

**A MATRIX LANGUAGE FRAME ANALYSIS OF STAGED SPANISH–ENGLISH
CODE-SWITCHING IN JUNOT DÍAZ’S THE BRIEF WONDROUS LIFE
OF OSCAR WAO”**

**ВИКОРИСТАННЯ МАТРИЧНОЇ МОВНОЇ РАМКИ ДЛЯ АНАЛІЗУ
ПОСТАНОВНОГО ПЕРЕМІКАННЯ КОДІВ У РОМАНІ ХУНОТА ДІАЗА
“THE BRIEF WONDROUS LIFE OF OSCAR WAO”**

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This article investigates the peculiarities of staged code-switching, that is used deliberately to imitate the free flow of the oral language of bilingual individuals in different types of media. We analyzed the application of the model developed on the oral data to the investigation of the literary discourse. The practical analysis was conducted on the material of the novel *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Dominican-American author Junot Díaz.

The Matrix Language Frame model was applied in the process of analysis as one of the most holistic approaches to the phenomenon of code-switching that combines the principles of syntactic organization of bilingual utterance and psycholinguistic approach to the speech production and language activation theory. The aim of this article was to prove that the possibility of application of Matrix Language Frame to the material of staged code-switching proves that it is an authentic, rule governed bilingual phenomenon and not just a literary imitation of oral speech.

The article studies the main concepts and principles offered by the Matrix Language Frame and 4-M model. The difference between the matrix and embedded languages, system and content morphemes was determined and supplied with the evidences from the illustrative material. Particular attention was given to the comparison of embedded language islands and mixed constituents in the literary discourse, as well as detailed analysis of the two core principles of the Matrix Language Frame: the morpheme order and system morpheme principles. By interpreting the examples of staged code-switching from the analyzed novel through the lens of these principles we were able to confirm the fact that staged code-switching follows the same grammatical rules and obeys the same syntactic constraints as the oral code-switching on the basis of which the Matrix Language Frame was developed.

The results of our investigation highlight that the lack of spontaneity and the planned, carefully curated nature of the staged code-switching do not make it drastically different in terms of structure and internal organization from the oral counterpart. It proves that the role of staged code-switching goes beyond the literary and textual device, used to build the character or set the environment of the fiction context but becomes an authentic and independent element of the bilingual expression and experience.

Key words: code-switching, staged code-switching, Matrix Language Frame, bilingualism, bilingual literature, intra-sentential code-switching.

Статтю присвячено дослідженню постановного перемикання коду – унікального феномену, що зустрічається в різних типах засобів поширення інформації, як прийому відтворення природного мовлення білінгвів. Дослідження покликане з’ясувати можливість ефективного застосування моделі, створеної на основі спонтанного усного мовлення, для аналізу літературного тексту. Матеріалом дослідження послугував роман американського письменника домініканського походження Хунота Діаса «*Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*», у якому англо-іспанське перемикання коду виступає невід’ємним компонентом наративу.

Теоретичним підґрунтям дослідження є модель матричної мовної рамки Керол Маєрс-Скоттон, яка поєднує спроби впорядкувати загальні граматичні закони утворення висловлення з перемиканням коду та здобутки психолінгвістичної теорії мовленнєвого продукування й механізмів активації мови. У статті окреслено ключові положення матричної мовної рамки, зокрема розмежування матричної та вбудованої мов, а також системних та змістових морфем. Проаналізовано функціонування основних положень рамки матричної мови: порядку морфем і принципу системних морфем.

Аналіз засвідчив, що постановне перемикання коду у творі Х. Діаса підпорядковується таким самим граматичним обмеженням, що й усне білінгвальне мовлення, на основі якого було розроблено модель матричної мовної рамки. Незважаючи на спланований, продуманий характер письмового перемикання коду, його внутрішня морфосинтаксична організація має структурну впорядкованість і відповідає загальним законам взаємодії мов. Отже, роль постановного перемикання кодів виходить за межі літературного прийому чи текстотвірної засобу. Воно постає повноцінним проявом білінгвального мовлення, що має системний і автентичний характер.

Перспективами подальшого дослідження вбачаємо модифікацію моделей, заснованих на матеріалі спонтанного перемикавання кодів, зважаючи на характерні особливості літературного жанру, а також порівняльний аналіз дискурсивних, прагматичних та стилістичних функцій перемикавання кодів у неспонтанному мовленні на матеріалі різних жанрів текстів.

Ключові слова: перемикавання кодів, постановне перемикавання кодів, матрична мовна рамка, білінгвальність, двомовна література, інтрасентенціональне перемикавання коду.

Statement of the problem. For decades linguistic studies were largely monolingual. Language contacts were viewed as rare exceptions; bilingual speech was deemed deviant and inherently harmful to the monolingual linguistic competence [19]. Later, the situation changed with the growing number of investigations in the field of code-switching and language mixing.

Code-switching defined as alteration between two languages within a single discourse constituent with code referring to any system of signs, used for conveying a piece of information (language, dialect, variety etc.) became a widely analyzed phenomenon. It was viewed from three main standpoints: the psycholinguistic approach studies the cognitive processes that trigger and produce two languages simultaneously [7, 19, 3], sociolinguistic approach that investigates the social and identity aspects of code-switching [9, 2, 4] and the structural approach that attempted to develop a single grammatical framework that would explain the rule governed processes of code-switching [12, 14, 10]. The majority of the theories and hypothesis developed in this field were built around a clear speech bias. Research focused on spoken corpora while the material of written code-switching remained not only undertheorized but overall dismissed as artificial and inauthentic.

In terms of written code-switching, the term ‘staged code-switching’ implies the constructed, not reproduced but produced bilingual speech in poetry, drama and film, as explained by Rainer Grutman [8]. Oral code-switching may serve a particular conversational goal but more often it is the answer to the immediate conversational triggers or subconscious drive of the speaker. At the same time staged code-switching is undoubtedly planned and carefully crafted to fulfil some immediate need of the text, whether giving a subtle description of the character, providing information on the historical or cultural context of the piece of media, hence it is inherently incapable of being spontaneous or unmotivated [1].

Primarily structural models were believed to be applicable to more “interactive” written genres such as chat conversations or even letters, but would be impossible in practice for the less synchronous and communicative genres [17]. Thus, the written poetic language seems to be alienated from the studies of the oral code-switching.

However, the analysis of the staged code-switching in literature through the models developed for the oral data, Matrix Language Frame in particular as one of the most comprehensive and holistic, can prove that not only is staged code-switching authentic speech marker of bilingual authors but it functions beyond literary device or an imitation game.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

One of the questions raised within structural approach to code-switching is that of the holistic grammar of the phenomenon. A major issue in discussion concerning the structural aspect of code-switching is whether it is to be identified as an alteration between two separate linguistic systems with independent grammatical structures or as insertion of elements from one language onto the framework of another one, which would claim grammatic governing. The second approach implies the asymmetrical relations, while the first one exemplifies a “collaboration” of two languages at work [18].

The main condition for code-switching to occur is the sentences and sentence fragments in the speech act must be internally congruent with “the morphological and syntactic (and optionally, phonological) rules of its lexifier language” [15]. This limitation led to the development of constraints theory. Shana Poplack formulated the two principles of constraints that govern the code-switching processes. The free morpheme constraint that implies the switch between codes may occur after any element except of bound morpheme and the equivalence constraint which is based on the fact that code-switches occur at the points where the surface structures of the two languages map onto each other [14].

As a response to the equivalent constraint theory Carol Myers-Scotton offered a Matrix Language Frame as a grammatically plausible model of bilinguals mixed speech production that would fit in with the psycholinguistic explanation. Matrix Language Frame reflects the patterns of language retrieval and access that shed light on the structural and systematic relations between languages involved in the act of code-switching [12].

What concerns the research on staged (literary) code-switching it moved from purely supplementary to the analytically valuable in terms of sociolinguistics. Scholars like Deniel Weston and Penelope Graner-Chloros emphasize that literary representa-

tion of bilingual speech often reflects the recurring functions and structural complexity of oral code-switching, particularly in dialogues where author stages multilingual interactions [20]. At the same time, research highlights the complementary role of literary data in broadening the empirical base of code-switching studies. Recent scholarship further argues that an exclusive reliance on spontaneous spoken corpora is methodologically limiting, particularly in the contemporary multimodal communicative landscape, and calls for greater integration of written and staged multilingual practices into structural and sociolinguistic models of code-switching [8].

The purpose. While numerous studies have investigated the structural limitations of oral code-switching and pragmatic functions of written one, the purpose of this research is to apply the structural Matrix Language Framework to the staged code-switching in the novel by Junot Díaz in order to prove that it is rule governed, predictable, and therefore constitutes linguistically authentic bilingual production rather than purely aesthetic literary device.

Presentation of the main material. This investigation is conducted on the material of the fiction writing by Junot Díaz, in particular his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). The choice of this author's work for the analysis can be explained by the nature of his writing. Junot Díaz was born in the Dominican Republic in 1968 and his family emigrated to the United States when he was a child. While he writes primarily in English the inevitable presence of Spanish is seen in injections of foreign words and phrases in the text without direct translation or without being italicized. The code-switching between English and Spanish in the analyzed texts can be divided into two categories:

- conventional terms that are commonly switched by characters both in the dialogues and narration as a cultural, identity index (for instance terms for family members 'tío', 'hija', polite addresses 'señora', the ethnic markers 'dominicano', 'Puertorriqueña');
- the narratively conditioned choices of switches that author uses with particular intention (such choice is by association approximated to the choice of the narrator or the character and create a distinct narrative voice).

According to Shana Poplack all cases of code-switching may be categorized into three types according to the level of integration:

- **tag-switches** (emblematic): inserting tags, addresses or exclamations in one language into the sentence in another one;

- **intra-sentential switches** are observed when a speaker alternates between languages within boundaries of the same sentence;

- **inter-sentential switches** occur between sentences, where the speaker finishes one sentence in one language and begins the next sentence in another one [16].

Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame, which remains the central methodological framework of this investigation, is concerned exclusively with the cases of intra-sentential code-switching as in this category the relationship of two languages is asymmetrical, that is to say the grammatical constraints presented earlier affect both participating languages.

The Matrix Language Frame is built on two main binaries. The first one is of the matrix and embedded languages. This division further develops François Grosjean's theory of different activation of base and guest languages [7]. The base language contributing more to the exchange by offering a grammatical substructure for a switch is considered a matrix language. The guest language, the one that only partially participates in the exchange providing inserted elements is the embedded language. The particular phrasing "contributes more to the exchange" applied to matrix language is used not literary to indicate the number of morphemes, but rather explains the contribution of abstract and surface structures [12].

If we speak about Junot Díaz both his novel is written primarily in English, hence it serves as a base language in the analyzed material. Spanish is the embedded language, the narrator or the characters in the dialogue call for it regularly in the form of single word borrowing or more elaborate sentence or paragraph long switches. Eugenia Casielles-Súarez in her work calls the unique narrative voice of Junot Díaz as radical code-switching stating that "the quantity and quality of the Spanish words and phrases which are constantly inserted in English sentences create hybrid phrases with the result that rather than alternating with English, Spanish becomes part of English" [6, p 475].

The second binary of Matrix Language Frame is content and system morphemes. Mayers-Scotton uses the term 'morpheme' rather broadly, referring to the lexical units, accessed in the mental lexicon, which are generally deemed lemmas [12]. That being said, content morphemes are those that bare the thematic and semantic weight of the constituent. System morphemes are functional elements of the utterance that express the relation between the content morphemes. Taking into account the equivalence constraint theory, the Matrix Language Frame

states that the switch may take place only within a framework offered by the matrix language. That is, it will be the source of all the system elements of the utterance while the embedded language falls into the inherently inferior role of providing the content morphemes [11].

The sentences with one word inserted into the matrix language provide the simplest example of the system/content morpheme opposition. For example, the sentences “*Un blanquito with long hairy legs I met one night at Limelight...*” [21, p 84] is constructed in English with the subject in the form of the noun + article inserted from Spanish. According to the 4M theory (a further development of the Matrix Language Frame that aims to illustrate the spectrum of activation of different types of morphemes) the article is an early system morpheme. As an element dependent on the content morpheme it must be in the same language as the content morpheme it modifies [13].

Within the Matrix Language Frame, the three types of bilingual constructions are distinguished that are presented on the figure 1 [11].

What interests us in this article are the first two categories. Mixed constituents are most frequently represented by the single insertions of words from the embedded language, for instance: “*her trigueña skin*” [21, p 55], “*you've had bruja ways*” [21, p 74], however can also be the longer sentences were multiple constituents of embedded language are scattered through the framework of the matrix language, as in “*In her twenties, sunny and amiable, whose cuerpo was all pipa and no culo, a 'mujer alegre' (in the parlance of the period)*” [21, p 139].

EL islands have a structure of a “sentence within a sentence”, where the multiword constituent from the embedded language possesses its own internal grammar but still is subordinate to the rules of the matrix. For instance, the sentences with direct speech

usually have the words of the narrator in English while the line of the character may be fully in Spanish, as in “*Muchacha del diablo, she shrieked*” [21, p 93], “*Watch out, Mom, Lola said, they probably think you're Haitian.//La única haitiana aquí eres tú, mi amor, she retorted*” [21, p 323]. More rarely, we might feel as if one word switch triggers the continuation of the sentence to be an EL island. For example, “*It looks like a painting of a ciclón and that's what you are mi negrita, una tormenta en la madrugada*” [21, p 156]. In this sentence a switch ‘mi negrita’, seems to trigger the continuation of the thought in Spanish, a logical association imitated by the author.

The Matrix Language Frame leads to two main principles of internal organization of code-switching constituents. First of all, *The Morpheme Order Principle* tells us that in mixed constituents consisting of singly occurring embedded language morphemes and any number of matrix language morphemes, surface morpheme order will be that of the matrix language [11].

We were able to find proofs of the adherence of the staged code-switching to this principle. In the sentence “*within the week she'd be mamando his ripio like an old pro*” [21, p 257], the insertion of the verb ‘mamar’ is used in the form of the present participle according to the English structure “would be doing”. Here the pronoun ‘his’ which is considered a system morpheme is again in English followed by the content morpheme – a noun ‘ripio’. This is the case of the system morpheme principle discussed later. By the same principle the following sentence is formed: “*Hijo de la gran puta, would you stop jodiéndome!*” [21, p 159]. The structure “stop doing” is replicated with the present participle of Spanish verb ‘joder’. The direct object in the form of pronoun ‘me’ is connected with the form of the verb according to the rules of Spanish language. However, it cannot be considered an independent constituent but rather

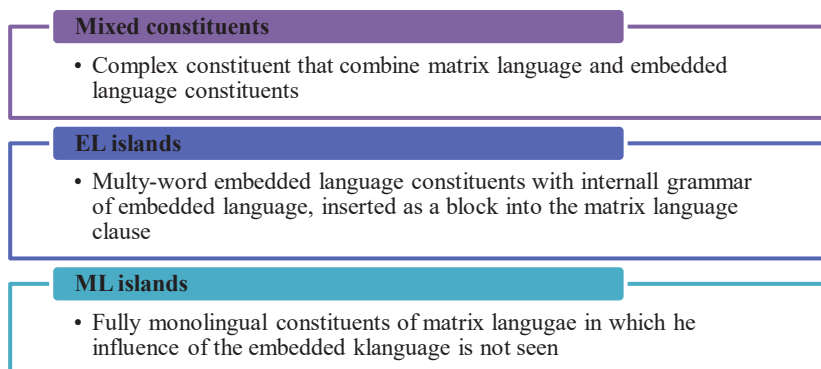


Fig. 1. Types of bilingual constructions according to the Matrix Language Frame

as bridge system morpheme. According to the 4-M theory, they may be part of the content morpheme closets surrounding, thus they are mostly in the same language as their ruling constituent [13].

The combination of the noun and an adjective where only one element is of the embedded language always follow The Morpheme Order Principle. For instance, “*her trigueña skin*” [21, p 55] and “*the most buenmoso man*” [21, p 40] follow the English prepositional placement of adjective. In the same way the superlative form is formed by the rules of English language, yet in this particular case it may also have an ironic undertone, the mock reference to the characters womanizer like disposition, rather than simple adherence to the semantic principles.

There are examples that contradict the Morpheme Order Principle, in particular rare cases of hispanicized syntax in the phrasing of certain sentences. For instance, “*Hija de Liborio she called you after you picked your tia's winning numbers for her*” [21, p 74], “*My hermanita she called Belí*” [21, p 140]. Focus preposing structure where the thematic element of the sentence is placed on the initial position is far more common in Spanish language than in English [6]. Apart from Spanish switches being placed into this position there are fully monolingual phrases constructed this way, like “*Eighteen months she worked at the Palacio Peking*” [21, p 131].

Secondly, **The System Morpheme Principle** states that in mixed constituents all system morphemes which have grammatical relations external to their head constituent will come from the matrix language [11]. An interesting example is the following passage: “*A culo que jalaba más que una junta de buey*” [21, p 118]. In the wider context it seems to be the case of inter-sentential code-switching. However, within this sentence ‘a’ is not a Spanish preposition but an English indefinite article. The logical question arises, whether the matrix language of this sentence is still English. Yes, as the surrounding of this sentence is still in English, while the sentence performs the role of EL island, internally structured Spanish constituent that is not integrated into English. The article provided form English as a system morpheme adheres to the system morpheme principle.

Another sentence “*Listen, palomo: you have to grab a muchacha, y metéselo*” [21, p 40] again shows how after the mixed constituent English article + Spanish noun the sentence continues in Spanish fully. It might be reasonable to argue that ‘muchacha’ here is a borrowing used with an appropriate article while the switch starts with ‘y’, a Spanish conjunction. The counterargument here would be that single borrowing would not trigger the activation of the

Spanish grammatical framework [11]. The fact that the next word is a conjunction in Spanish implies the internal governance of the EL island. Otherwise, the conjunction would be in English according to the system morpheme principle. Thus, the indefinite article ‘a’ is a system morpheme from matrix language that precedes the switch into embedded Spanish that starts with a noun ‘muchacha’ and follows into the EL island that is governed by rules of the embedded language, hence Spanish system morpheme – conjunction ‘y’.

Matrix Language Frame allows for a controversial type of switches, intra-word switches, if the internal structure of word reflects matrix language ordering rule. In case of compound words, the “head” compound typically follows matrix language principles. From the point of view of the system morpheme principle inflectional and word-forming elements must come from the matrix language and be added to the content morpheme, a stem from Spanish. Some examples from the analyzed novel by Junot Díaz include: “*...while the Friends of the Dominican Republic were perejiling Haitian...*” [21, p 420] (‘perejiling’ = stem ‘parejil’ from Spanish slang noun meaning ‘scapegoat’ + English ending ‘-ing’ that creates a verb from a noun), “*a consummate culocrat to the end*” [21, p 412] (“culocrat” = Spanish noun ‘culo’ + English derivational affix ‘crat’). Neither of three examples violate the principles of the Matrix Language Frame, but show the endless possibility for linguistic creativity within the boundaries of this model.

Conclusions. The main conclusion that can be drawn from the investigation of the staged code-switching from the perspectives of the model developed on the material of the oral data is that even though this particular type of code-switching is devoid of spontaneity of speech production it still follows the constraints and laws of internal organization.

The results of our research have attested functioning of the principles presented in Myers-Scotton’s Matrix Language Frame. Staged code-switching is not a simple imitation of the bilingual speech it is a part of bilingual reality, authentic to both the bilingual author who consciously or subconsciously follows the inherent structures of code-switching and the characters that through this linguistic phenomenon fill far more natural and authentic to the reader who share not only their experience but their bilingual voice.

The study of staged-code switching offers a great plethora of opportunities for the further scientific investigation from adaptation and development of Matrix Language Framework and other oral code-

switching models that would better accommodate asynchronous and planned nature of literary discourse to comparative analysis of different pairs of languages and genres of literature that would broaden our understanding of the methods and strategies used for staging free flow of bilingual speech production.

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