

Code-mixing as criterion for bidialectism: the case of urban Cypriot Greek

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Identifying the native speaker becomes an arduous and theoretically challenging task in speech communities, which have been undergoing language shift as a result of factors such as language contact. Cypriot Greek is a case in point: while diglossia is arguable still highly pervasive, recent findings (Karyolemou 1999, Karyolemou & Pavlou 2001, Papapavlou 2004, Tsiplakou 2004) suggest that code-switching and even code-mixing between Standard Modern Greek (SMG) and Cypriot Greek (CG) are at work in spontaneous speech of a large group of native speakers of the dialect. More specifically, particular registers display not only intra-sentential but also inter-sentential SMG/CG alternations, and, crucially, code-mixing within the limits of syntactic phrases or even words (cf. Poplack 2000). As expected, the phonetic/phonological level remains predominantly Cypriot and the morphology exhibits more versatility. IN this context, syntactic variability presents the most challenging domain of inquiry. The phenomenon appears to be contingent upon education, sex and age as well as upon communicative parameters such as interlocutor, topic, register and, above all, the projection of particular sociolinguistic identities.

Preliminary findings suggest that code-mixing is expected to occur most typically in the speech of educated, middle-class, urban speakers. However, this trend is recently becoming more wide-spread and evident and is found among increasingly larger numbers of speakers. The aim of the present research is twofold: first, to investigate and determine the criteria for defining different groups of speakers of the dialect and to determine which among these, if any, is playing a key role in language shift of the type described above; second, to explore the significance of code-switching and code-mixing in establishing the profile of the dialect speaker.

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