

Barbara E. Bullock & Almeida Jacqueline Toribio (Eds.). (2009). *The Cambridge handbook of linguistic code-switching*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 422 pages.

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“Bilingual adults in some communities mix their languages extensively. Research has shown that the most proficient bilinguals mix the most and in the most sophisticated ways without violating the rules of either language.”

~ Fred Genesee (2006)

Why might an applied linguist or education researcher choose to read a textbook designed for advanced linguistics students and researchers interested in discrete branches of linguistics such as syntax, morpheme types, or code-switching specific constraints? In the case of *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-switching*, edited by Barbara E. Bullock and Almeida Jacqueline Toribio (Cambridge University Press, 2009), the answer may be that beyond an interest in more discrete contact phenomena such as lexical borrowings or content morphemes, this edited collection of recent research in the area of linguistic code-switching also addresses topics such as bilingualism, language acquisition and attrition, and sociolinguistic aspects of the phenomenon. Consequently, while this book will be relevant to advanced linguistic students, and of particular interest to linguistic researchers working with myriad aspects of code-switching as linguistic phenomenon, it may also hold appeal for researchers in applied linguistics and language education interested in complexifying sociolinguistic and socio-cultural dimensions of their research where code-switching is present.

Contributions are organized into five themed sections, a convenient feature for the applied linguistics reader. Thanks to these thoughtful groupings on the part of the editors, readers will find it easy to focus on aspects of code-switching most relevant to their area or areas of interest. For example, Part II—Social Aspects of Code-switching, may be of high interest to sociolinguistic researchers. In the Gardener-Chloros chapter on “Sociolinguistic Factors in Code-switching,” for example, readers can engage aspects of code-switching “first and foremost from a sociolinguistic perspective, that is to say from a perspective where language behavior and use are related to speakers’ (social) identity and characteristics, or to aspects of their social life in the broad sense” (p. 97). Similarly, chapters such as “Code-switching and the Internet” by Dorleijn and Nortier offer readers the opportunity to engage “issues like stylistic uses of [code-switching] and the role of [code-switching] in identity construction” (p. 127). As an education researcher, I found Part III—The Structural Implications of Code-switching, to be the most interesting part of the handbook. Among other interesting articles in this section, Müller and Cantone’s interrogation, “Language Mixing in Bilingual Children: Code-switching?” offers complex perspectives on language mixing of bilingual children, while Quinto-Pozos, in his chapter

on “Code-switching Between Sign Languages” delves into more discrete areas of code-switching research.

Although thematically organized, the book is also easily read in cross-sections. Readers interested in language acquisition, for example, might select Khattab’s chapter, “Phonetic Accommodation in Children’s Code-switching” from Part II, and the Miccio, Scheffner Hammer, and Rodríguez chapter “Code-switching and Language Disorders in Bilingual Children” from Part IV—Psycholinguistics and Code-switching, along with the aforementioned Müller/Cantone chapter, combining the three for quick access to varied perspectives on the sophisticated ways children negotiate language with and through code-switching. A cross-sectional approach such as this could also be useful to the handbook’s intended readers in the field of linguistics proper, since, as Miccio, Scheffner Hammer, and Rodríguez point out, code-switching “is a linguistic behaviour frequently used among bilinguals for a variety of reasons” (p. 252). Reading broadly throughout the handbook also serves to illustrate the extent to which these reasons are often quite complex, and can be context as well as language specific.

Two particular threads, consistent throughout most of the volume, drew me in as a reader. First, most of the authors devote a portion of their respective chapter to clarifying their definition(s) of code-switching, both for their research and within their area of interest in the linguistic code-switching arena. As Bullock and Toribio note in their introductory chapter, “because there is a lot of latitude in what comprises the study of [code-switching], it is not surprising to find disagreements in the literature” (p. 14), and the chapters included in this volume are no exception. Rather than create frustration, however, this characteristic of continually defining and redefining the phenomenon of code-switching serves to illustrate the breadth and complexity of the phenomenon, as well as to help the reader refine definitions of other contact linguistics phenomena (borrowing, transfers, etc.). Second, because the handbook does target a linguistics audience, most chapters include numerous examples of code-switching discourse. These excerpts are consistently well-documented and contextualized, and reflect a strong and consistent editorial presence throughout the handbook. Consequently, whether the context addresses a French-English (both of which I read and speak) situation, or a Dutch-Moroccan (neither of which I read nor speak) dynamic, the content seems accessible and strengthens the overall impact of the theories being advanced.

Although the handbook has an international flavour, which one would expect from a Cambridge University Press offering, I will share one strong criticism I have of the collection. Given that the first, albeit not exclusive audience of this journal is Canadian, I read the book with the RCLA/CJAL readership in mind. As a result, I found the complete lack of any Canadian-based university researchers in the contributors list created an unfortunate silence, particularly given the breadth and depth of Canadian scholarship in the field. Although some chapters do reference Canadian scholars who have made important contributions to the code-switching arena—the editors, for example, draw on the work of Monica Heller (1995), while Müller and Cantone situate their work in relation to the important, field-shifting contributions of Fred Genesee (1989) to research

on language mixing—it seems, at least to this reader, that this oversight could have easily been avoided.

Overall, like many handbooks, *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Code-switching* succeeds in offering a little something for everyone. This is perhaps best summed up in the Treffers-Daller chapter, “Code-switching and Transfer: An Exploration of Similarities and Differences.” She notes that in the field of language contact “there are important controversies over the nature of the phenomenon [of code-switching] and how to delimit it from other contact phenomena” (p. 58). Moreover, she argues,

it is becoming increasingly evident that [code-switching] research needs to inform and be informed by models of speech processing, theories of language variation and change, and SLA, and that studying CS in isolation from other disciplines may not be fruitful.” (p. 59)

As editors Bullock and Toribio put forth, “those with interests in [code-switching] behavior range from poets to neurologists, and from parents to politicians” (p. 17). So, whether the reader coming to the text works in linguistics, applied linguistics, or education research, and whether s/he reads a chapter, a section, a cross-section, or cover-to-cover, this edited collection offers new insights—and new quagmires—for students and researchers interested in the phenomenon of code-switching. *Tout compte fait*, a worthwhile read.

References:

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