



Analyzing the Effect of Code-Switching Attitudes on Acceptability Judgment Tasks

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Goal

- The present study examines the effects of code-switching (CS) attitudes on Acceptability Judgment Tasks (AJTs) among early Spanish/English bilinguals in the United States. In doing so, we explore whether negative attitudes towards CS result in lower/degraded ratings, and, likewise, whether positive attitudes result in higher acceptability ratings.

Introduction

- Studies in experimental syntax have used CS as a tool to explore diverse syntactic phenomena that are otherwise opaque in monolingual data (González-Vilbazo, 2005; González-Vilbazo & Bartlett, 2010, 2013; González-Vilbazo & López, 2011; González-Vilbazo & Ramos, 2011; Ebert, 2014; Koronkiewicz, 2014; Parafita et al., 2015).
- However, the use of CS as a tool for linguistic inquiry poses many empirical challenges since there is no established methodology that unifies the field (see González-Vilbazo et al. 2013 for discussion).
- In this paper, we focus on one very specific aspect in the participant selection process: attitudes towards CS.

Assumptions

- We are interested in CS as an expression of the bilingual's I-language.
- AJs as a way to get to the bilinguals' I-language.

Background

- Using CS as a tool can be problematic as its use still carries a social stigma, at least in the context of Spanish/English CS in the US.
- According to Montes-Alcalá (2000):
 - “This phenomenon has been socially stigmatized by monolinguals and bilinguals alike, and has been given derogatory labels such as *Tex-Mex* or *Spanglish*”.
 - The use of Spanish/English CS is often attributed to illiteracy, a lack of formal education, or a lack of proficiency in one or both of the bilingual’s two languages and it is stigmatized among many communities in the US.

Background

- We may even encounter differing attitudes within members of the same community or among speakers of similar backgrounds (Toribio, 2002).
- This has the potential to directly impact studies that examine CS.
 - Use of participants with similar backgrounds as a control not good enough.
- Some studies have tested attitudes and their effect on production.
 - Toribio (2002): Negative attitudes do not impede bilinguals from code-switching.
 - Montes-Alcalá (2010): “Attitudes towards CS are not a determining factor in the types of CS that bilingual individuals produce”.

Background

- We find a gap in the literature when it comes to the participant's attitudes towards CS and their effects in non-production tasks.
 - Parafita, Deuchar & Fusser (2015): No effect for attitudes on AJTs with Welsh/English bilinguals.
- Researchers opt to use AJTs as they tap into the participant's L-language (see González-Vilbazo et al., 2013).
- Due to the extensive use of this particular task in the field, we set out to use AJTs as a tool to explore the effects that a given participant's attitudes towards CS can have on his or her acceptance rate of code-switched sentences.

Background

- In order to construct our task we employed CS stimuli from two different studies.
 - Koronkiewicz (2014) → Pronouns (Strong=stressed or full DPs, weak=unstressed).
 - Sande (2015) → *Pro-drop* (i.e. the omission of the subject of a finite clause; possible in Spanish, not possible in English).
- *Table 1. Experimental stimuli*

Pro-drop stimuli (Sande, 2015)	CONDITION 1 <i>No sé por qué</i> Lucía ate all those brownies. 'I don't know why Lucía ate all those brownies.'	CONDITION 2 <i>Me pregunto qué</i> discovered in his sister's diary. 'I wonder what discovered in his sister's diary.'
	CONDITION 3 The other day those girls <i>conocieron a nuestra abuela</i> . 'The other day those girls met our grandmother.'	CONDITION 4 They <i>compraron unas manzanas</i> . 'They bought some apples.'
Pronoun stimuli (Koronkiewicz, 2014)		

The use of two structures allowed us to isolate the factor of attitude and how it affects CS acceptability judgments.

Research questions

- **RQ1:** Is there an effect for participants' attitude towards CS on their ratings for code-switched sentences?
- **RQ2:** Does this effect vary by CS structure?

The study: Methodology

- Participants:
 - 50 early Spanish/English bilinguals living in the US
 - Average age = 22.5
 - Age of acquisition = before the age of 7
 - Grew up in bilingual households
 - Level of education: 17 college graduates, the rest had some college education
- *Table 2. Average proficiency for overall and individual skills based on self-reports.*

	Spanish	English
Reading	3.97	4.68
Writing	3.40	4.47
Speaking	4.07	4.71
Understanding	4.25	4.63
Overall	4.28	4.84

The study: Methodology

- Procedure:
 - Survey through Google Forms



Attitude questions

What do you think when you hear someone else mix two languages in the same sentence?

1. I find it horrible. It is an aberration to the two languages. It shows that she does not speak either of them well.
2. It does not seem right. It is better to talk using the same language when talking to a person.
3. I do not care. I never thought about it. I do not have a strong opinion.
4. It's okay. It is as normal and as acceptable as speaking using the same language when talking to a person.
5. I think it's great. It shows that someone can speak well or is comfortable in both languages.

The study: Methodology

- Analysis:
 - A single 'Attitude Score' was calculated by averaging participants' responses to attitude questions.
 - Participants were divided into three categories based on this score:
 - 1-2.5 (Negative attitude, n = 16),
 - 3.5-4 (Mildly positive attitude, n = 14)
 - 4.5-5 (Very positive attitude, n = 17)
 - A General Linear Mixed Model was conducted.

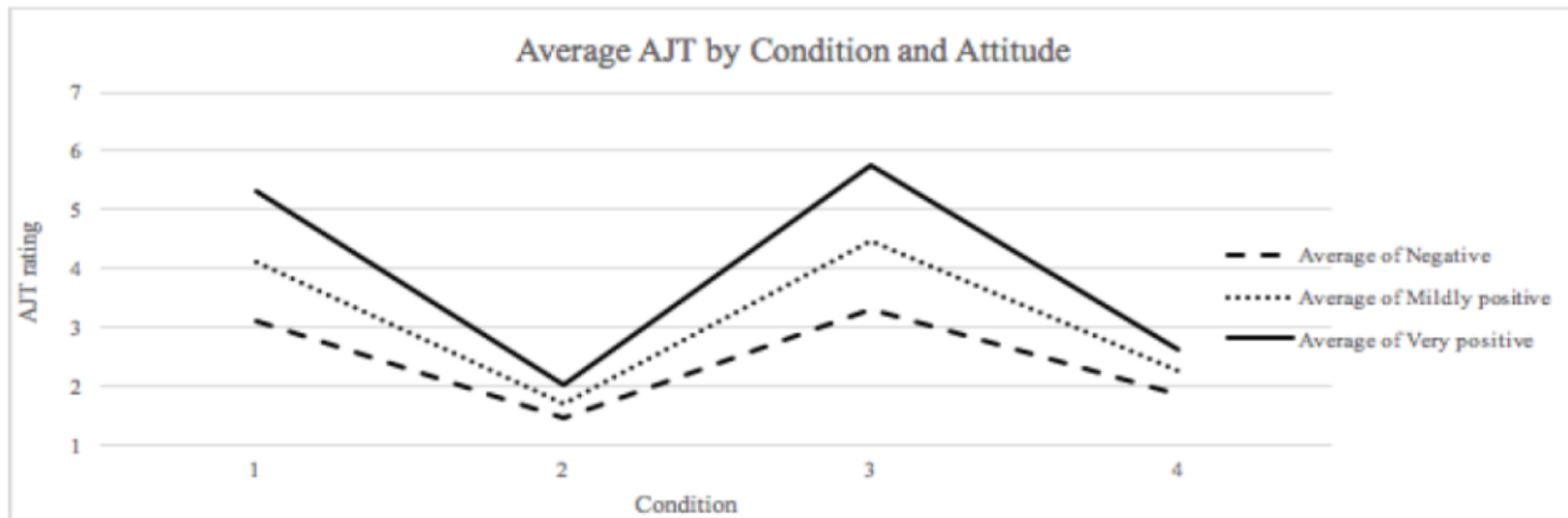
Results

■ *Table 3. Average rating by Condition.*

	<i>Pro-drop</i> Overt subject	<i>Pro-drop</i> Covert subject	Pronouns Strong/Full DP	Pronouns Weak
Average AJT	4.2 (<i>SD</i> = 2.2)	1.7 (<i>SD</i> = 1.3)	4.5 (<i>SD</i> = 2.1)	2.3 (<i>SD</i> = 1.8)

Results

Figure 1. Differences by condition for each attitude group



A significant Attitude*Condition interaction ($F(6, 140.15) = 5.48$; $p = .000$) was found.

- Condition 1: Very positive > Mildly Positive/Negative
- Condition 3: Very Positive > Mildly Positive > Negative
- Conditions 2 & 4: No group differences

Discussion

- **RQ1:** *Is there an effect for participants' attitude towards CS on their ratings for code-switched sentences?*
 - YES, results on the GLMM showed a main effect for attitude when the code-switched sentences are collapsed across all four conditions.
 - In these conditions the more positive a participant's attitude, the higher their acceptability rating.

Discussion

- **RQ2:** *Does this effect vary by code-switched structure?*
 - YES. Results show an effect for bilinguals' attitude in Conditions 1 and 3 but not for Conditions 2 and 4.
 - Going back to Koronkiewicz (2014) and Sande (2015), the structures in Conditions 1 and 3 are the structures that were rated higher by Spanish/English bilingual participants. The structures in Conditions 2 and 4 were rated lower by Spanish/English bilingual participants.

Discussion

- No effect for attitude by syntactic structure.
 - Condition 1 and 3 VS Condition 2 and 4 – Why?
 - We found the same overall pattern as Sande (2015) and Koronkiewicz (2014).

■ Table 4:

<i>Pro-drop stimuli</i> (Sande, 2015)	<i>CONDITION 1</i> <i>No sé por qué</i> Lucía ate all those brownies. ‘I don’t know why Lucía ate all those brownies.’	<i>CONDITION 2</i> <i>Me pregunto qué</i> discovered in his sister's diary. ‘I wonder what discovered in his sister’s diary.’
<i>Pronoun stimuli</i> (Koronkiewicz, 2014)	<i>CONDITION 3</i> The other day those girls <i>conocieron a nuestra abuela</i> . ‘The other day those girls met our grandmother.’	<i>CONDITION 4</i> They <i>compraron unas manzanas</i> .’ ‘They bought some apples.’

Discussion

- No effect for attitude by syntactic structure.
 - Condition 1 and 3 VS Condition 2 and 4 – Why?
 - We found the same overall pattern as Sande (2015) and Koronkiewicz (2014).
 - Conditions 1 and 3 part of bilinguals' I-language.
 - Conditions 2 and 4 not part of bilinguals' I-language → rated low regardless of attitude.
- We only observe an effect for attitude in CS structures that are part of the bilingual's I-language.

Discussion

- We believe that this holds true for monolingual speakers.

(1) *Si tendría dinero, me compraría un coche.*

If I would have money, I would buy a car.

‘If I had money, I would buy a car.’

(2) **Nosotros caminaba por la calle.*

We walk.3rd.PAST on the street.

‘We walked on the street.’

Conclusion

- In this study, we have provided evidence that attitudes towards CS have an effect on acceptability judgments, at least for sentences that are part of a bilingual's L-language.
- Positive attitudes towards CS result in higher acceptability ratings, while negative attitudes towards CS result in lower acceptability ratings.
- Thus, attitudes towards CS is a variable that must be controlled for when doing research on CS.

Limitations and outlook

- Our study specifically focused on AJTs, we contend that our results have the potential to open a new line of research which investigates whether CS attitudes affect participant responses in other types of tasks.
- Test CS attitudes using other syntactic structures.
- Aim for larger participant pools in order to see if the results still hold when there is a wider range of attitudes towards CS (neutral group).
- Many different measures of attitudes in order to get a more in-depth picture of how attitudes can affect acceptability judgments on code-switched sentences.

- Thank you!
- Special thank you to Dr. Luis López, Dr. Jennifer Cabrelli-Amaro and the members of the Bilingualism Research Lab at UIC.



Outline

- Goal
- Introduction
- Background
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion and Outlook

Background

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Stimuli by condition

<i>Pro-drop stimuli</i> (Sande, 2015)	<p><i>CONDITION 1</i></p> <p><i>No sé por qué</i> Lucía ate all those brownies.</p> <p>‘I don’t know why Lucía ate all those brownies.’</p>	<p><i>CONDITION 2</i></p> <p><i>Me pregunto qué</i> discovered in his sister’s diary.</p> <p>‘I wonder what discovered in his sister’s diary.’</p>
<p>Pronoun stimuli (Koronkiewicz, 2014)</p>	<p><i>CONDITION 3</i></p> <p>The other day those girls <i>conocieron a nuestra abuela</i>.</p> <p>‘The other day those girls met our grandmother.’</p>	<p><i>CONDITION 4</i></p> <p>They <i>compraron unas manzanas</i>.’</p> <p>‘They bought some apples.’</p>

+ use of CS control stimuli

