PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF CODE-SWITCHING AMONG BASQUE-SPANISH BILINGUALS

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1. Introduction

Until the early seventies, the study of intra-sentential code-switching has been neglected and stigmatized as a "grammarless language mixture or gibberish by semilingual speakers" (Grosjean, 1982: 157). This view prevailed, especially after Weinreich's definition of the ideal bilingual as an individual who "switches from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in the speech situation (interlocutors, topics, etc), but not in an unchanged speech situation, and certainly not within a single sentence" (Weinreich, 1953: 73).

Since the early seventies, several studies (e.g. Gumperz & Hernández Chavez, 1972; Pfaff, 1979; Kachru, 1978; Poplack, 1980; Sánchez, 1983; Scotton & Ury, 1977) have shown that intra-sentential code-switching is a very common phenomenon in communication among bilinguals. Moreover, researchers agree that code-switching seems to be the norm rather than the exception in the bilingual speech mode (e.g. Grosjean, 1982; Sánchez, 1983). In addition, studies have shown that code-switching is a rule-governed phenomenon. On the functional level, it is often used as a communicative strategy and therefore, can express several and different functions within the discourse. On the structural level, several studies provide evidence that certain linguistic constraints govern code-switching.

In this study, we understand the term code-switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" following Gumperz (1982), Sánchez (1983) and Romaine (1989) among others.

We consider that code-switching is not a new phenomenon among Basque-Spanish bilinguals. Although it has not been the focus of any serious studies, some authors have mentioned that code-switching seems to be present among Basque-Spanish bilinguals in contexts such as women's speech, young people's speech, school children's speech, popular songs, and plays (e.g. Etxeberria Balerdi, 1994; GEE Kultur Elkartea, 1992; Lezeta and San

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Martín, 1991). This lack of interest is due to the general view of this behavior as undesirable and as the result of not being an example of "good" Basque.

This paper will focus on some discourse/pragmatic functions of Basque-Spanish code-switching. After a review of the major pragmatic functions of code-switching, we will present the results of the analysis of recorded data from Basque-Spanish bilinguals from the Basque Country.

2. Previous studies on the functional aspects of code-switching

Regarding the pragmatic constraints on code-switching, Romaine (1989) points out that research within this approach have differed in the extent to which they are prepared to assign a specific meaning to every instance of code-switching. Poplack (1985), for instance, regards "true" code-switching as essentially void of pragmatic significance. On the other hand, McConvell (1988) would like to attribute some meaning to every case. Gumperz (1982) seems to be in between these two positions, since he notes that just because code-switching conveys information, this does not mean that every switch can be assigned a single meaning. He stresses that the inferences which participants draw from any conversational exchange are not unambiguous in the sense that they can be (dis)confirmed through direct questions about what something means in isolation.

Gumperz (1982) suggests that linguists look at code-switching as a discourse mode, or a communicative option which is available to a bilingual member of a speech community on much the same basis as switching between styles or dialects is an option for the monolingual speaker. Switching in both cases would serve as an expressive function and have pragmatic meaning. In a study conducted in Norway, Blom and Gumperz (1972) introduced the concepts of 'transactional' and 'metaphorical' switching (also referred to as situational and non-situational code-switching). Transactional code-switching comes under the heading of the type of switching most commonly discussed as being controlled by components of the speech event such as topic and participants. On the other hand, metaphorical switching concerns the communicative effect the speaker intends to convey (e.g. reported speech or quotations, to mark interjections or to serve as sentence-fillers, to reiterate what has just been said in order to clarify or emphasize a message, etc.).

There have also been other studies (e.g. Sánchez, 1983; Maschler, 1991, 1994; Nishimura, 1995, among others), which have studied the specific functions of code-switching in bilingual discourse. For instance, Sánchez (1983) analyzed the functions and the relationship between code-switching and different speech acts and styles in the Chicano

community of the Southwest. She notes that switches are triggered by different speech acts (challenge, request, agreement, etc.), different styles (evaluative versus narrative), and differences at the connotational level[2]. Nishimura (1995) and Maschler (1991, 1994) have noticed similar uses of code-switching among English-Japanese and Hebrew-English bilinguals respectively.

The study of the social functions of code-switching from a socio-political perspective is seen in research such as Heller (1992). Heller (1992) views code-switching –and language choice in general– as a political strategy, especially as a strategy for ethnic mobilization. In her view, and in order to understand the role and significance of code-switching in a given community, it is essential to understand not only its distribution in such a community but also how that distribution is tied to the way groups control both the distribution of access to valued resources (i.e. jobs, social mobility, etc.) and the way in which that value is assigned. It is along this line of thinking that she points out how socio-political factors seem to influence the actual presence or absence of code-switching in a given community.

Other studies (e.g. Scotton & Ury, 1977; McConvell, 1988) rely on the concepts of 'social arena' and 'strategy'. Social arena is understood as a 'construct which corresponds to a set of norms'. They recognize three universal social arenas: identity, power and transaction. A speaker may switch for a variety of reasons such as to redefine the interaction as appropriate to a different social arena, or to avoid defining the interaction in terms of any social arena. That is, code-switching may serve as a strategy of neutrality or as a means to find out which language is most appropriate and acceptable for a given situation. For instance, in case of doubt regarding the language that should be used, some speakers might engage in code-switching and let the interlocutor define the language of the interaction. It is in this context that Myers-Scotton (1993b) proposes her 'Markedness Model'. In this model, she tries to distinguish different types of code-switching depending on its socio-psychological motivations. A distinction which has to be made since types of code-switching vary across

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[2] For exemple:

−¿Dónde trabaja tu papá?

−En el Hilton.

−¿Qué hace ahí?

−Es un manager y un *bartender*.

Let's compare (a) Mi papá es un *bartender* versus (b) Mi papá es *cantinero* (my dad is a bartender) in this exemple taken from Sánchez (1983). This kind of switching can be understood if we take into account that two signs may share semantic properties in denotation, and yet convey different connotations. In this case, the English and th Spanish words reflect different social status. Whereas the word "cantinero" has no prestige in the community, "bartender" signifies social mobility, especially in connection with the Hilton. "Cantinero" would have signified work at the local chicano bar.

different communities. This approach to the functional aspects of code-switching follows a similar line to those of Scotton and Ury (1977) and McConvell (1988), since this model also tries to state the expected (unmarked) linguistic choices for a given situation before going into any interpretation of specific code-switching utterances.

Summing up, the study of the pragmatic aspects of code-switching includes different types of research which range from those trying to assign specific functions to codeswitches (e.g. Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Sánchez, 1983, among others), to those viewing code-switching and language choice as a political strategy (Heller, 1992). In between these two extremes, we find other works (McConvell, 1988; Myers-Scotton, 1993b; and Scotton & Ury, 1977), which take into account both the specific functions of switches within the discourse (i.e. to express anger, authority, emphasis, etc.) and also the role of code-switching within the more general patterns of language choice within the community. That is, they try to state the expected linguistic choices for a given situation before going into any interpretation of code-switching (i.e. is code-switching the expected choice for the situation under study or not?). Unlike Gumperz and his associates, this line of research makes a distinction between different types of code-switching before dealing with the pragmatic function of specific switches.

3. The study

3.1. The study is based on the analysis of almost 9 hours of informal speech recorded during the summer of 1992 and 1994 in San Sebastián in the Basque Country (Spain). The informants belong to different age groups. The younger group (early twenties) consists of two males and three females and the older group (in their fifties) includes three males and one female. The informants are all fully bilingual in both Spanish and Basque. Two different kinds of data were collected: (1) narrative data where the speakers tell the interviewer about different episodes of their lifes, and (2) conversational data which consisted of group discussions[3] about such diverse topics as memories of their youth, bars and restaurants, and gossip.

3.2 We differentiate the three types of code-switching Poplack (1980) distinguishes: *tag-switching*, *intersentential code-switching* and *intrasentential code-switching*.

Tag-switching involves the insertion of a tag in one language into an utterance which is otherwise entirely in the other language. (e.g. you know, I mean, etc). In our clasification,

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[3] In some instances the speakers were not aware of being recorded. However, later they did approve the use of the recording for this study.

this category involves not only tags, but also discourse markers such as "well, OK, all right", interjections and affirmative/negative particles (e.g. yes/no), following Schiffrin (1987).

Intersentential switching involves a switch at a clause or sentence boundary, where each clause or sentence is in one language or another (Romaine, 1989).

Intrasentential switching involves a switch within the clause or sentence boundary. It may also include mixing within word boundaries (e.g. switching of: NP, VP, PP, N, ADJ, etc.) (Romaine, 1989).

The criterion used in the analysis for determining a code-switch is the one used by Poplack (1980). A given item was considered a code-switch if it was not phonologically, morphologically and syntactically integrated into the base language. However, this criterion turned out to be insufficient in differentiating lexical borrowing from lexical code-switching, since the phonological systems of Basque and Spanish are almost identical (Hualde, 1991: 1). As a result of the phonological similarities, most Spanish borrowings into Basque need no adaptation at all. Thus, it was often impossible for us to decide whether we were dealing with a code-switch or a borrowing (e.g. 1).

(1) panorama, pelea, pareja, problema, postura, plan, cuchillo, portero, juerga, equipo, tarta, espectáculo, guapo, tema, etc.

Our solution was to consider as code-switches only those instances that clearly showed to be following Spanish syntax or morphology (ex. 2).

(2) taberna guzti-tan egon behar dira /*extintor-es*[4].

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all bars must have *fire extinguishers.*

In example 2, the item "extintores" was counted as a code-switch because it showed the Spanish plural marker -*(e)s* instead of the Basque one -*ak.* In case of being a borrowing, the item in question would have the Basque marker and not the Spanish one, resulting in: "extintoreak".

In addition, Spanish items whose Basque equivalents were being used in the data were also considered as code-switching instances.

Finally, the rest of the cases were only counted as switches if the speakers had considered them as such in a test that was conducted in order to distinguish lexical switching and lexical borrowing.

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[4] In the examples, Basque will be in plain and Spanish in *italics*.

4. Functions of Basque-Spanish code-switching

A first look into the data shows that some of the switches are linguistically motivated in the sense that speakers switch into Spanish when they lack a Basque lexical item (e.g. 3).

(3)   topic: a trip to the mountains

jm: baino / behintzat / nehiko garbi egoten da / ba / zea / *mosquito* ta / gauza / hauetaz ezta?

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jm: but, at least, it is usually pretty clean, umh..., (of) *mosquitoes* and, those things, no?

These kind of switches are usually, but not always, marked by pauses and hesitations. As example (4) shows, speakers may use whatever lexical item comes to mind first.

(4)   topic: the speaker's childhood

jm: elurra ta iten zunen ba / han ez zeon / eskiko / ezer / egiten genuen / *tabla-*/ ola batzuk hartu / ola / zahar batzuk ...

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jm: when it snowed, there wasn't anything to sky so, we took *board-,* some boards, some old boards ...

Other switches can be explained in terms of topic (e.g. 5) or connotational implications such as the degree of emphatic strength conveyed by different expressions (e.g. 7).

(5)   topic: taxes

p: ez baina nik jarri det ehuneko hogeitahamabosta / kutxak ordaintzen duna / ta hori da... *el tipo medio* / ta horrekin kutxak ordaintzen du ba *bueno / por hacer sus negocios por... tal tal tal / comisiones de tal / por cada ingreso / treinta y cinco por cien / hacienda / bien / vale /* tallerrak / *treinta y cinco por cien de... lo que gana después de facturar / y / descontar los gastos y tal / treinta y cinco por cien a hacienda / muy bien / vale impuestos normativos* ez *impuestos (...) / taberna / por su actividad normal / que tiene más decibelios o tiene más abierto por la noche / o más impuestos / vale bueno / impuestos normales / servicio de bebidas al por menor // esto para el gobierno* / bakoitzak bere mailan lana egiten du

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p: no but I paid 35%, that is what the bank pays, and that's... *the regular type,*

and with that the bank pays for well, well, for running its business, for...so and so and so, commissions, for each income, 35%, for the Treasury Department, well, OK, the garage, *gives to the Treasury 35% of what they earn after subtracting what they spend, very well, OK regular taxes*, no *(...) taxes*, the bar, *because of its regular activity, which is noisy or which is open until late at night, or more taxes, OK well, regular taxes, it is a facility to serve drinks retail, this (money, taxes) for the government*, every one works their way'

The speaker of example (5), who is 52, works as an accountant and Spanish is not only the language used at work but also the language in which he was educated and in which he learnt everything about taxes and accountancy. Thus, his switch into Spanish seems to be motivated by the topic and by the fact that his knowledge of Basque might not include this kind of technical language. However, the fact that the speaker shows a lecture-like intonation for this Spanish passage (i.e. the speaker's attitude implies the idea of 'let me tell you how taxes work'), shows that there is an additional motivation behind this switch: to give his words authority and make them sound serious. This is also the motivation behind other switches which involve definitions, as can be seen in example (6):

(6)   p: tabernariak ze obligazio dauka? / *servicio de bebidas al por menor* / ho-
        horregatik ordaintzen da / besteak / tallerrak zer dauka? / *pues arreglo de*
            automóviles o venta de automóviles o ...

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        p: what's the obligation of the bar owner? *retail sales of beverages;* that's what you
        pay for. The other one, the shop, *car repair or car sales ...*

Example (7) on the other hand, can be explained in terms of the different connotational implications of expressing the same in Basque or in Spanish since Basque lacks an expression that conveys the same emphatic strength as the one he uses in Spanish. This Spanish expression conveys an especial emphasis on quantity. It means more than just 'a lot of money', it means 'a huge, an incredible amount of money'. Another important factor is that this expression is part of the young people's slang, which in our opinion, Basque lacks.

(7)   topic: bar owners
        g: egiten du *mogollón de pasta!*
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        he makes **loads of money!**

Code-switching is also used in order to either smooth the negative connotations of a given expression (e.g. 8), or to convey humour and irony (e.g. 9).

(8) topic: the speaker's sister

  p: bai bai / *o sea / oronda y lironda!*

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  p: right, right, *I mean, a little butter ball!*

(9) topic: the speaker's best friend, who happens to be a journalist

  p: *el periodista / tío! / el reportero!* / oi ba ni ez nitzan enteratu / *vale vale!*

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  p: *the journalist, man! the reporter!,* oh I didn't know, *OK OK!*

In example (8) the speaker uses a Spanish idiomatic expression to refer to his sister's weight. Had he continued using the Basque term (*potola*: 'fat'), the result of his utterance would have been much stronger and with negative connotations. The Spanish idiomatic expression adds a loving tone to what he is saying and makes the other participants laugh.

In example (9) the same speaker uses Spanish to convey not only humour but also irony since he complains about the fact that his best friend, who happens to be a journalist, is never aware of the latest gossip.

Along the same line, examples (10) and (11) show that speakers also switch into Spanish to give contextualized situations. That is, speakers sometimes present different possible situations/conversations in order to develop a given topic or a given point in the conversation. These hypothetical dialogues are always reported in Spanish (even if in real life any of the two languages could be used).

(10) topic: bars

  p: harek esan dezake / *yo a ti no te sirvo y a la calle*

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  p: the bartender can say, *I'm not giving you any drinks so get out of here*

(11) topic: bars

  p: bat joaten zaio / *...oye! voy a ir a / mear al bater // no pues / jode tengo la bomba estropeada y no se que*

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  p: a guy goes to the bartender, *hi! I'm going to use your rest room. No, well, gosh, it's out of order or whatever*

Therefore, the use of code-switching in quotations is mostly reserved for those occasions in which the speaker assumes a different role, when s/he is no longer herself or himself but a bartender, a mechanic, etc.

In example (12) we can see that Spanish is also used to quote real conversations which may have happened either in Basque or Spanish. Moreover, there are several instances where quotes from the same speaker and/or conversation appear first in one language and later in the other language.

(12)   topic: a trip to the mountains

jm: iriki zun atia ta aiba / inor ez / ez ote dute ematen jaten edo hola? / ta, / bitarte hortan ba emakumia, / ta *que, no se puede entrar a comer? / y si si ...*

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jm: she opened the door and wow, nobody, do they really serve lunch here?, and, in the meantime, he woman (came) and (I said), *so, can we go in and have lunch? and* (the woman said) *yes yes...*

Thus, the use of code-switching for role-changing and direct quotations makes the bilingual's speech livelier and more real.

Other instances show that speakers also use code-switching as a strategy to reinforce (e.g. 13) or reject what has already been said (e.g. 14).

(13)   topic: the amount of money bar owners make

g: festak egongo ez balira baino askosez gehiago irabazi, / *que es lo que cuenta a fin de cuentas*

p: asko gehiago / baina askoz gehiago ordaindu ere

g: bai, baino irabazi / *que es lo que cuenta*

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g: they make more money than when it's not a holiday, *and that's what is important now*

p: (they make) more money, but they also pay more in taxes

g: yes, but they make money, *that's what is important now*

(14)   topic: the amount of money bar owners make

g: egia ez dala erreala? / *eso es otra cosa!*

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g: you say that the truth is not real? *that's a different thing!*

In addition to reinforcement and rejection, the switches in examples (13) and (14) imply that, according to this speaker, it is time to move on with the discussion. This use of code-switching can also be seen in example (15):

(15)   topic: the amount of money bar owners make

   p: seguro irabazten dula! / dudik gabe! / baina irabazten du asko / ordaintzen du asko / irabazten du gutxi / ordaintzen du gutxi!

   e: *bueno venga! / joe* seg*i! / que estais todo el rato con lo mismo!*

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   p: of course s/he earns money!, no doubt!, but s/he earns a lot, s/he pays a lot; s/he earns little (money), s/he pays little (money)!

   e: *oh come on!, gosh* continue!, *you've been all the time talking about the same thing!*

It seems then, that these bilinguals are using code-switching as a strategy to negotiate the development of the conversation, and therefore, to organize or structure their discourse. This type of switching (i.e. switching in order to structure or organize discourse), can also be seen in example (16), where the speaker introduces or marks new topics for discussion by switching into Spanish.

(16)   topic: should bars have restrooms?

   p: fabrika baten / ere / da / *un servicio al público // edo zuen tallerrean da un servicio al público* / ez du esan nahi komuna euki beharra daukatela jendearentzat!

   g: *es que un servicio público* daude gauza asko *al servicio del público*

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   p: a factory is also *a public service* (the speaker is assuming that a bar is also a public service), or even your garage is *a public service*, but it doesn't mean that you should have rest rooms for the people!

   g: *but in a public service* you have many things *to serve the public*

The speaker who elicited example (16) was the first one in bringing up the point of what a public service is or what such a service should offer. The interesting fact is that since that moment and whenever they talked about that concrete point, the NP public service is not only always present in both speakers' utterances but also, it is always and only expressed in Spanish (even though it could easily be translated or adapted to Basque). The very same

happens whenever either of the speakers wants to add a new point for discussion: the point in question is introduced by an NP in Spanish and this NP is reiterated by both speakers whenever they want to bring it back to the discussion, or as long as they keep talking about it. As a result, a monolingual speaker of Spanish would have an accurate idea of what went on during the discussion just looking at the code-switched instances.

In addition to the use of code-switching in order to move from one topic to another or to introduce new topics, speakers also switch into Spanish to maintain their turn and finish what they have to say. Examples (17) and (18) show that the speaker identified as 'e' is using Spanish (as well as the raise of the tone of her voice) to achieve that purpose (see that the other participants won't even listen to what she is saying in example (17), when she tries to express her view in Basque[5]). In other words, it seems that the switch to Spanish in example (18) conveys an implicit meaning of I'm not finished yet!. After having stopped one of the participants, she switches back to Basque and is soon interrupted again by the same speaker. Then, she switches completely to Spanish in order to complain about not being included in the discussion. A few seconds after that, she takes part in the discussion for a few minutes and leaves. Let us say that her last and longer intervention in the discussion, was completely made in Spanish. Thus, it seems that this speaker uses Spanish as part of the strategy to maintain her turn and to make the rest of the participants aware of her presence.

(17)   topic: how much money bar owners earn

g: *vale*? / ba orduan / irabazten dutela / diru mordoa / argi eta garbi //

e: *bueno* baino ez da bere [(...)]

p: [ta ordaintzen dutela] diru mordoa/argi eta

garbi

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g: *OK?*, well then it is clear that they make a lot of money

e: well, but that's not his [(...)]

p: [but it is also clear that they pay a lot of taxes]

(18)   topic: should bars have restrooms?

e: baino taberna batean / edaria ematen dizute! / besterik gabe

g: *joe* eta

e: *y si lo ponen más bonito* eta musika polita / jende gehiago

juteko! / beraiek diru gehiago irabazteko!

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[5] The fact is that, after five attempts to take part in the discussion, she gave up. None of the other participants would let her talk.

p: *claro!*

g: itxoin,baina *joe!*

e: eta komuna jartzen dute / jendea ere juteko!

g: bai / komunera juten dan jendea! / jendea juten da edatera / eta

edatera / eta edaten dezunean gauza bat gertatzen da

e: baino zu askotan.juten zera taberna batera / egun normal batean /

            [(...)]

g: [zergatik / joe / zergatik / joe]

e: *joe/es que encima no me escuchan!*

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e: but in a bar they only give you drinks, that's it

g: *gosh!* and

e: *and if they decorate the place* and play good music, is so that

people will go there, so that they can make more money!

p: *of course!*

g: wait! but, gosh!

e: and they include a rest room so that people will go to that bar!

g: yes, the people that go to the rest room, people go there to drink

and when you drink we all know what happens

e: but many times, you go to a bar in a regular day   [(...)]

g: [why?, *gosh*!, why?, *gosh*!]

e: *gosh! they won't even listen to me!*

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen that code-switching is a common phenomenon among Basque-Spanish bilinguals. Our data show that the motivations behind Basque-Spanish code-switching may go deeper than lack of competence in Basque.

We have found that in some cases Basque-Spanish bilinguals do resort to Spanish for linguistic reasons (e.g. 3, 4). That is, they use Spanish items to fill lexical gaps (temporary or not). Although some of these linguistically motivated switches are preceded by hesitations and/or pauses, marking the switch is not a common strategy among our speakers.

However, there are other instances of code-switching which are better explained as a combination of a specific topic (e.g. 5) with a certain attitude (e.g. seriousness or authority) that the speaker wants to convey (e.g. 6).

Basque-Spanish bilinguals also resort to code-switching because of the different connotational implications that equivalent expressions may have in both languages. These

switches may include Spanish lexical items and idiomatic expressions that belong to young people's slang (e.g. 7). In addition, switching languages is also an important tool to smooth the negative connotations of what they are saying (e.g. 8), as well as to make humorous and/or ironic remarks (e.g. 9).

Along the same line, our data also show that our speakers use code-switching to highlight contextualized situations (e.g. 10, 11) and quotations (e.g. 12). Let's remember that in these cases, the use of Spanish does not necessarily reflect the original language in which the conversations (real or hypothetical) took place. Other uses of code-switching in our data also include reinforcement (e.g. 13) or rejection (e.g. 14) of what has already been said.

Finally, we also found that these bilinguals resort to code-switching as a strategy to organize or structure discourse. For these bilinguals, switching is a resource to negotiate the development of the conversation (i.e. they switch to Spanish to imply that it is time to move on to another point in the discussion) (e.g. 13, 14, 15), to introduce new topics (e.g. 16), as well as to maintain and finish their turn (e.g. 17).

In sum, our data show that Basque-Spanish bilinguals use code-switching for a wide variety of purposes, from the need to fill lexical gaps to more complex discourse-level functions. Our findings, along with the fact that all these functions of code-switching have also been mentioned in other studies (e.g. Gumperz, 1982; Sánchez, 1983; Romaine, 1989; Maschler, 1991, 1994; Nishimura, 1995, etc.), suggest that further research is needed in this area of Basque Sociolinguistics.

We hope that this study contributes not only to a better understanding of code-switching as a bilingual phenomenon in general, but also to a more accurate view of Basque-Spanish bilingualism and to the development of Basque Sociolinguistics.

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