

Code-switched Greeting by Bilingual Saudi-American Subject: A Case Study

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the myth of children's monolingual brain by conducting a case study of a two-year-old Saudi-American girl, who is in the two-word stage of vocalization, by focusing on a certain speech act, viz., "greeting" and demonstrating how it is heavily code-switched into Arabic/English language(s) with regard to the context of the speech and the greeter/receiver of the greeting identity. The subject has been raised in an English-speaking country milieu (United States of America), while she has been used to speaking Arabic at home. In this regard, the paper highlights the aim of the encoded usage of code-switching utterances in term of addressing the monolingual brain hypothesis. This qualitative study is based on open observations of two continues months of a toddler as the participant of this study aiming at exploring whether children's greeting differ from those of adults and whether this greeting differs between two languages with regard to monolingual brain hypotheses. So far, the study concluded that greeting has never been mixed upon context, though utterances are code-switched. Moreover, the greeting process is comprehended and acquired within the language context as a pragmatic speech act regarding greeter's identity, context, and gender. Findings of this study significantly support the cognitive approach in term of greeting via using a high frequent greeting word among the American culture. As would cognitive linguists suggest, greeting speech act response varies regarding how greeters of each community greet the subject, but not how they greet each other's in a community. Therefore, surprisingly the two-year-old subject perceptually recognizes the fact of receiving two different languages regardless to the monolingual hypothesis.

Keywords: Bilingual, case study, code-switched greeting, monolingual brain hypothesis

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1. Introduction

Along with the investigation of mixed sentences/utterances, a theoretical claim of “limited capacity theory” appears in the field of linguistics to explain children’s bilingual code-switching, as an evidence of their inability to distinguish between their two languages (Genesee, 2015). Yet, believers in a monolingual brain rely on Genesee (1989) hypothesis of “unitary language system” that considers the input of both languages as a single language. Another concern relating to code switching that has numerous claims regarding the fluency of the coded language in order to be mixed within utterances (Bouchard, 2015). Through various identifications of the term code switching that address language fluency, this study aims at exploring whether complete mastery of language/s is needed in order to be code switched, as long as the subject has not mastered any of the languages, though Arabic is the matrix one. From observations conducted in public places over three extended months, findings show a significant role of greeter/receiver identity, gender, and speech context. Also, perceptually, the subject is able to distinguish between the two languages and initiate greetings with regard to that fact. Monolingual brain has been studied and investigated in the process of bilingual language acquisition- mostly under two main parts of the language, viz., lexicon and grammar- but has not been investigated yet under the frame of pragmatic speech acts. There are many recent books that support “the unitary system hypothesis” (Bhatia, 2018; Snape & Kupisch, 2016) and the ‘limited capacity theory’ (Hervais-Adelman, Pefkou, & Golestani, 2014) under the bilingual language acquisition section, though these streams have been refuted in other works such as (Genesee, 2015). This paper attempts to fill the gap by proposing a work that combines early childhood bilingual greeting in regard to the monolingual belief of Genesee (2006), and Paradis, Nicoladis, Crago, and Genesee (2011). Additionally, it investigates the bilingual language aspect, not under the frame of language acquisition, but under the pragmatic feature of speech act.

Furthermore, studying the nature of childhood greeting speech act will be beneficial in understanding childhood language acquisition and language developmental processes. Thus, this paper aims to investigate more on how children acquire the pragmatic speech act (such as greeting). And it also tries to establish a clear concept about childhood greeting.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Monolingual Brain that Results in Code-Switching

Numerous definitions have been offered for the term code-switching (CS) over the 90s until recently. Generally, the use of two languages or more within certain discourse (written, or spoken) through applying linguistics aspects of languages basically describes the concept of (CS) (Brice & Anderson, 1999). It has been believed that code switched utterances are the main evidence that supports the monolingual brain hypothesis, while the other evidence stands as the dilation of bilinguals’ language acquisition (Genesee, 2015). Basically, monolingual brain relies on the “limited capacity theory” which assumes that the bilingual child will be confused and cannot distinguish between languages if parents are using both languages at home (Paradis et al., 2011). Also, it depends on the “unitary language hypothesis” as has been dubbed by Genesee (2006). This hypothesis predicts that bilinguals’ brain puts both languages systems together and that results in code mixing. The believers of the monolingual brain aver that one grammatical aspect and lexicons of both languages will be associated together under one language in the bilingual brain. There are many works in support of these claims such as W. Francis and Gutiérrez (2012) who argue that the child’s language acquisition is the use of both languages under one constraint in child’s mind. However, there are some studies that find this wrong. For instance, Maneva and

Genesee (2002) studied an infant whose parents were speaking in different languages to the infant. The mother spoke French, while the father spoke English. By counting the amount, type, and duration of babbling, it was found that the infant was babbling differently regarding the language. That led the researchers to conclude that from that age, bilingual infants do not just perceptually distinguish between languages, but also differentiate grammar (Pearson, Fernandez, Lewedeg, & Oller, 1997).

2.2 *The Cognitive Approach of Linguistics*

Basically, the cognitive approach relies heavily on the cognitive processes and social exposure of a context (Rose, Feldman, & Jankowski, 2009; Sternberg & Sternberg, 2016). Early language acquisition begins with a genetic willingness for participating and engaging with complex patterns of a developed human speech (Lieberman, 1968). Furthermore, as the cognitive linguistical knowledge of a child develops in early childhood, Piaget's cognitive development is achieved when a child shifts from a feeling to another (Lewis, 1977). In other words, the linguistic shifts imply adjustment and modulation in language usage. Francis (1972) indicates that in early language development these shifts contain shifts from syntagmatic responses to paradigmatic responses. Certainly, rearing practices and social development affects and shapes the child language (Lewis, 1977; Ringler, Kennell, Jarvella, Navojosky, & Klaus, 1975). In particular, Ringler et al. (1975) also concluded that the amount and type of the mother's linguistic speech pattern influence child's (of two years) language usage as they tested out the mother-child linguistic contact. The experiment depends on language exposure of two groups, in which one of the groups received more time and linguistical contact with the mother. The experimental group, the group who received more maternal contact, shows significant linguistic varieties. Another study that examined five-year-old twins showed that children develop "idioglossia" in which they have received little stimulation to adults' contact. Remarkably, the twins resulted in unclear disclosing of certain usages. However, when they got separated and put within a different context, they were forced to engage, and they resulted in a notable language increase (Luria & Yudovich, 1971). It is important to specify that the role of stimulation is indicated multiply not just within linguistics cognitive studies but also in the generative approach as Chomsky evidently encourages its significance even in language acquisition, in which Universal Grammar is carried out within the context (Chomsky, 1981). Moreover, research that examines 'physical deprivation' of early language acquisition suffers from ambiguity when methodologies are difficult to be employed (Lewis, 1977).

2.3 *Greeting Speech Act*

Greeting is a cross-cultural pragmatic speech act, which initiates or closes an interaction in a certain discourse (Pinto, 2008). Greeting also serves a great deal in acknowledging another person's presence through a linguistic/verbal form of exchange (Rasmussen, Kristiansen, & Andersen, 2019). Thus, greeting contains certain rules and boundaries of engagement in human interaction, which shape the notion of greeting, though it differs among different cultures (Knuf, 1989). Human greeting may include facial expressions, gestures, verbal movement, and certain utterances- with regard to cultural norms and traditions (Trovato et al., 2015). Holmes and Wilson (2017) state: "Greeting formulas universally serve an affective function of establishing non-threatening contact and rapport but their precise content is clearly culture specific" (p. 308) in which all these formulas extendedly lead to various complications.

There are few studies devoted toward greeting speech act among children, as Lokken

(2006) noted in a study of greetings among Norwegian toddler peers. As well as supporting the linguistic cognitive approach, Lokken (2006) study found that greetings and welcomes among children of nine to thirty months were affected by other peers in the day-care. Also, the study shows that greeting act is affected by the cultural aspect as indicated in studies of adults' greetings. Unsurprisingly, he found that the knowledge of greeting is expanded as noted that the one and two-year children were more active and attentive greeters than other subjects. On the other hand, Brenner and Mueller (1982), Lokken (2006) and Stambak and Verba (1986) confirm that the act of playing, somehow, avoid toddlers of being engaged in certain interactions. Thus, some research studies specify the difficulty of human greeting due to its engagement differences vis-a-vis cultures (Rababah & Malkawi, 2012; Trovato et al., 2015). Though a universal and unified form of greeting was proposed to ease this complication, it has not emerged yet (Trovato et al., 2015). Rababah and Malkawi (2012) believe that the greeting act is even harder for foreigners to maintain; their study finds that different greeting utterances are used by Jordanian people according to the setting, age, sex, and relationship. A study of Muslim and Hindu greetings reveals that Muslim kids sometimes misinterpret Hindus non-verbal greetings, though they are living together (Baseer, Alvi, & Zafran, 2012).

2.3. Research questions

This study is an attempt to investigate the subject's ability to differentiate greeting speech act upon two different contexts and cutlers (Saudi and American cultures) as long as the greeting context shapes the act of greeting. Thus, the study considers greeting differentiations of both cultures. As it is indicated in the introduction, this study aims to establish a clear concept about childhood greeting through answers to the following three research questions:

1. Does children's greeting differ from those of adults?
2. Does greeting differ between two languages with regard to monolingual brain hypotheses?
3. Do bilingual children perceptually differentiate between the two languages?

4. Methodology

This study followed a qualitative research approach by adopting a case study research method utilizing participant observation as the data collection tool. Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2012) state that:

Participant observation is in some ways both the most natural and the most challenging of qualitative data collection methods. It connects the researcher to the most basic of human experiences, discovering through immersion and participation the hows and whys of human behavior in a particular context (p. 75).

4.1 Participant of the Study

The data of this study is derived from the conduct of a two-year-old girl (who is the researcher's daughter). The girl was born and has lived in Terre Haute, Indiana, United States of America. The girl has been raised in two different communities; the Saudi community (Arabic speaking community) to which she belongs, and American community (English-speaking community) in which she was born. In other words, she is acquiring a minority language (Arabic) at home but is being educated in a majority language (English) in the day-care. It is important to specify that though the girl used to go to the day-care, from the beginning of this study, the girl has not been attending day-care until the last half of the second month of this observation this is addressed as one of the limitations of this paper in the conclusion section). To this end, the subject's matrix

language is Arabic, as long as she used to be more exposed to her parents than to the outer world.

4.2 Data Collecting

Basically, the data collection method utilized in this study is an open observation conducted for two months. This type of study was chosen as it allows the researcher to encounter and select data in greater depth, than observing one case for just a limited time. Besides the open observation, in order to study the greeting speech act more carefully, *Barns and Nobel* bookstore was chosen as a place for observation. The subject was seated right beside the front door in order to enhance the chance of receiving and initiating the speech act of greeting. This part of the data collection was done twice a week for two hours a day. However, other places too have been used for the open observation, such as hotel room, restaurants, and hospitals.

5. Data Analysis

The data of this open observation is analyzed on regard to greeter's acquaintedness (relationship to the subject), gender, and community (with the American or Saudi). On other words, the analysis of this paper is based on how the subject is familiar to the greeter, e.g., the greeter might be a friend of the mother or could be known by the subject from the subject's day-care. The greeter's gender is one of the study's variables. By that, the greeter's reaction toward greeting speech act is considered upon greeter's gender. Therefore, three parameters were measured during greeting act analysis, which are:

- a) the greeting act of unfamiliar females of both communities: Saudi and American
- b) the greeting act of familiar females of both communities: Saudi and American
- c) Initiating Greeting and Responding to Familiar and Unfamiliar Males of both cultures: Saudis and Americans.

It is important to specify that the subject's gestures associated to greeting speech act, such as waving a hand, nodding head or smiling are counted down as initiating greeting or responding to it.

5.1 Initiating Greeting and Responding to Unfamiliar Females of both communities (Saudi and American)

5.1.1 Initiating Greeting and Responding to Unfamiliar American Females

During gathering the open observational data, when unacquainted American female encounters the subject, the subject welcomes receiving a greeting from her. Even though the subject has no prior knowledge to or relation with the greeter. The subject might respond to the greeting act by waving her hand or by replying "Hi" and smiling.

Out of thirty-two greetings, the two-year subject has initiated the greeting twelve times and responded to them sixteen times. Sometimes, the subject initiates the greeting by just waving her hand; which is one of the surprising findings, indicating that she is able to imbibe the American greeting concept in her mind. Notably, the subject responds to the use of the English language but not the greeter's appearance. In some cases, the subject refers to people speaking the English language as being "Hi" community. For instance, she says "Mama, mamma, ya hi" which means "mother, mother those are hi". Significantly, she sometimes acknowledges the speakers without even seeing them- but throughout hearing them speaking English of course- and informs her mother that the speakers are "Hi". Obviously, she refers to the speaking community

via hearing them speaking English not necessarily upon their look or physical appearance each time.

5.1.2 Initiating Greeting and Responding to Unfamiliar Arabic Females

On the other hand, when an unfamiliar Arabic Saudi female steps by, the subject doesn't show any interest in initiating the greeting or accepting the same. In all the cases, unknown Arabic Saudi females don't initiate greeting with the subject, but with the subject's mother instead. Thus, the subject receives zero greeting and because of that, initiates zero greeting as well. Unknown Saudi females greet the mother of the subject with "Alsalamo Alaikum" or raising the hand high as a companion gesture of the greeting act.

5.2 Initiating Greeting and Responding to known/familiar Females of both communities (Saudi and American)

5.2.1 Initiating Greeting and Responding to familiar American Females

Moving to the part of the greeters acquainted to the subject, and especially the known American females, the same case is happening with the unfamiliar American greeters to the subject (previous section: 5.1.1). The subject is flexible to initiate and respond by waving her hand or by saying "Hi". Throughout the time of the observation, the subject never greets with any other word rather than "hi", though the known female (who works in her daycare) usually says "Hello". As has been specified in the methodology section, the subject has joined the day-care lately. Thus, the occasions of receiving and initiating the greeting with known American females are limited, because the subject doesn't engage with known adult females except during her time at day-care. Out of twenty greetings offered in the day-care, the subject initiates two and responds to seven. Day-care is representing a new environment for the subject (without the parents), it might be challenging for her to initiate or respond to greetings. Particularly, the subject does not initiate greetings with familiar and unfamiliar American females upon two things: a) the physical appearance and social dressing code as Americans, e.g., not wearing a headscarf. b) in term of hearing them speaking the English language before seeing them (in this case, she often informs the mother that there are some English greeters).

5.2.2 Initiating Greeting and Responding to Familiar Arabic Females

However, when an acquainted Saudi Arabian female visits the subject's family, the subject gets excited and pronounces the visitor's name repeatedly but does not resort to the Arabic way of greeting (which is kissing the cheeks and shaking hands). Moreover, the subject never extends the American way of greeting to the known and even unknown Saudis. For example, when Brooj, a friend of the subject's mother, enters, the subject repeatedly says: "Booz. Booz. Booz". This does not happen with all of her mother's friends, but only with those, the subject loves most. Otherwise, she ignores the known visitors by not greeting them at all. On the contrary, adult Saudi female greeters do not usually initiate greeting with the subject. Instead they greet the mother. However, they occasionally ask the subject "How you doing?" or "How are you?" right after they greet the mother with the Arabic greeting style. Remarkably, she never greets an Arabic-speaking woman with the American greeting, e.g., by saying "Hi".

5.2 Initiating Greeting and Responding to Familiar and Unfamiliar Males of both cultures: Saudis and Americans

More surprisingly, the subject never initiates or responds to any greeter of the male gender-

whether the male greeter is Saudi or American. It is important to specify that just one male initiated greeting, but the subject fails even to reply or to show some interest in initiating the greeting. For instance, when a woman entered Barnes and Noble, the subject initiated the greeting saying: “Hi”, to which the women responded “Oh, hi”; a man saw what happened and tried to greet the subject by saying: “Oh, hi here”. The subject turned her face away and refused to reply. Significantly, it was the only man who ever initiated greeting during the two months of the open-observation. The only case of her initiating the greeting to a male was when she was in the drive thru’ and heard a voice speaking in English; this was at the end of the second month of the observation and mentioned as a limitation of this study in regard to the expansion of the subject’s knowledge of greeting act. It is also possible that she did not recognize the gender’s sound via the speaker of the drive-through. Table: 1 displays the findings relating to greetings initiated/responded to by the subject, classified as to community, gender, and identity of the greeter. On the other hand, acquainted Saudi males a few times ask the subject some pragmatic discourse questions to open a conversation instead of a greeting, as well as familiar female greeters, do.

Table 1. *Frequency of subject’s initiations and responses of greeting/ speech act.*

Subject’s Reaction toward greeting Speech act	<i>Unknown American Females</i>	<i>Known American Females</i>	<i>Unknown Arabic Females</i>	<i>Known Arabic females (who are friends of the mother)</i>	<i>Known and unknown/ American Males</i>	<i>Known and unknown/ American Males</i>
<i>Initiates greeting (even by waving her hand)</i>	12 times	2 times	0 time	Initiate by names 6 times	1 (in the drive thru)	0 time
<i>Responds to greeting</i>	16 times	7 times	0 time	3 times	0 time	0 time

6. Findings with observational examples

There are several examples that clarify the subject’s understanding of greeting upon the context. For instance, in the hospital, when she listens to the nurses speaking English, she says: “*Mama, mamma, ya hi*” which means “*mother, mother those are hi*”. By that, when she hears the English language, she indicates that those are the people who say hi. This gives clear evidence that the subject perceptually distinguishes between both communities and language; in that regard, she uses the certain ways of greeting to each greeter with regard to her/his community, according to the finding of Rababah and Malkawi (2012) as well as Baseer et al. (2012) who explain that greeting speech act is with regard to the greeter’s context, identity, and age. As previously mentioned in analysis section (5.2) earlier, the subject perceives greeter’s sex in which she unlikely tend not to respond to men as it shown during the open observation that they don’t prefer greeting a two-year-girl.

Initiating greeting act with unacquainted American Females can be analysed in regard to the realization of speaker's race and physical characteristics as specifically indicated in early language acquisition that children from an early stage acknowledge physical diversification (Follari, 2014); however this is not always the case here, because, in the hotel room, the room service lady knocked on the door and said: "room service", to which the subject responded by saying, "*Mama, mama ya hi*" which means "*mother, mother, it's a hi*". It is thus clear that the subject distinguishes between the two communities through the use of language and recognizes each language as having an entity different from the other. In that regard, she initiates and responds to greeters within the right pragmatic speech act (Riches, Tomasello, & Conti-Ramsden, 2005). For instance, she never mixes up by greeting an Arabic female with "*Hi*". Clearly, this is not what monolingual believers would expect, as long as they believe that the person possesses one language system and inserts different lexicons into that system (Francis & Gutiérrez, 2012).

This finding supports (Genesee, 2015; Maneva & Genesee, 2002) in which infants are found to have different responses varying with the speaker's language.

The most notable point is aligned to cognitivists' beliefs toward the necessity of linguistics and social stimulation in regard to language acquisition (Lewis, 1977; Riches et al., 2005; Ringler et al., 1975) More specifically, the receptive aspect of what the children have received regarding the quantity and quality of exposure in the findings of Ringler and his colleagues' study. Similarly, this study also investigated that the subject greets people depending on how she is used to being greeted by them, and not on how they [adults] greet themselves, or how they greet her mother. For instance, the subject never imitates how the unacquainted Arabic females greet her mother; instead, she never greets them because they basically ignore her. On the other hand, lots of unacquainted American females pay attention to her and greet her without having any reservation with her. That leads to what Riches et al. (2005) specify in his book as children's acquisition of language, in which at this stage, child's language is not an adult language, though language input is somehow taken from adults.

Further explanation, this study shows that the subject perceived and comprehended greeting parameters of both contexts from adults' social communications, however she applies what engages her socially with others in greeting act. Also, this agrees with the contention of Trovato et al. (2015) and Pinto (2008) in specifying the nature of the greeting act- as it is culturally comprehended and implemented within its act. Thus, the subject also ignores males, as long as she receives not much attention or greeting from them, and until now conceptually she might be believing that she doesn't have to greet them.

Finally, the greeting process is comprehended and acquired in the language context as a pragmatic speech act: as the subject involves herself and sees, she imitates the way of producing the speech act. This is what cognitivists, such as Riches et al. (2005) and Bybee (2010), predict. Also, the high frequency of the word uses, as Bybee (2010) explained in her work, affects words usage. For instance, the subject uses "*Hi*" in greeting all the time over any other English greeting word due to its high-usage frequency in spoken English language, according to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (see Table: 2)

Table 2. A Summary of the Study's Findings in regard to Previous Studies

<i>The Study Findings</i>	<i>Agrees with Previous Studies/Linguistical Approaches</i>	<i>Disagrees with Previous Studies/Linguistical Approaches</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greeting process is comprehended and acquired within language context as a pragmatic speech act. ■ Though she code-mixes utterances, she never mixes greetings upon the context. ■ Greeting speech act depends on the greeter's identity, context, and gender ■ Notable point, she never greets as adults, but she greets as when adults greet her. ■ As she involves and sees, she imitates 	<p>Cognitivists. Specifically, in (H. Francis, 1972; Lewis, 1977; Riches et al., 2005; Ringler et al., 1975).</p> <p>(Rababah & Malkawi, 2012)</p> <p>(Riches et al., 2005)</p> <p>Cognitivists (H. Francis, 1972; Lewis, 1977; Riches et al., 2005; Ringler et al., 1975) and Generativists</p>	<p>Monolinguals</p>

7. Conclusion

At the end of this work, this paper answers the first question of this study: that children's greeting does not differ from that of adults when it is copied from an adult's input; however, children's greeting reflects what adults greet children with (not on how adults greet each other). Thereafter, the knowledge of greeting will be expanded as the child grows into an adult. Thus, for future studies, greater attention to this type of research will have more value, considering that this study took just two months and knowledge of greeting. The researcher realizes that overgeneralization might happen in this case, in which the early childhood acquisition goes back and forth all the time until it gets adequate to the adult's language level. However, future studies might also investigate more about child-to-child greeting speech act in the frame of bilingual and monolingual children in term of previous literature that adheres the fact of child's knowledge of welcoming and greeting beyond peers' communications (Lokken, 2006).

With regard to investigating monolingualism, the second question of this research, this study shows that though children code-mix utterances by using one systematic grammar and combining languages lexicon (as in this case, the subject uses the Arabic grammar because it is the matrix language and code-switched with some English words), the subject never mixes up greetings with regard to the speaker of a particular community, and by that one would expect that if the subject had acquired both languages simultaneously from birth, the subject wouldn't rely more on the language aspect as in this study. Genesee (2015) specified in his study that learning two languages simultaneously from birth wouldn't ravel the acquisition of both languages. In that regard, this can be considered the second limitation of this study, which requires to be considered in future work.

The answer to the last research question is that the subject perceptually demonstrates two different entities, allowing her to distinguish between the two languages and uses the correct form of greeting with each member of the two communities (Saudis and Americans). Hence, this finding disagrees with the monolingual hypothesis in a way that monolinguals assume one language pattern in the human brain for both entities, by that, the speaker mixes utterances in regard to grammatical and structural word usage of both systems.

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