monolingual context, overall, code-switching is seen as a positive phenomenon.

1. Introduction

Speech addressed to children, child directed speech (CDS) is the term applied to that way of talking that parents and others use when they are addressing children (Foster-Cohen, 1999: 98). As Soderstrom observes, "although maternal speech plays an important role in a child's development, it does not rule out other speech forms or registers and speech from other speakers" (ibid., 2007: 505). Since Chomsky's (1965) argument for language innateness, research into child language acquisition and the role of parental input has flourished. This rested on the contention that language input to children is degenerate (Chomsky, 1965: 31) as "much of the actual speech observed consists of fragments and deviant expressions of a variety of sorts" (Chomsky, 1965: 201). However, according to Saxton (2008) as soon as the input was examined with any rigour, from the 1970s onwards, it became apparent that, far from being degenerate, the linguistic input from adults was remarkable for its well formedness and for the numerous adaptations and simplifications made at every level of linguistic analysis. Numerous studies (Saxton, 2008; Soderstrom, 2007; Foster-Cohen, 1999; Clark, 2003) have since shown that CDS is in fact a skilful adaptation to the child's linguistic need to comprehend and learn the linguistic system. Phonology, lexis, syntax and pragmatic factors have all been discovered to be subject to a wide range of modifications when speakers address young children (Saxton, 2008). Adults simplify their language systematically in interaction with children. English CDS has been extensively described and similarities have been noted between the features of English and other languages (Foster-Cohen, 1999; Clark, 2003).

Research has suggested that mothers speak to their children in a manner that is distinctively different from the way they do so with adults (Kloth et al., 1998: 149). Snow & Ferguson (1977) note the special phonetic qualities used by adults as the most obvious feature of child directed speech. Fernald & Mazzie (1991) and Jusczyk et al. (1992) observe that when an adult addresses a child, prosodic signals are specifically exaggerated. Foster-Cohen (1999: 98) identifies the following as typical features of CDS: high pitch, a sing-songy intonation pattern, long drawn out vowels, preference for words or versions of words with a simple structure, such as consonant-

vowel-consonant-vowel which results in 'horse' becoming 'horsie', for example (Foster-Cohen, 1999: 99). Adult substitutions also mimic the kind of substitutions seen in children's phonological development, for example, using *wabbit* instead of *rabbit* and *wawa* instead of *water*. With the word *wawa,* she notes that it is possible to avoid a final /r/ (in dialects where it would be pronounced), and it also has the preferred CV syllable shape, repeated identically to provide a reduplicative structure (*choo choo, toot toot*, etc). This is a feature in many languages, for instance in Japanese the word for shoe 'kutsu' becomes /kuku:/ in Japanese CDS.

As Soderstrom (2007) writes, in terms of syntax, speech to 24 month olds and older does begin to show increases in length as opposed to shorter utterances used for younger children. CDS is often, though not always, characterised by short, grammatically correct utterances. Since some of the reduced length comes from deletions, this may be viewed as adding complexity to the task of the infant, who must reconstruct the missing elements. It has been argued by many researchers (Newport, 1976) that adult talk to children tends to be more grammatical than adult talk to other adults.

Snow (1977) notes the syntactically simple and redundant nature of CDS which contains a relatively large proportion of questions, directives and imperatives, and which is pitched higher and tends to have an exaggerated intonational pattern. Kloth et al. (1998) see this as a very limited and general description of the communicative behaviours of mothers interacting with their children. That is, as Snow, Perlmann & Nathan (1987) observe, we should not ignore the presence of individual variation in the communicative behaviour of mothers that exists, even when their children are of the same age or linguistic level.

With reference to CDS, some features mentioned by Ferguson are the absence of inflectional endings and omission of the copula, e.g. *baby hungry* (Ferguson, 1978: 209). Invariant question tags are common and pronouns are used with different referents. Wills (1977: 284) cites the use of first person plural 'we' for second person singular 'you' as a result of the here and now semantics of adult-child discourse. Adult speech involves numerous self repetitions and children's utterances tend to be expanded by mothers, for example,

> Child: Baby highchair
> Mother: Baby is in the highchair
> Child: Mommy sandwich
> Mother: Mommy'll have a sandwich (Foster-Cohen, 1999: 102)

The lexicon is reduced and special lexical items are added, such as 'gee-gee' for 'horse'. Such items tend to refer particularly to food, body parts, kin, animals, toys and games (Ferguson & De Bose, 1977: 102; Ervin Tripp, 1972: 240). Diminutives ('doggie'), onomatopoeia ('bow-wow') and reduplicated words ('din din' for 'food', 'wee-wee' for 'urinate') are common (Ferguson, 1978: 208).

Soderstrom comments on the qualitative difference in the large number of questions that are used by parents, particularly yes/no questions noted by many researchers in both ID and CD speech. She gives the example of a longitudinal study of all speech input to one Dutch learning infant, which found similar percentages of interrogatives (around 10%) in ID and AD speech. She sees the presence of interrogatives as important in the input, as they provide an important source of

information to infants about how sentences vary structurally, and may provide cues to the internal structure of sentences.

There is no intention to imply that these features are universal in maternal speech. As Wells & Robinson (1982: 17) observe, they can be seen 'as constituting a repertoire which all speakers can identify as the kind of language used with children and from which they may draw where appropriate'. CDS features are sometimes consciously avoided by some parents; however, even though they may not use the stereotypical CDS features, they will still alter their language to suit the needs of the child such as by using repetitions, new lexical items, expanding the child's utterances, and using shorter, simpler sentences.

2. Child directed speech in the context of Sri Lanka

Studies (Bradshaw & Yee Lan, 1988) indicate that the CDS features discussed above are widely recognised and used in monolingual English speaking communities, but little attention has been paid to the use of CDS by speakers in other English using communities. This study examines the use of CDS in a bilingual family in Sri Lanka., and looks at how closely the language used conforms to the conventions of English CDS. The input and pragmatic strategies used is a major concern in bilingual research within the family (Juan-Garau & Pérez-Vidal, 2001: 59) as the effect these strategies have on the successful establishment of productive family bilingualism is of immense importance. Goodz (1989) suggests that in bilingual families, the characterisation of the CDS of each parent may serve to make one language more salient to the child. Those characterisations may include prosodic features, lower rate of speech, emphasis and repetition of important words. Other important variables might include the parents' ability to understand the child, their sensitivity to the child's level of semantic and syntactic development, and their ability to elicit and maintain communicative interactions with the child.

As mentioned by Bradshawe & Yee Lan, (1988: 101) some differences can be anticipated as a result of the nature of CDS and the domain in which it is used. Sinhala is the mother tongue of the majority of speakers in Sri Lanka. In most bilingual households, including the one under investigation, children usually acquire Sinhala as their L1 when they are about one to one and a half years of age. In Sinhala society, children about one and a half years of age are considered to have reached the 'stage of understanding language'. This is referred to as *baha thorana kaale* [bahə θo:rənə ka:le:] (Dissanayake, 1976: 133). In Sinhala, CDS is referred to by the term *tondol* ([θonðol]). Meegaskumbura (1980) who has studied *tondol* observes that it is so diffused that even a native speaker of Sinhala would fail to give a clear-cut explanation, let alone a definition of it. He notes a few typical contexts where θonðol is used which are suggestive of senses or attitudinal responses. These include, fondling, showing immaturity (talking in a baby way), pacifying, etc.

Sinhala is a diglossic language which consists of two distinct varieties: the Spoken and the Literary. They differ not only in their form and structure but also in their typical uses and functions. Literary Sinhala is generally considered the 'higher' variety in that its structure is closer to the classical literary idiom. It is used in all forms of nonfictional writing, including news bulletins, and in electronic media. News is read rather than spoken. Different genres of fiction use a mixture of both: literary Sinhala for narration and spoken Sinhala for dialogue. Spoken Sinhala is used in all face-to-face communication.

3 Data collection

3.1 Profile of the family

The family selected for study are bilingual and within the household they use two languages, Sinhala and English. The household consists of mother, father, son, who is 3;5 years (referred to as CT) and daughter who is 1;5 years old known as DY (who is barely speaking). Both parents are Sinhalese and educated up to GCE A Level in the Sinhala medium. The father grew up speaking English as a home language and considers it to be a dual first language. The mother learnt English in school as a subject and considers English to be a second language. According to many researchers (Arriaga, Fenson, Cronan & Pethick, 1998; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, Laursen & Tardif, 2002; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991; Lawrence & Shipley, 1996; Ninio, 1980) more educated and advantaged parents have children with greater vocabulary skills and faster vocabulary growth during early childhood than less educated and advantaged parents. This claim is true of this particular household, as compared to many other families in Sri Lanka, this family can be considered to belong to a small elite that has English as a first language and come from an educated and fairly affluent background. Rowe (2008: 186) notes that a child's vocabulary skill is due, in part, to the speech that parents offer children during day-to-day interactions. According to Hoff (2003) mothers with high SES use longer utterances and more different words when they talk to their children than low-SES mothers and, in turn, their children have larger vocabularies. This study will, however, not focus on the relation between SES and child directed speech.

The parents seem to have made a conscious decision to give priority to English in the home because of its importance as an international language, and claimed that they want their children to learn English as a home language rather than as a second language. In Sri Lanka, English is essential for both higher education and employment and many parents are keen to educate their children in English from a young age. The children are fortunate to be exposed to extensive use of English in the family domain as the extended family, father's mother, sisters, brothers and their children speak English as a first language.

The children are also exposed to some Tamil, as their domestic help speaks both Sinhala and Tamil and occasionally, the children use one or two Tamil words in their speech. The boy shows a preference for Sinhala rather than English, because Sinhala is the language used by the children of the neighbourhood. The girl is still picking up language and the data shows that she uses more Sinhala words than English. Similarly, despite the parents desire for their son to pick up English as a first language, his active command of English clearly lags behind that exhibited for Sinhala, the more dominant language. Research suggests that there is no simple relationship between a child's proficiency in each language and the language of the mother or the language of the neighbourhood.

The mother and father were informed that I was interested in examining adult-child verbal interaction and asked whether they would be willing to make recordings at their leisure. Following previous studies, the parents were asked to record "routine caretaking, free play, teaching and reading activities" with the children. The recordings were carried out by the parents over one month. Most of the audio recordings appear to have been done while feeding or playing with the children. The majority of the recorded sessions are with the male subject and not the female subject. There are also some conversations that have been recorded of the father talking to the son. These are mainly in English, though some Sinhala is occasionally used. The data

is mainly limited to the male subject's interaction with his mother, and his father to a lesser extent. I am aware that there is a bias in the data due to the recordings being based on particular conversational contexts selected by the mother.

4. The findings

4.1 Phonological features

Spoken Sinhala contains 40 segmental phonemes: 14 vowels and 26 consonants, including a set of 4 pre-nasalized voiced stops (labial, dental, retroflex and velar). The following phonological features are a common occurrence in Sinhala CDS (Meegaskumbura, 1980: 300):

(1) /æ, ə/ are sometimes realised as [a], e.g kərannə > kəlanna 'do'; kæ:va > ka:va 'ate'
(2) /s/ may become [t], saban > taban 'soap'; /r/ may become [s], e.g. ratu > satu 'red'; /f/ may become [p], e.g. tofɪ > topɪ 'toffee'
(3) /ʤ/ > [d] ʤambu > dambu (a kind of fruit); raʤʤuruvo: > tadduluvo: 'king'
(4) /j/ > [n,l] jaka > naka, laka 'devil'
(5) /r/ > [l] u:ra: > u:la: 'pig'; ka:r > ka:l 'car'
(6) /s/ > [h] saban > haban 'soap'
(7) /h/ deleted: hakuru > akulu 'jaggaree' (a type of brown sugar)
(8) /v/ deleted: vaturə > atulə
(9) /ɲ/ alternates with /n/: ɲa:vva > na:vva

With plosives there appears to be a three way contrast between bilabial, dental and velar articulation in CDS in opposition to the five way contrast seen in adult Sinhala – bilabial, dental, retroflex, palatal, velar.

In the data, the following phonological features are evident:
The /s/ sound in the adult word is changed to /θ/, e.g [lassənəmə] > [laθθənəmə]
The /ʧ/ in [ʧɔkko] is realised as [t].
The absence of [r] noted for children's speech in other languages by scholars (e.g. Meegaskumbura, 1980: 301) is also noticeable in Sinhala.

4.2 Lexical features

One of the interesting things in the data was that when special CDS words were employed, they were usually from Sinhala not English. These lexical items mainly included words concerned with routine activities such as playing, feeding, reading, etc., where Sinhala words were often employed by the parents. Some English words such as *tum tum* were also used. It is possible that these words occur in television programmes the child watches. Most of the CDS, as shown in Table 1 below, are drawn from Sinhala and occasionally Tamil, especially when the domestic help is interacting with the children. This vocabulary is regularly used by the parents in speaking to the children in English. One of the noticeable things about the vocabulary is that there are no verbal forms. Meegaskumbura (1980:296) notes that the special vocabulary items of Sinhala used in CDS consists of about 50 words. Other estimates by different scholars vary between 26 and 60; Ferguson has a list of 30 in his comparative vocabulary (Ferguson, 1964: 109). As evident from Table 1, there were only about 18 Sinhala words in the data.

The words employed by the parents in talking to the children are everyday words that have been modified for the children's benefit and are quite rudimentary in nature. As can be seen from Table 1[1], the words mainly belong to categories such as kinship terms, words to do with the body, animals, beings and things, food and drink. As noted before, no verbal forms are used by the parents in Sinhala CDS.

The notion that CDS prefers more simplified forms is refuted by the use of the word bandıjə (stomach) and ambılı ma:ma (moon) which are far more complex than the adult forms badə and hanðə. This confirms Kelkar's view that CDS sometimes prefers more colourful and picturesque variations (cited from Meegaskumbura, 1980: 298).

Table 1. Sinhala CDS vocabulary in the data

Vocabulary item Child's term	Sinhalese	Tamil	Meaning
Kinship terms			
amma /ammı	amma, mavə	amma:	'mother'
θa:θa:, appatʃtʃı	θa:θa:	appa:	'father'
Body			
kakkı	gu: (impolite)	kakka	'faeces'
bandıjə	badə	vantı	'belly'
tʃu:	muθra	tʃu:	'urine'
kukku, ukkuŋ	kırı		'milk'
θoθθu	ha:ðu		'kiss'
dojı, doıjannə, bajı	nınðə		'sleep'
Reference to animals, things, etc.			
bauva	balla	ukku	'dog'
ka:kka	kaputa		'crow'
na:vva, pu:sı	balələ		'cat'
ambılı ma:ma	hanðə		'moon'
go:nı bılla			'monster'
ka:lekə	ka:rekə		'car'
Food and drink			
ʤo:	vaθurə		'water'
baıja	baθ		'rice'
tɔkko	tʃɔkələt		'chocolate'
daija	gınðərə		'fire', 'hot', 'spicy'

Nursery rhymes which use CDS words are also frequently used in interaction between the parents and the children in this particular household. Meegaskumbura (1980: 293) notes that this is a common occurrence in Sinhala CDS. The nursery rhymes that are used are mainly drawn from the Sinhala folk tradition and are acquired by children

[1] Long vowels are indicated with length marks and long consonants by doubling the consonant symbol.

quite early in life similar to the learning of English nursery rhymes in monolingual households. There are two Sinhala nursery rhymes evident in the data which employ CDS words. These include the following:

Lullabies which employ CDS vocabulary: This lullaby is used to lull the child to sleep:

doi doi doi doijə babo:	1	sleep sleep sleep baby
bajı bajı bajı bajıjə babo:	2	sleep sleep sleep baby
numbe amma koθənə gıje	3	where did your mother go ?
kırı erəva ennə gıje	4	she went to fetch milk
kırı muttıjə gaŋge gıje	5	the milk went down the river
gaŋgətə udıŋ kokku gıje	6	the cranes flew over the river
annə babo: alı enəva	7	look, baby elephants are coming
andənə lamajı allənəva	8	they take children who cry
allə allə vıkunənəva	9	they take them and sell them
vıkunə vıkunə ra: bonva	10	they sell them and drink toddy
annə babo: æθınnıja	11	look, baby, the female elephant
gal arəmbe: sıtınnıja	12	she is in her rock cave
atə pımbə pımbə duvannıja:	13	she runs away blowing her trunk
babutə baje duvannıja:	14	she runs away frightened of the baby

This is a nursery rhyme that is very commonly used by mothers in lulling their babies to sleep. The first verse of the rhyme reflects on a mother who leaves her baby and never comes back. The main features apparent in the verses used are repetition, for example, doi doi doi and reduplication [allə allə, pımbə pımbə]. The data suggests that CDS does not always use only simplified forms as some adult forms such as [kırı] instead of [kuku]/[ukkuŋ], [lamajı] instead of [babbu] are used.

Another noticeable feature in contrast to the CDS words used in the data, is the use of simple present tense verbs such as gıje (go), [enəva] 'coming', [allənəva] 'catch/take', [vıkunənəva] 'sell', [bonəva] 'drinking', [duvannıja:] 'running', etc. Although the verbs are in the present tense, they have been stylistically modified for poetic effect, for example, [duvannıja:] instead of [duvanəva] 'runs'. In verse two, the mother tries to frighten a stubborn child by warning her that there are elephants, who take naughty children and sell them in exchange for toddy. In the third verse, however, the child's confidence is restored by telling the child that s/he need not be afraid of elephants forever, as elephants are scared of babies, for example [babutə baje duvannıja:] 'she runs away frightened of the baby'. Researchers note that the form and content of speech to children are shaped by both the linguistic structure of the input language(s) as well as the values of the particular culture in which the child is being socialised (Fernald & Morikawa, 1993: 639).

4.3 Syntactic features

The grammatical features that appear in the data are discussed below. They do not appear to be very different from adult grammar. There are however, a few features which appear to be used mainly in talking to the child such as inflectional suffixes, reduplication and BE deletion.

4.3.1 Use of inflectional suffixes

The common plural suffix /ɬa/ of the kinship nouns is used with other animate and inanimate objects instead of their usual suffixes, for example, instead of [ka:kk-o] 'crow-plural' the suffix /ɬa/ is used making the word [ka:kka-la].

4.3.2 Reduplication

Although reduplication is a very common feature in a lot of languages, not many examples of reduplication were evident in the data. There were only 2 instances of reduplication in the data and these had to do with routine activities such as feeding.

(10) Mother: puθa good boy puθa baɪja kaka kaka tv balanna
son son rice eat eat watch

'My son is a good boy, eat eat and watch TV'

(11) Mother: puθa okkomə kæ:voθ ammɪ laθθənəmə
son all eat (if) mummy beautiful

laθθənəmə presənt ekak ðenəva
beautiful one give

'If my son eats all his rice I will give a beautiful beautiful present'

4.3.3 BE deletion

Copula deletion is another feature that occurs variably in the mother's speech to the child.

(12) Mother: puθa very happy no?
son

'You happy son?'

There are also instances of BE deletion in its verbal function.

(13) Mother: Where you going, ah?

(14) Mother: Baba laughing, no?

However, this cannot be seen simply as a CDS feature since BE deletion is also a feature of colloquial English usage among some speakers of English in Sri Lanka. The use of BE is *optional* in Sri Lankan English speech, so that it is possible to use it or not (Herat 2005:25). There is no equivalent to the copula in Sinhala, therefore, some second language users of English tend to use it variably in their English conversations when there is no loss in meaning.

Since English is a second language for the mother, an analysis was made of the frequency of BE deletion in the mother's speech to the two children. It was not possible to do a comparison with how she uses BE deletion with adults, as there were no conversations recorded with adults. I analysed the environments where BE was used or not used and found that there were seven different linguistic environments.

These were pre ADJ, before NPs, before LOC, in imperatives and WH questions. Table 2 below shows the results.

Table 2. BE deletion in the data

BE	BE	Pre ADJ	Pre NP	Pre LOC	Aux	Imp	WHQ	Total
CDS	+	2	3	0	2	1	2	10
	-	3	5	1	2	0	1	12
		5	8	1	4	1	3	22

The table above shows that the mother tends to delete BE more often before ADJ and WH questions.

Similar patterns emerge with the use of the third person singular –s morpheme. Because of the small size of the sample the results are only suggestive of trends.

(15) Mother: ah naŋgɪ look very beautiful
younger sister

Table 3. Realisation of the 3rd Person Singular Morpheme

3rd singular –s morpheme	+	-
CDS	25%	73%

4.3.4 Absence of pronouns

Another feature noticeable in the data is the absence of pronouns. The mother often uses kinship terms such as ammɪ to refer to herself rather than use the relevant personal pronouns. The second person pronoun 'you' is occasionally used, but with the younger child the mother frequently refers to herself as [ammɪ].

(16) Mother: This **[**ammi:]'s hair
This [baba]'s hair
[baba]'s dolly
This is **[**aɪja:]'s ball
elder brother
'this is elder brother's ball'

Since pronoun usage requires quite complex cognitive skills, Bradshaw and Lee Yan (1988) note that avoidance of pronouns can be seen as a skilful adaptation to the child's conceptual level. Variable use of pronouns, such as in example 16 above, may also perform a teaching function. Interestingly, the father, who mainly converses with the elder child CT, also replaces pronouns in conversations.

(17) Father: What does my [puθa] want to drink?
son
'what does my son want to drink?'

In this case the use of the kinship term may be a clarification of the pronoun referent. Other studies have shown the replacement of 'I' by 'we' or 'let's' (Wills, 1977) but this does not occur in the Sri Lankan data.

4.4 Discourse features

As noted by Foster-Cohen (1999) expansion of children's utterances is a common feature in the data. The mother expands the child's utterances in order to correct the child's grammar or to add content to the child's utterance. In the following example, the mother expands the child's utterance by providing the correct plural form for 'car'. Scherer and Oslwang (1984) have demonstrated that a mother's expansions could facilitate the child's spontaneous language production.

(18) Mother: What did [loku amma] bring [puθa]?
big mother son
'big aunty' (mother's elder sister)
'What did big aunty bring my son?'

CT: Two dinky car
Mother: Two dinky cars. Where show?
CT: Hid
Mother: You hid them?

Snow (1977: 238) notes that adults also answer their own questions as a way of sustaining the conversation with young children and this is seen in the mother's behaviour.

(19) Mother: Who is in Noddy's car? (While reading Noddy to CT)
CT: (says nothing)
Mother: Look, it's Tessie bear. Balloons taking the car up and up.

(20) Mother: ah Bubby eating tɔkko?
chocolate
Good girl bubby eating tɔkko

Mother: Why you're smiling?
Baby like the tɔkko. Baby want some ʤo:
chocolate water
'Does baby like the chocolate? Does baby want some water?'

A mother's speech directed to children while in conversation, especially in the context of book reading or interaction has been seen as particularly important in the child's development of lexis. The mother's input is not just a means of facilitating the conversation but is a means of teaching which enables the child in developing his/her linguistic repertoire.

Another discourse feature that is regularly used by the mother to sustain conversation and provides input is repetition, which is very common in talking to children. As Harding (1984) notes, the normal adult conversation constraint which obliges adults to modify repetitions does not apply in the case of CDS.

(21) Mother: mage: ðu: bauva ekkə play kərannə
my daughter dog (BT) with do
'My daughter plays with the dog.'

bauvatə loku loku θoθθu ðennə
doggie (DAT) big big kisses give
'Give doggie big big kisses.'

4.5 Code switching

As noticeable from the above examples, code switching and code mixing are common features in the mother child interaction described here. Table 1 summarises the Sinhala CDS words used when the conversation is in English. Likewise, English words are also consistently used when the interaction is in Sinhala, for example, play, kiss, etc. The mother generally initiates conversation in English and attempts to sustain her code choice, but CT uses Sinhala more frequently, and often obliges the mother to code-switch.

(22) Mother: baba eat baıja like good boy
rice

CT: epa ice cream ðennə
Don't want give
'No, don't want give ice cream'

Mother: No ıssella baıja kannə o:ne
first rice eat must
'No first must eat rice.'

(Reading from *Noddy*)

(23) Mother: Meanwhile, at Big Ears' house, the party was in-
CT: ko: amma Big Earsge ja:luva
Where (possessive) friend
'Where is Big Ears' friend?'

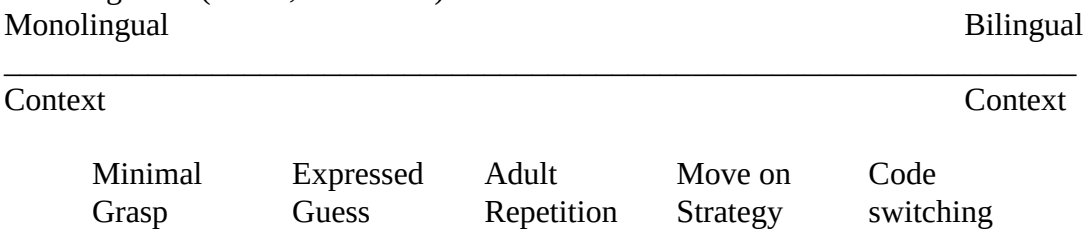
Mother: Big Ears' friend in the car
Child: bolu kıjannə epa
lies tell don't
'Don't tell lies!'
Mother: boru nemeı æθθə
Lies not truth
'Not lies, it's the truth.'

Here the mother tries to resist using Sinhala but eventually gives in to the child's code choice. According to McClure (1977), bilingual children's codeswitching has several stages related to age. In her data, switches aimed at clarifying were used by bilingual children from the age of three. This is a feature of CT's speech in my data. In the above extract, he code switches to clarify a point about the story; to ask where Big Ears' friend is, but in the process, he obliges the mother to code switch as well.

This switching between languages is quite a common feature not only in CDS but in English/Sinhala bilingual interaction generally. Studies on code switching have led researchers to agree that it plays an important role in bilingualism rather than just being a random, stigmatized phenomenon. McSwan, (2000), for example, observes that codeswitching may be regarded as a prestigious display of linguistic talent in many cultures. Other studies of children's code switching have shown a similar pattern. Pan (1995) observes that bilingual children frequently codeswitch with familiar adults, especially if these adults have some knowledge of both languages.

In her study, Lanza (1992) identified 5 basic parental strategies that contribute to the negotiation of either a bilingual or monolingual context of interaction. She places these strategies on a continuum.

Figure 1. Parental strategies towards child language mixes. From Lanza's Figure II (Lanza, 1992: 649)



Of these a bilingual context of interaction is encouraged when the child's code switching causes the parent to switch as well, as when the parent gives no repair cue in response to the child's mix and the conversation continues. Both the move on strategy and that of code switching highlight the parents' bilingual identity.

Functions performed by children's codeswitching such as quotations, emphasis and getting attention have also been observed and analysed (Fantini, 1978; McClure, 1981; Halmari & Smith, 1994). Gumperz (1982) listed several codeswitching functions of adult bilingual speakers. All these studies demonstrate that children use codeswitching in similar ways to adults with symbolic, instrumental, or register changing functions.

4.5.1 Strategies used by parents towards code mixing

Lanza (1992, 1997) presents a highly systematic framework for the analysis of parental discourse strategies and their bearing on children's mixing. She notes that bilingual parents can negotiate either a monolingual or a bilingual context of interaction with their children. As can be seen in the data discussed so far, the context that is negotiated by the mother is one that is bilingual as compared to the father who seems to want to negotiate a more monolingual context where English is the primary language used. As Juan-Garau & Pérez-Vidal (2001: 61) note, in the first case, parents can present themselves as monolingual speakers to the children, forcing them to adapt their language choice to that of the interlocutor, which would discourage code switching. For instance, parents can pretend not to understand their children's code switches. In the second case, they can show their bilingual identity to the children by choosing to be addressed in both languages or even going so far as code-switching whenever children use the other language. It is the second scenario noted by the authors that mainly obtain in the bilingual household studied here. Although there are instances where the father ignores the first language, often there is a tendency by both parents to code switch to Sinhala when the child uses that language. As previously

noted, the parents have made a conscious decision to speak to the child in English rather than Sinhala, but as Lanza emphasises, it is necessary to examine how the child reacts to such parental discourse strategies, as although it may be a conscious communication plan on the adult's side, it might be unconsciously employed. Nevertheless, what is more important to young bilingual children are the attitudes towards bilingualism encountered in the family and immediate community (Juan-Garau & Pérez-Vidal, 2001: 62).

The results presented in Table 4 shows CT's parents' strategies towards his mixing. As the data sample was small, the table shows the specific number of tokens for each strategy, by mother and father respectively. A noticeable feature in the data is that the number of code switches often exceeds that of other mixing related strategies, as in most cases the parents respond to the child's mixing by code-switching.

With regard to the mother, as in example 5 given above, there are times when she attempts to resist the child's code mixing by continuing to speak in English, but as the child persists in talking in Sinhala, she then gives in to the child's code choice. Lanza (1992) refers to this as the 'move on' strategy.

In the following example, the mother's continuing of the conversation in English is a sign that she does not want to change the code and she wants him to continue in English. McDonald and Pien (1982) have shown that, a characteristic of mothers of children in their third year of life is their attempt to either control their children's actions or to elicit their conversational participation. Here, the mother's continuation of the topic in English can be regarded as an attempt to control CTs actions.

Reading from *Wind in the Willows*:

(24) Mother: He saw a rabbit running through the trees. Mole expected it to slow down. Instead it almost brushed him as it dashed past, muttering, "Get out of this you fool, get out".

CT: æjɪ ammɪ eja: mo:ltə fu:l kjuvve
why mummy he moleDAT fool called
'Mummy, why did he call mole a fool?'

Mother: Because wild wood is very scary and mole is all alone. So he said "Fool, get out".

CT: eja bad rabbit
he
'He is a bad rabbit'.

Mother: No, no good rabbit. Now listen. And it disappeared down a friendly burrow.

Her reply to CTs question is not just a clarification but also an opportunity for teaching English. She uses a complex sentence with an adverbial clause of reason, as well as reported speech demonstrating that mothers' language to children is far from simple and short. The language she uses provides CT with grammatical input about the structure of English; for example, how complex sentences are formed; the use of imperatives, premodification, compounding, etc. At the same time, she takes charge of the conversation by contradicting CTs statement and reproving him with the imperative 'now listen'. Newport et al (1977) compared CDS with speech that was directed at an adult and showed that CDS used more imperative forms than speech to adults. As in the above example, imperatives are common since parents use language to both encourage and reprove children's behaviour.

Table 4. Strategies used by parents towards mixing

	Mother	Father
Minimal grasp	0	5
Expressed guess	0	0
Repetition	4	4
Move on strategy	7	3
Code switching	15	10
Total mixes	26	22

Table 4 shows that CT's father makes use of more mixing related strategies than the mother. This is because the child uses more Sinhala in speaking to the parents than English. This coincides with Juan-Garau & Pérez-Vidal's findings (2001:75). They note that this is natural in a context where the child's first language is more dominant in the community language and so uses much more of that language.

CT's code switching has been divided into two kinds: grammatical and lexical. Sinhala words account for nearly sixty percent of the child's mixed words, with the remaining forty percent being grammar. English words often co-occur with Sinhala grammar. As in Lanza's (1992) study and Juan-Garau & Pérez-Vidal's (2001) study this 'directionality of mixing' is interpreted as CT's dominance in Sinhala, the majority language. There follows an example which illustrates both grammatical and lexical mixing.

(25) CT**:** What you ljuvva
'What did you write?'

Table 5 presents the percentage of child mixing and appropriate language choice according to the interlocutor. It can be seen that mixed utterances are used more with the mother than with the father. Likewise, Sinhala is more predominant with the mother than with the father, who uses more parental strategies such as the minimal grasp strategy to make the child speak in English. Table 5 also shows that although mixed utterances are a constant feature in the child's use of language, they are used much less with the father (35%) than with the mother (50%).

Table 5. Percentage of child mixing and appropriate language choice according to interlocutor

	Mother	Father
Sinhala	40%	40%
English	10%	25%
Mixed	50%	35%

These findings suggest that the actual language behaviour of parents in bilingual families is not determined by a simple decision to present a particular language in a specified way. In general, the data indicates little evidence that English is predominant in this household. Although the parents claimed to have made a conscious decision to use English in the home, both parents spoke Sinhala and English to their children. The findings also made clear that code switching does not prevent high levels of achievement in the languages being learnt, as CT appears to have a good grasp of both languages as evidenced by his code-mixing.

5. Conclusion

The study provides some useful insights into the nature of CDS in one bilingual household in Sri Lanka but clearly, further research is needed to establish the extent of this behaviour in the English Sinhala speaking community. The CDS that has been described here is very similar in many respects to mother child interaction in monolingual societies. However, one of the features that was common here but not evident in monolingual contexts was code switching. Other CDS features that were used were mainly modifications that were appropriate to the cognitive age of the children, what researchers have called 'universal' features. The conventional features of CDS such as particular lexical items were largely absent; as a result, it is suggested, of the domains in which English has been transmitted in Sri Lanka. When special lexical items were used these were usually from Sinhala.

The syntactic simplifications observed in CDS were also present but as the local variety of English shares some of these features no conclusive claims can be made about their role in maternal speech. There does seem, on the evidence gathered here, to be a trend towards more frequent deletions such as BE deletion and deletion of the 3rd person singular morpheme –s. However, it is not possible to draw any conclusions without more extensive data.

One of the main features that distinguish monolingual CDS from talk in bilingual households is the use of code-switching. Code switching is used by parents to make themselves understood and to clarify things that the child might otherwise not know. Although code-switching was encouraged by both parents, it was found that the father used more strategies such as the minimal grasp strategy to get the child to speak more in English. This shows that there is a conscious effort to make English the language of the home.

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