

## **Multilingualism in written discourse: an approach to the analysis of multilingual texts**

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### **Abstract**

The study of spoken discourse in a mixture of languages, commonly called ‘conversational code-switching’ has a history of several decades, and a number of well-developed theories compete to account for it. A number of researchers have studied multilingual *written* discourse from different perspectives, but most of these studies have focussed on interactive genres which resemble conversation. Only a few studies have offered analyses of multilingual texts with prominent visual aspects, such as advertisements, posters and web pages.

This paper briefly reviews research on written code-switching and then goes on to introduce examples of multilingual and multimodal texts which, although they involve combinations of languages within a text, do not correspond to what is normally regarded as code-switching. It argues that an insightful account of these phenomena requires an understanding of the kinds of multilingual literacy practices with which they are associated. Furthermore, for an insightful account of them to be given they need to be analysed as *multimodal* texts, where visual and spatial aspects of the whole are crucial to interpretation. The paper presents a framework for analysing multimodal, multilingual texts in terms of their visual and spatial as well as linguistic characteristics, and examples of how this can be applied to actual data.

## **Multilingualism in written discourse: approaches to multilingual texts**

### **1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Since the 1970s a large amount of research in the field of bilingualism has focussed on the mixing of languages in discourse, in particular *code-switching* and related phenomena, variously called *code-mixing*, *code-shifting*, *language alternation* or *language interaction*. Much of this work has studied spontaneously produced informal spoken data, usually described as ‘conversational code-switching’. Extensive research has also been done on spoken code-switching in more institutional contexts such as classrooms and offices.

A relatively small body of linguistic research to date has concerned itself with the phenomena of *written* language mixing. Literary genres such as novels and poetry which involve multilingualism have received some attention from scholars of literature (e.g. Schmeling & Schmitz-Emans 2002, Knauth 2007). Within linguistics, some studies (e.g. Moyer 1998, Callahan 2004) have used written data to confirm hypotheses developed on the basis of spoken data. Recent linguistic studies in this area have tended to focus on written computer-mediated communication (see Androutsopoulos 2007a for an overview) and have treated the written data as the focus of interest in its own right.

However, while the study of spoken language mixing has focussed on essentially one genre - conversation – whether in its informal or institutional settings, there is no such clear focus for written language. The written medium is different from the spoken in complex ways, and encompasses a great diversity of genres, most of which do not correspond to spoken genres even where there is some overlap. It is therefore not obvious (though also not much questioned in the literature) that the term ‘code-switching’ and the related terms mentioned above are applicable to written language at all, and if so, whether they refer to the same phenomena, or slightly different phenomena, or substantially different phenomena. It is probably not useful to dwell too much on this question,

especially as the term code-switching has so many different definitions, and there are still ‘serious disputes about issues that are partly terminological in nature’ (Auer 2010:460).<sup>2</sup> It will be argued in this paper that there are genres of written text which are multilingual (i.e. contain elements drawn from more than one language) but which cannot be analysed insightfully using the tools developed for spoken code-switching. This paper will introduce examples of some of these genres and propose a set of analytical tools for researching them. It is hoped that this will extend the range of types of multilingual text which are currently regarded as suitable for study from a specifically *sociolinguistic* viewpoint.

### **Multilingual speech and multilingual writing**

The prototypical ‘spoken multilingual text’ is a conversation which involves language alternation, and under the heading of ‘conversational code-switching’ this is where most research has been focussed. By contrast, other types of multilingual genres, including those that straddle the boundaries between speech and writing, have tended to receive much less attention from researchers. For example, some multilingual communities have traditions of producing oral poetry or songs in a mixture of languages. These have been studied mainly by ethnologists and scholars of literature rather than linguists (Knauth 2007) though there are some linguistic accounts (e.g. Argenter 2001). Multilingual performances, e.g. plays and rapping, may be scripted or unscripted. These texts are products of, and resources for, local language practices and although they are mainly spoken they are less ephemeral, and more replicable, than spontaneous conversation. They may be written down during the process of production, or later, or remain purely oral. They have been studied to some extent by linguistic researchers (e.g. Sarkar and Winer 2006 on rap lyrics in Quebec).

One type of multilingual written text which has been studied by linguists is the sort where language alternation takes the form of *embedding* a representation of speech (for example, dialogue) within a larger matrix (for example, the narrative in a novel). In such cases, the multilingualism may result from the speech itself being multilingual (i.e. a representation of

conversational code-switching). Alternatively, the speech may be monolingual but in a different language from that of the matrix. An early linguistic study of such a text was Timm's (1978) paper on Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*, which provided her with an extensive corpus of French/Russian code-switching. Moyer's (1998) study of a humorous newspaper column is another example of research on a written representation of spoken code-switching.

There exist other written texts, which display multilingualism without being embedded within a monolingual matrix. Those types which have been studied the most, are those which most resemble spoken conversation; for example, code-switching emails like those extensively discussed by Hinrichs (2007), the bilingual letters analysed by Graedler (1999), or the diasporic web forums studied by Androutsopoulos (2006, 2007b). The language-alternation discourse found within these genres is usually referred to as 'written code-switching', and does indeed exhibit many characteristics similar to those of spoken code-switching.

Other written genres are not like conversation at all, despite having the potential to involve text in more than one language: for example, posters, newspaper articles, advertisements and web pages, of which examples will be discussed below.

While spoken code-switching has been extensively studied and theorised since the late 1960s, no theories have been developed specifically for written code-switching. Most researchers have therefore drawn, more or less extensively, on the available theories of spoken code-switching. The pioneering sociolinguistic work on the study of code-switching was undoubtedly that of Gumperz (Blom and Gumperz 1972, Gumperz 1982) and almost all the sociolinguistic research on written code-switching applies some of his key concepts. Among his central contributions to research in this area are the notion of code-switching as a contextualisation cue, the distinction between situational and metaphorical switching, and a typology of discourse functions of code-switching. All of these concepts are potentially applicable, and have been applied at some stage, to written language alternation.

Since the 1990s two frameworks have predominated in sociolinguistic research on spoken code-switching. The *Markedness Model* (Myers-Scotton 1993) accounts for code-switching in terms of ‘rational choices’ by speakers who choose a code from their repertoire to activate sets of ‘rights and obligations’ associated with that code. The concepts of the Markedness Model can be applied, at least to some extent, to the more conversation-like and interactive written genres, e.g. online chat. However, it would be harder to apply to other types of written data which are less interactive, or where one or both of the interacting parties is anonymous.

The *Conversation Analysis* model (Auer 1984, 1995, 1998, 2010; Li Wei 1998, 2005) can likewise be adapted to work with more conversation-like interactive data, but because of the crucial role played by interlocutors’ responses within this approach (i.e. the central role of *sequentiality*) it is impossible in practice to apply it in any useful way to non-interactive written data. So, for example, Auer’s definition of code-switching as ‘perceived and interpreted as a locally meaningful event by participants’ (Auer 1999:310) immediately causes a problem when we want to consider written texts. For some kinds of written text, such as internet chat and play scripts, it is reasonably clear that there are ‘participants’, but for many other types of text, where the only interaction is between the writer and a distant reader, it is not clear at all. We could, however, extend the scope of the term code-switching to such text types while preserving the requirement that to be called ‘code-switching’ a change of language must be ‘locally meaningful,’ functioning as a contextualisation cue for the reader. Then some instances of language alternation in ‘non-interactive’ text types would be classed as code-switching, while others would not. For example, Päivi Pahta, in her study of ‘Code-switching in medieval Medical writing’ (2004), argues that insertions in Latin within medical texts serve a variety of discourse functions, such as showing ‘exclusion and decorum’ (p. 86), marking blessings and charms (p. 88) and serving as text-organising devices (p. 90). These analyses are plausible and convincing from the analyst’s point of view, but there is no text-internal or text-external way of establishing that ‘participants’ actually have these interpretations, as there might be in a conversational interaction.

The majority of studies of written mixed-language discourse to date, to the extent that they try to classify code-switching and account for what motivates individual switches, have applied one of the three models above – those associated with Gumperz, Myers-Scotton, or Auer. However, none of these models was developed originally to deal with written texts, and researchers often face difficulties when trying to apply them to a different modality.

## **2. Written multilingual genres: literacies, norms and contexts**

It is difficult to say for certain whether written multilingualism is on the increase, or whether it has simply been less prominent – or less noticed by linguists – in the past. Multilingual texts have been documented and analysed going back as far as ancient times (see e.g. Adams (2003); Schendl (2001, 2002a, 2002b); Pahta (2004); Wright (2000, 2002)), but in most contemporary societies, they are mainly confined to a small number of text types, such as bilingual signs and product packaging. Undoubtedly this is one result of hegemonic monolingualism, an ideology which legitimates only texts which conform to the norms of a single (usually named and standardised) language. The influence of hegemonic monolingualism is exerted particularly strongly on printed texts which are produced for public consumption, such as fixed signage, books, newspapers and printed matter. Yet even here, there are exceptions, and different norms apply in some language communities, allowing for the production – routinely or occasionally, depending on the community – of multilingual texts. Advertising, as we saw in some examples mentioned above, is an area where the monolingual norm is sometimes flouted, even in societies where it is strong in other contexts. Recently the internet has produced a large additional space, relatively free from normative constraints, in which speakers can practice multilingualism in written, computer-mediated communication.

Given the diverse range of types of written multilingual text, it is unlikely that any blanket theory can be put forward to account for the forms they take. It is clear that in

trying to account for the form of any particular multilingual text, we will at the very least have to take into account the language preferences and capabilities of the author or producer of the text, and those of its reader or consumer. However, this is not enough. We *also* need to know something about the context in which the reading of the text will take place – the literacy *events* (Heath 1983:71, 386; Barton 2007:36) in which it may feature.

For example, in order to account for the mixing of (Norman) French and English in a medieval letter written to King Henry IV of England<sup>3</sup> by one of his officials, it is desirable that we should have an understanding of the circumstances both of its composition and its reading. The practice of writing bilingually was not the norm in those days, so we can only speculate<sup>4</sup>. It *may* have been written by a writer fluent in English and French, and read by a person (the king himself?) likewise fluent in both: this corresponds to a modern model of a monolingual writer and a monolingual reader. But there are other possibilities: it may have been dictated in one language or a mixture, and read out to its addressee by one bilingual person, or two or more monolinguals. It may never have been read verbatim to the king, but read by one or more of his servants, who then produced a verbal summary in one language or a mixture. Whichever of these is correct – and we cannot know – we can be sure that the form of the letter was partly dependent on the literacies and literacy practices of its author, and assumptions about the literacies and literacy practices of its addressee.


Another example is provided by bilingual magazines like *Russian Bride of New York*, in which all content is presented once in Russian and once in English (Angermeyer forthcoming). Angermeyer points out that the bilingual format of this magazine allows daughters of Russian immigrants (who may speak Russian, without being literate in it) to plan their weddings jointly with their mothers who are literate in Russian but may be unable to read English. Thus a kind of collective reading is envisaged, and the form of the multilingual text is designed to match the particular literacies, and literacy practices, of the target readership. This is in contrast to the kind of multilingual magazine often given away by airlines as in-flight reading, where the assumption is likely to be that the reader

has a preference for just one of the languages, and the act of reading will almost certainly be individual rather than collective.

Figure 1 provides a different kind of example. It shows a small home-made poster advertising an orthodox church service to be held in a city in England. The text is in Greek apart from three sections which are in the Roman alphabet. Two of these give only the name of the priest, which is an English name and has not been transliterated into Greek. The third non-Greek section is a longer stretch of English. It has a prominent position, in the middle of the poster, but is in parentheses, an indication that it is somehow to be treated as different from the rest of the text. It gives, in good English (but with some indications that it was written by a non-native English speaker), a set of instructions for finding the church.

We need to consider the context of use as part of understanding the way Greek and English are mixed in this poster. The long English stretch of text has some English names (*East Road* and *St Peter's*), but this does not in itself account for the rest of it being in English. It seems there is no problem in inserting English words within a Greek text, as this has been done with Father Jonathan's name in the bottom line. Why then the large body of English text in the middle of a mainly Greek document? It seems unlikely that a first language speaker of Greek, even one living in England, would find the instructions easier to understand in English than in Greek. We could try out an explanation based on the metaphorical uses of the two languages, for example, that English metaphorically indexes the here-and-now in England, as opposed to the enduring, and essentially Greek, nature of the church and its service. This also seems unlikely, because the specific details of when the services take place, the name of the church and diocese and even the city have all been given in Greek.

**ΕΛΛΗΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟ**  
**ΑΝΤΙΟΧΕΙΑΣ**  
**ΔΙΑΚΟΝΙΑ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ**  
**ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΝΑΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΤΙΜΙΟΥ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΥ,**  
**ΛΑΝΚΑΣΤΕΡ**  
ΥΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΑΙΓΙΔΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΟΥ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ ΙV  
**ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΟΣ:** Father Jonathan Hemmings  
**ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ**  
**ΑΓ. ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤΟΜΟΥ**  
(ΣΤΗΝ ΑΓΓΛΙΚΗ ΜΕ ΚΑΤΙΣΤΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ)  
**ΚΑΘΕ ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ**  
10.30 π.μ.  
(go up East road, past St Peter's, past the crossroads, and  
turn right at the second set of blue gates being always on  
the right side of East Road as you go up.)



Μακάριο ἡ κοιλία ἡ βαστάσα σου (1' ουκ. 27)

ΠΛΗΡΟΦΟΡΙΕΣ: Fr. JONATHAN THA. (01524) 771396, 32109, 32892

Figure 1: hand-made poster advertising church service

A likely explanation is in terms of the practical situation in which the information might be used. The assumed reader appears to be a Greek speaker who is well able to understand the directions in Greek or English, but might need to enlist the help of an English speaker to find the place, for example an English-speaking friend who might have better local knowledge, or a bus or taxi-driver who might be taking them there. In such circumstances it would be much more useful to have the directions written in English than in Greek. Again in this case, the choice of languages and the way they are juxtaposed in the text is based on assumptions about the literacies and language preferences of the readership. In this connection, it is worth noting that the service is described (in Greek) as being “in English with some Greek”. Thus although Greek predominates in the poster, there seems to be an assumption that the congregation is bilingual with a preference for English, since the service is mainly in English in spite of the fact that Greek is strongly preferred as the language of Orthodox church services<sup>5</sup>.

### 3. From multilingual texts to multimodal analysis

The focus within bilingualism research on spoken code-switching and, to a much lesser extent, its written counterparts, has led researchers to concentrate on written text *as* text – in other words, as strings of words on the page or screen – rather than seeing it in its *visual* context, as a reader sees it: as a text surrounded by other texts, potentially with differing font sizes, colours and styles all potentially providing context for interpreting the content of the text. Research which takes this visual aspect of multilingual texts into account is limited, reflecting the general reluctance of linguistics as a discipline to take on board the analysis of visual and graphic elements in conjunction with text <sup>6</sup>. In particular, treatments of *multimodality* (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996/2006; Jewitt 2009; Kress 2010) in multilingual texts have until now been rare (but see Stroud and Mpendukana 2009, 2010 for a notable exception).

Certainly, some kinds of written text do not seem to need direct reference to visual aspects in their analysis: emails, for example, used to be presented by browsers in a standard way using plain fonts, with little contextualisation provided by positioning on the screen or variation in the type face. Recently this is less true, with writers often having the same range of fonts and styles available in email as in word processing. Ignoring the visual aspect is unproblematic if the type of analysis to be done is concerned purely with such matters as syntax, lexis, or text-internal cohesion. Such concerns are, in fact, similar to those of some researchers studying code-switching in spoken language, and treating written texts as units of ‘plain text’ probably serves such researchers best. The layout, design and relative ordering of texts that make up the ‘bigger picture’ can safely be ignored. The same could probably be said for prose texts in traditional media, e.g. novels. However, even these genres may make use of visual effects to contextualise other-language elements: for example, Mahootian (2003:1495) observes that all Spanish words within basically English texts in the bilingual magazine *Latina* are italicised, marking them as ‘other’. Any use of a different script (e.g. the script-switching described by Angermeyer 2005, forthcoming) has a similar effect. Similarly Mbodj-Pouye and Van den

Avenne (2007: 104) note that in a handwritten text, script styles – lower case block letters for Bambara, and cursive for French – keep the languages apart<sup>7</sup>.

Thus research on written code-switching so far has tended either to focus on text types where visual layout is conventionalised and of limited importance to the interpretation (such as letters, email messages and legal or medical texts) or to remove the text for analysis from its context, for example by looking at individual articles from a magazine rather than at the magazine or the page as a whole, complex text<sup>8</sup>. But while some written texts are linear and make little or no use of layout or lettering styles/fonts, other written texts make full use of the potential of the visual medium for complex layouts, multi-layering and the use of a range of fonts and graphic devices. Contemporary advertising provides many examples of this, including multilingual examples. Linguists trying to account for the interpretation of such texts have been forced to take into account at least some of the visual and graphical features. For example, Graedler (1999:337), discussing an advertisement in a Norwegian magazine which contains both Norwegian and English, finds the spatial positioning of the elements to be salient:

Switches in ads are also very often found in conspicuous positions - almost 90% occupy an initial position as heading, or a paragraph-final or text-final position in the text, or they are graphically separated from the text proper. Given the overall discourse function of advertising — to sell product — and the sales and snob-appeal associated with English world-wide, this is not surprising.

In fact, it is clear that many monolingual and bilingual written texts cannot be satisfactorily analysed without paying attention to aspects other than the strictly textual. The metalanguage required for this kind of multimodal analysis has begun to be developed by linguists, e.g. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996/2006), Scollon and Scollon (2003) but has rarely been applied to multilingual texts. An early example of a multimodal analysis of a multilingual advertisement is Piller's analysis of a poster (2001:161-162), in which she finds it necessary to include 'fonts, colours, position, and

form' alongside function in order to explain the salience of the English headline in an otherwise German text. More recently, Androutsopoulos (forthcoming) has developed the concept of 'English on top' in the spatial arrangement of multilingual texts which include English. Thus in this type of complex text, visual and spatial features provide contextualisation cues for the interpretation of the language strings which they relate to. An analysis of a text such as the poster described by Piller in purely textual terms would be very difficult – or uninteresting - as much of its meaning derives from the visual elements mentioned. Yet increasingly the textual world is made up of texts like this, which are structured visually as well as textually: as Kress and van Leeuwen note, many kinds of texts 'are no longer just written, but "designed", and multimodally articulated' (1998: 187). It is important that those texts which in addition are multilingually articulated should also be amenable to study.

Figure 2 is an advertisement which appeared in a free bilingual newspaper, the *Spanglish Times*, published in Phoenix, Arizona in 2007<sup>9</sup>. Most of the content of *Spanglish Times* was<sup>10</sup> presented bilingually, either in separate Spanish and English versions or, as in this advertisement, in a mixture<sup>11</sup>. In this advertisement, some information is presented in Spanish and some in English, without overlap. For example, the opening times are given only in English, as are the details of tyres available and 'extras' that come with their purchase: 'mounting and balancing, lugs, locks and free tire repairs'. The equally important information that the advertiser repairs bent and damaged aluminium rims, and will even buy them, is only in Spanish. The name of the business *Cien Alegrías* ('Hundred Joys') is Spanish only, but the nature of the trade, 'tire and wheel', is given in English.

The advertisement appears to be designed for bilingual readers with competence in both English and Spanish, because the Spanish and English contents complement rather than repeat each other. It is possible that the services are described in different languages because different sets of readers are targeted for different services, but this seems unlikely: presumably Spanish monolinguals are no more likely than English speakers to

want to repair their broken rims, and no less likely to want to know when the shop is open. The advertisement as a whole addresses a community of readers who are equally able to read and understand the Spanish and English parts of the text.

<b>CIEN ALEGRÍAS</b> <b>Tire and Wheel</b>					
LOGO	LOGO	LOGO	LOGO	LOGO	LOGO
BRAND 1 - BRAND 2 - BRAND 3 - BRAND 4 - BRAND 5 - BRAND 6 - BRAND 7					
<b>17 inch</b> Starting from	<b>18 inch</b> Starting from	<b>20 inch</b> Starting from	<b>17 inch</b> Starting from	<b>22 inch</b> Starting from	<b>24 inch</b> Starting from
<b>\$\$\$ .99</b>	<b>\$\$\$ .99</b>	<b>\$\$\$ .99</b>	<b>\$\$\$ .99</b>	<b>\$\$\$ .99</b>	<b>\$\$\$ .99</b>
w/tires	w/tires	w/tires	w/tires	w/tires	w/tires
INCLUDES MOUNTING AND BALANCING, LUGS, LOCKS AND FREE TIRE REPAIRS					
<b>¿Necesitas Reparar?</b>					
Reparación de rines de aluminio Doblados - Quebrados				COMPRAMOS RINES DE ALUMINIO QUEBRADOS	
OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK! MON-SAT 8AM - 8PM - SUN 9AM - 5PM - 7 LOCATIONS					
<b>9999 Southern Drive - Hometown - 555-444-4321</b>					

Figure 2: Advertisement for ' Cien Alegrías tire and wheel service'

This example illustrates the difficulty of extending the notion of 'code-switching' to all multilingual texts. Although alternation between languages is certainly involved here, it makes little sense to describe the transition between *tire repairs* and *¿Necesitas reparar?* as 'intersentential code-switching' since (as shown in more detail below) the visual structure makes it clear that the sentence is not the relevant unit here. To provide an insightful analysis of the text as a whole, reference has to be made to the visual at the

same time as the linguistic, just as it would if the advertisement was a monolingual one. The following account is therefore enhanced by reference to spatial arrangement, fonts and colours.

Although both languages occur in the advertisement, they are kept separate visually through the use of horizontal bands with different background colours. Of these, only one (numbered 2), contains both Spanish and English. This is the uppermost text-bearing band and also the broadest band in the advertisement. It has a white background, with the Spanish name of the business in large letters, centred, in red, and immediately below that, the nature of the business: 'tire and wheel' in a much smaller font, in black. The font size and colour of the (Spanish) business name undoubtedly give it more prominence than the (English) business description; nevertheless we have both Spanish and English occurring together in a very prominent position.

The remaining bands are either monolingual or not attributable to a particular language. Below a narrow band of trade logos (3) which separates the business name from the rest, three adjacent bands are visually marked as a cohesive unit through the use of purple type on a white background. They are separated by horizontal lines which also separate them thematically: the first band (4) consists only of brand names of tyres, the second (5) gives a set of tyre sizes and 'starting from' prices, while the third (6) gives additional information about what services are included in the price. While the brand names cannot be allocated to any particular language, the other two bands with a white background are clearly English, meaning that visual cohesion in this case corresponds to linguistic cohesion as well.

There is a sharp visual disjunction between this unit and the next, which consists of two bands (7 and 8) in dark colours, purple and red, further connected visually with images of two tyres on the left, and a yellow circle containing text on the right. All the text in this unit is in Spanish. Although the bands have distinct colours their use of reds gives them cohesion, which also corresponds to two kinds of linguistic cohesion – first, they both contain only Spanish, and secondly, they have the form of a (modified) adjacency pair, the text in the first posing a question ('Need a repair?') and the second providing the answer ('Repairs of aluminium rims. Bent and broken').

Another change of background colour – this time to black – marks the transition to the last unit, (bands 9 and 10).

Clearly, for a rich analysis of this multilingual advertisement, both visual and linguistic aspects must be taken into account. Cohesion is achieved visually – for example, through colour but also through the use of similar fonts and spatial proximity – as well as linguistically, through the use of the same language or through other means such as adjacency pairs.

In the analysis of advertising and similar texts, it is of particular interest to identify the most salient parts, as in Piller's analysis of a poster (2001:161-162) mentioned above: 'The headlines are salient because of their function, large fonts, strong colors, position, and form. All these graphic devices serve to make the English text "stronger" than the German one. English becomes the dominant voice of the advertisement'. In the case of the *Cien Alegrías* advertisement, however, it is much harder to identify a 'dominant voice' in language terms. Spanish occupies a position at the top and just below the centre, two positions which would give it salience according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Scollon and Scollon (2003). Furthermore, Spanish is associated with strong colours and large fonts relative to other text in the advertisement. On the other hand, English is also placed near the top, and also takes up much of central and lowest part of the advertisement. On these grounds we could claim that English is prominent too. Significantly, the topmost unit of text, band 2, has *both* Spanish and English in a prominent position, although English is second and smaller. In the absence of any reliable metric for measuring salience with this degree of accuracy, we could say that English is *slightly* less salient than Spanish in this advertisement, but that both languages play an important role. Moreover, the advertisement presents itself as 'bilingual' by placing both languages together in a prominent position at the top (cf. Androutsopoulos (forthcoming)).

We can conclude that for this kind of multilingual text, an analysis which takes account of both the linguistic and visual aspects is essential. In the next section I will suggest some ways of approaching such an analysis.

## **5. An analytical framework for multilingual texts**

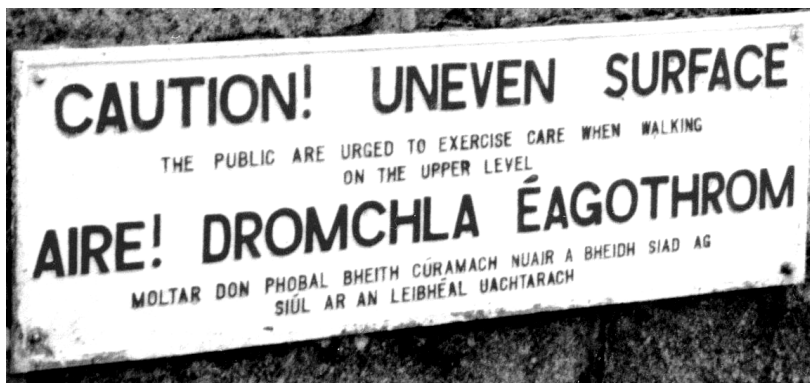
While spoken code-switching is essentially one-dimensional, involving the juxtaposition of spoken linguistic units from two languages within a single interactional event, language mixing within multilingual texts is potentially multidimensional, involving juxtaposition or separation on both the linguistic and visual dimensions. In this section, I present a framework which will allow for a rich analysis of a wide range of multilingual texts, including such texts as bilingual signs and multilingual labels, as well as the kinds of texts already discussed above. The framework is presented here under these headings: *units of analysis; language-spatial relationships; language content relationships; and linguistic mixing types.*

### **5.1 Units of analysis**

In the analysis of spoken code-switching, the units of analysis have traditionally been grammatical (e.g. sentences, morphemes) or discourse-related (e.g. utterances, turns) or a combination of these. In the case of multilingual written texts, we will need to refer to at least three types of unit: (1) grammatical units (e.g. sentences, morphemes); (2) genre-specific units relevant to textual structure and cohesion (e.g. paragraphs, headings); (3) visual/spatial units (e.g. column, box, frame): these are contiguous areas of the surface (page, screen, sign etc.) which are separated from the rest by areas of blank (text-free) space or by lines, bands, or similar visual devices. Units are typically nested, so that one unit may lie wholly inside another, which may be of the same type (e.g. a box within a box) or a different type (e.g. a paragraph within a column).

### **5.2. Language-spatial relationships**

'Language-spatial' rather than simply 'spatial' is the appropriate term here because this refers to the spatial relationship between units containing a specific language or mixture of languages. Figure 3 is an example of a bilingual English and Irish warning sign, where the English and Irish textual units are arranged so that they occupy equal amounts of space above and below a horizontal axis of symmetry. In this sign and many others like it, the language-spatial relationships are symmetrical; by contrast, the language-spatial relationships in Figure 2 above are asymmetrical. Other bilingual texts may be of a mixed type, with both symmetry and asymmetry in different parts of the text.



**Figure 3: Bilingual warning sign**

Other kinds of language-spatial relationships are possible and potentially relevant: for example, units may be ordered in terms of language, as illustrated also by the sign in figure 3, where English precedes Irish. Scollon and Scollon (2003: 122) regard such ordering in signage as the results of a *code preference system* which 'privileges the top, the left and the center' (at least in those cultures where the script direction is left to right, top to bottom) and is thus based on language-spatial relationships. Though their claim is not empirically derived, it seems that many bilingual signs and similar texts are designed on the assumption that it is true (see Coupland 2010: 89 for a Welsh example).

### **5.3. Language content relationships**

Most people who view the sign in figure 3, irrespective of whether they know both, one or neither of its languages, will make the assumption that the message given above in English is exactly the one given below in Irish. This is not only because this is the norm for such signs, which are after all common in many parts of the world, including airports.

It is also because of the symmetry of the sign, and the strong visual ‘mimicking’ using fonts, type sizes and colours, which is normal in this type of bilingual sign. However, these visual signals are in effect contextualisation cues: they do not in themselves *guarantee* that the English text and the Irish text are translation equivalents. For this reason we need to introduce independent category of *language content relationships*, with three possibilities: *Equivalent* texts are those that have similar content in two or more languages, like the sign in figure 3. *Disjoint* texts have different content, as in the case of the texts in the different bands of figure 2. It is also possible to have *overlapping* language content, a mixed type in which some of the content is repeated in the other language, while some is not.<sup>12</sup>

#### **5.4. Language mixing type**

By this is meant the nature of language mixing, or its absence, within a unit. At one extreme are monolingual units (in a specified language), but there are at least two other possibilities: *mixed* units and *language-neutral* units, which will be discussed in more detail below. Language mixing type is always relative to a specific unit, so that while a unit may be monolingual in Language A, it may be inside a larger unit which contains other units which are monolingual in B, making the larger unit a mixed type. This is the case with the advertisement in Figure 2, for example, where most of the units (‘bands’) are monolingual in either Spanish or English, but the advertisement as a whole is mixed. The same applies to the bilingual sign, Figure 3.

##### **5.4.1 Mixed units**

Mixed units are units which contain elements from two or more languages. These elements may be of different types, for example they may be smaller visual units (such as boxes within a larger box) or they may be textual units such as paragraphs or grammatical units such as sentences. Mixed textual units typically correspond to the commonly held prototype of code-switching in spoken language: languages alternate within a discourse unit (*intersentential*), possibly within a sentence (*intrasentential*). Functional reasons for the alternation may be identifiable, just as in spoken code-switching, where there exist a

number of theoretical frameworks providing accounts based on discourse, pragmatic or social criteria (Gumperz 1982; Myers-Scotton 1993; Auer 1995).

However, code-switching is not necessarily an appropriate term to apply to all mixed units. This is true particularly in the case of units which are defined solely by visual criteria; for example, Band 2 of Figure 2, containing the text ‘Cien Alegrías Tire and Wheel’ is a mixed unit but it cannot usefully be described as ‘code-switching’. Similarly the bilingual sign, Figure 3, is a mixed unit (containing two symmetrically arranged, content-equivalent monolingual units) but it does not involve code-switching in any normal sense of the term.

#### **5.4.2 Language-neutral units**

The term ‘language-neutral’ applies to units which consist entirely of items which cannot be assigned exclusively to one language but belong equally to both (or all) the languages involved in the text. These tend to be smaller units, e.g. words or headings. Brand names and other proper names often fall naturally into this category. However, ‘artificial’ strategies may be used to create language-neutral units as well. Contemporary examples tend to come from advertising and marketing, where there is less regulation and less enforcement of monolingual norms.

For example, this text appears in small print on a household hygiene product, which is labeled in English, French and German:

**Dermatolog. tested, pH-skin-neutral, alcohol-farbstoff-colorant free**

Here the purpose appears to be to make the message available to users of several languages while using the minimum amount of space. The quoted text is in several languages (French, English and German) at once, and at the same time none of them: the English reader may read ‘Dermatologically tested, pH-skin-neutral, alcohol and colorant free’ while editing out *farbstoff* (German for ‘colorant,’ though it should have a capital letter) as making no sense in English. German and French readers could likewise be

expected to get the gist, though they will have to make more adjustments than the English reader, and will need to recognize three words which are only English: *tested*, *skin* and *free* (cf. German *frei*). Linguistically, the text draws on the fact that some vocabulary is identical across two of the languages (*colorant*) or even all three (*neutral*) or can be made identical by abbreviating an ending (*Dermatolog.* = *dermatologically/ dermatologisch/ dermatologique*).

Historically there is at least one substantial body of texts which make extensive use of strategies for creating language-neutral units. Medieval English accounts and inventories, as analysed in detail by Wright (2000, 2002), frequently use truncations and abbreviations which blur the distinction between English, Latin and French and make it unnecessary to use the grammatical suffixes which are specific to any one of the languages. For example, in an accounting record regarding candles, the Latin (but almost-English) word *candela* ends with an abbreviation which allows it to be read as ‘candle’ or ‘candelarum’ (the genitive plural, and correct Latin form in this instance), ‘according to competence and choice’ (Wright 2000:151). Wright points out (Wright 2002:473) that the scribal practices connected with these kinds of records provided ‘considerable room for exploitation of the overlap of the two languages’<sup>13</sup>.

### **5.5 ‘Parallel’ texts and ‘Complementary’ texts**

The framework outlined in this section now allows us to characterize two broad categories of multilingual text. *Parallel*<sup>14</sup> texts, of which the most familiar examples are bilingual signs like the one in Fig. 3, can be characterized in terms of the categories above as texts where language-spatial relationships are *symmetrical*, language content relationships are *equivalent* and the linguistic mixing type is exclusively *monolingual*. In other words, the ‘parallel’ type of multilingual text consists of matched units, symmetrically arranged and containing identical content in each language, without any language mixing.

While a detailed discussion of the sociolinguistics of such texts is beyond the scope of this paper, each of these characteristics can be seen to serve a sociolinguistic function: the symmetrical arrangement is a visual metaphor for equality, the content-equivalence is a response to assumed monolingualism or a preference for literacy in one of the languages only, while the absence of mixing is a response to a pervasive language ideology of monolingualism and purism and a preference for standard forms (see also Coupland 2010).

At the other end of the scale, *complementary*<sup>15</sup> texts can be characterized as having *asymmetrical* language-spatial relationships and *disjoint* language content relationships. In terms of linguistic mixing type complementary texts are varied: they may consist exclusively of monolingual units, but could contain any combination of monolingual, mixed and neutral units. The ‘Cien Alegrías tire and wheel’ advertisement (Fig. 2) is of the complementary type. There is no symmetrical arrangement of languages, nor is there a unidirectional ordering (English units 4, 5, 6 are followed by Spanish units 7 and 8 and more English units, 9 and 10). The content relationships are disjoint: what is said in English is not repeated in Spanish and vice versa. There is also one linguistically mixed unit (Band 2) which contains the name of the business in Spanish and the nature of the business in English.

As in the case of parallel texts, the characteristics of complementary texts can be seen to be compatible with the sociolinguistic profile of their intended readers, and in particular with their literacies. Since information is given only once, either in English or in Spanish, a text like ‘Cien Alegrías tire and wheel’ is only suitable for a reader who can read both languages to a reasonable degree. We can assume that there are many such people in the catchment area of the Spanglish Times, since about one third of the population of approximately 1.5 million of Phoenix, Arizona is of Hispanic or Latino origin<sup>16</sup>.

It is not being claimed here that all multilingual texts fall neatly into one of the categories ‘parallel’ or ‘complementary’ as defined here. Intermediate types certainly exist, but the

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framework allows the analyst to specify how they differ from typical cases. For example, bilingual signage may contain symmetrical units, but with contents that are only partially equivalent or not equivalent at all; or they may contain units with equivalent content but not symmetrically arranged. Larger units such as web pages may be broadly speaking ‘complementary’ but nevertheless include some material in parallel.

In the next section, I give a further example of a multilingual text and its analysis using this approach.

6. A multilingual text: the *Luxemburger Wort*.



Figure 4: Front page of *Luxemburger Wort*

Figure 4 shows the front page of a major daily newspaper from Luxembourg, *Luxemburger Wort*, as it appeared on a day in 2001. The page is laid out similarly to other European broadsheet newspapers of the period. It has a nameplate or masthead at the top of the page across the centre. The rest of the page is divided vertically into two main sections, the one on the right being slightly narrower than the one on the left. The bottom left position is occupied by a small 'contents' section, next to which is a barcode and some international pricing information. The remainder of the page is occupied by news items and accompanying photographs, each extending across either four columns of type (on the left) or three (on the right).

Where *Luxemburger Wort* is different from many other European broadsheet newspapers is that it is multilingual. On the front page both German and French appear. Elsewhere in the paper, Lëtzebuergesch (the Germanic variety which is the vernacular and national language of Luxembourg) is also found, but is confined to certain and genres (for example, memorial notices) in sections nearer the back. The distribution of French and German on the front page (as elsewhere in the paper) is asymmetrical, as can be seen from Figure 5, which shows the linguistic layout of the news section (F = French text, G = German text). None of the French news stories has a matching German story with equivalent content, nor vice versa: thus in terms of language content, all units in this section are disjoint. Furthermore, all the news stories are either exclusively in French or exclusively in German, so the language mixing type is monolingual.

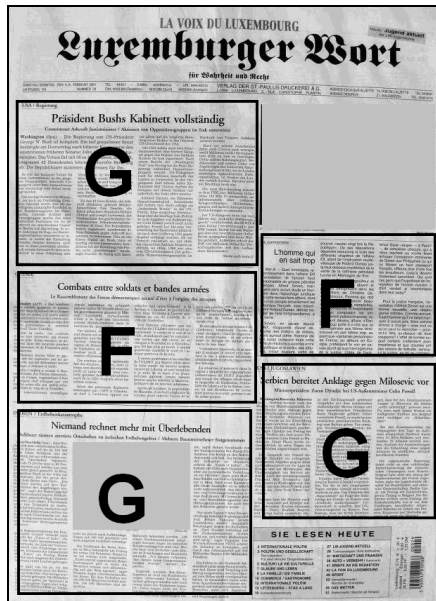


Figure 5: linguistic layout of Luxemburger Wort

So far the characteristics of this page are those of what I have called above a *complementary* type of multilingual text. However, things are a little more complicated when we consider the parts of the page that are not given over to news. At the top centre, spanning the columns, we find the newspaper title in both French and German. French comes first, at the very top, but in a substantially smaller typeface than the German, and in a paler colour (blue). The German title (which is only very loosely equivalent to the French as a translation) is not only in a much larger typeface: it is contextualized by being printed in a blackletter font, which is a common practice for newspaper titles, but also associates it with German-ness (Spitzmüller forthcoming). Furthermore, there is a German motto below the title, in smaller typeface but also in blackletter (*für Wahrheit und Recht* – ‘for truth and justice’). French (above) and German (below) are arranged around a horizontal line of symmetry, but the symmetry is disturbed by a diagonal banner in German advertising the youth supplement, with the legend *Heute: Jugend Aktuell die LW-Jugendseite*. Immediately below the nameplate is a band bordered by two horizontal lines, which contains both German and French – German for the day, date and volume information and the name of the publisher; French for the address of the publisher and the locations of two local agencies. This may be the result of established conventions of using

specific languages for certain functions, in this case French for addresses. This part of the title area is therefore a linguistically mixed unit.

The title area can thus be characterized as a part of the page which is bilingual, containing in the title itself an instance of partial symmetry in language-spatial relations, and partial equivalence of content, while the rest of the title area shows asymmetrical language relations and disjoint content. The masthead functions to establish both German and French as the languages of the newspaper, although German is given greater prominence through a stronger colour (black), more text, and a larger font size. This greater prominence of German is also reflected in its dominance of the remainder of the page, with more and longer news items in German, and more prominence also in the 'contents' section at bottom right.

Once again, this multilingual text reflects the literacies of the community which provides its readers. Luxemburg is a multilingual country where French and German both play an important role in education, with German dominant in the earlier part of schooling and French later on. Lëtzebuergesch plays a much smaller role, at least officially (Redinger 2010: 40-41). Adult Luxemburgers, at least those who are reasonably successful educationally, can be assumed to be fluent readers of both French and German, though for most, German is easier as it is closer to their first language, Lëtzebuergesch.

## **Conclusions**

In this paper I have argued that phenomena of language alternation or language mixing in writing are substantially different from the corresponding practices in the spoken mode, and require a theoretical approach and analytical tools which are specifically designed for written language. In particular, I have suggested that an account of written language alternation must be multimodal in its approach to the text, taking into account the visual and spatial relationships of languages on the page, screen or sign, at the same time as it takes into account their linguistic properties. I have also argued that in order to make a

meaningful analysis of multilingual texts we need to see them as products of, and part of, literacy practices which are embedded in the culture of language communities and which reflect their sociolinguistic circumstances. These practices may themselves be multilingual and multimodal, though other combinations of mono- and multi-, -lingual and –modal are possible (cf. Baynham 1993).

I have suggested an approach to describing and analysing multilingual texts which draws on these visual and spatial properties, in the hope that this will provide the basis for a productive analysis of the wealth of multilingual texts which now exist. The framework outlined here is intended to facilitate the description and analysis of multilingual texts of diverse genres – including, for example, multilingual signage, magazines, advertisements, web pages, newspapers and product labels. Some of these multilingual genres (e.g. public signage and advertisements) have attracted attention from linguistic researchers, while others, like some of the examples in this paper, have been largely overlooked. In addition, relatively little is known about the multilingual literacy practices that surround the creation and use of these texts. Over the past decades, the study of spoken language alternation has provided valuable sociolinguistic insights into multilingual communities. Further study of the multilingual written artefacts of such communities may yield still more.

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<sup>2</sup> An unresolved theoretical issue in code-switching research is whether the notion of ‘language alternation’ makes an unwarranted assumption that there are, in fact, two separate languages or codes which alternate, rather than just one, mixed, code. A detailed discussion of this is beyond the scope of this paper. However, whatever the answer may turn out to be, if there is one, for spoken language, it may well be different for written language, given that written genres are typically much more normative compared to spoken genres within the same language, and furthermore may be differentiated at various levels, e.g. by lexis, orthography and script (but see Sebba (2000) for an example of where orthography is used to integrate codes in writing).

<sup>3</sup> The closing part of the letter (which involves many switches between English and French throughout) is as follows (with English in italics, French in plain font and bold for neutral or indeterminate items):

*And for salvation of youre schire and marches al aboute, treste ye nought to no leutenaunt. Escript a Hereford, en tresgraunte haste, a trois de la clocke apres noone, le tierce jour de Septembre.*

Vostre **humble createure** et **continueulle oratour**

Richard Kygneston, **deane** de Wyndesore.

(*Royal and Historical Letters during the reign of Henry IV, I*, pp. 155 - 159.)

<sup>4</sup> However, there was at least one other letter to the king from the same writer, where the main part of the letter was in French, and the (longish) postscript in English.

<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Penelope Gardner-Chloros for pointing this out.

<sup>6</sup> Two themed issues of the journal *Visible Language*, both edited by Hodgson and Sarkonak, are pioneering in this respect (1987 and 1993), though most of the contributions are from researchers for whom linguistics is not their main discipline.

<sup>7</sup> Dans les cahiers, on repère ainsi des marqueurs graphiques de langues, le bambara étant en graphie scripte et en minuscules (selon la pratique des classes d’alphabétisation, reprise par certains maîtres d’école), le français en cursive. Cependant, cette différence script/cursive n’est pas toujours pertinente, la répartition n’est pas stricte, les types de graphies se contaminant pourrait-on dire.

<sup>8</sup> McClure 1998 is an example of this kind of analysis, applied to magazine articles.

<sup>9</sup> The advertisement has been reworked preserving the original fonts and colours as far as possible, but omitting some graphics. The name of the business has been changed.

<sup>10</sup> The paper’s website disappeared during 2010 but promised to return.

<sup>11</sup> This appears to have been encouraged by the editors, as almost every item contains at least one instance of language alternation.

<sup>12</sup> Similar observations are made by Backhaus (2007: 90) and Reh (2004:8-15) using different terminology. Backhaus calls texts *homophonic*, where they are complete translations of each other (i.e. the same message is conveyed in two or more different codes); *mixed*, where there is a partial overlap of messages but the content conveyed is not identical in the different codes, and *polyphonic* where the messages are different. Reh uses the terms *duplicating* (for complete translations), *fragmentary* (where translation is partial), *overlapping* and *complementary*.

<sup>13</sup> See Sebba (2000) for a different example of ‘exploiting overlap’ between Creole and English by orthographic means.

<sup>14</sup> This term is widely though not universally used for texts of this type, especially signage. See, e.g. Coupland 2010.

<sup>15</sup> The term *complementary* in this connection is not as widely used as the term *parallel*, but the phenomenon itself is also less widely discussed. Reh (2004) and Adams (2003) are among those who use the term in approximately this sense.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau ‘State & County QuickFacts’ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/04/0455000.html>,

accessed 19<sup>th</sup> July 2011. The actual figure given is 34.1% according to 2006 statistics.