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# Code-Switching in Portuguese Print Media of Brazilian Immigrant Communities in Massachusetts

STEPHANIE CASTELLARIN

Code-switching (CS) is the alternation between two or more languages in the context of a single enunciation or written production (Poplack, 1980, Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Generally, CS occurs more commonly in spoken conversation than in written form, but it does manifest in both modes of communication (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). This study is prompted by the following research question: Does CS exist in Brazilian Portuguese print media in Southeastern Massachusetts? And if so, what does the use of non-standard Portuguese suggest about the (in)stability of Portuguese in the region? Since the early 20th century, linguists have recognized the phenomenon of CS in bilinguals. Initially, it was thought of as a random phenomenon until the early 1970s, when scientists began to recognize and investigate the conscious use of CS in a Norwegian village (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Since then, experts in the field of linguistics have tackled the subject of CS from a plethora of perspectives in order to better understand the role it plays in language acquisition, attrition, and the formation of a social identity. The present study seeks to determine whether CS is occurring in the Brazilian community of Massachusetts, as evidenced by a review of the local print media. Print media was selected for exploration of evidence of CS because there is a large array of newspaper publications and magazines which are widely disseminated throughout the Southeastern Region of Massachusetts. Additional supportive evidence came from posted notices, ads, and local announcements, which are also widely available in community businesses

## Literature Review

Poplack (1980) defines the three main types of CS in her study of the speaking patterns of twenty Puerto Ricans in a bilingual community in New York City. The subjects exhibited varying degrees of fluency in the two languages. More importantly, the results showed that CS was done even by non-fluent bilinguals, which adheres to what Poplack refers to as equivalence constraint. This constraint dictates that CS

can only occur when L1 and L2 features are in accordance with syntax rules in both languages. She categorizes CS into three main types: tag-switching (or emblematic switching), morphological switching and intra-sentential switching. By providing this theoretical framework, she puts forth the idea that CS is an indication of the speaker's bilingual abilities. For the present study, Poplack's main categories of CS were used to classify the data gathered from Brazilian Portuguese print media sources.

Also important in the present study is the research completed by Pucci (2003). Pucci focuses mainly on the occurrence of CS in heritage learners and the resulting biliteracy encouraged by expanding the availability of print media in L1 and L2. It is important to note the high availability of print media in Portuguese in the South Shore communities that were analyzed in this research. Gardner-Chloros (2009) explores the implications of CS and what it may suggest about the development of the social identity of a community. A clear connection between the social identity of the expatriate Brazilian community and CS becomes clear through analysis of the data gathered for this research, as will be discussed later. Gardner-Chloros (2009) also explores the idea that the existence of CS has implications for attrition and language shift.

In fact, language shift and attrition are pertinent concepts in the study of immigrant communities. Bolonyai (2009) examines published works that suggest that CS may be linked to L1 attrition and imperfect acquisition. Attrition can be defined as a temporary or permanent decline in language skills, knowledge, or use. It is usually a result of intensive language contact. Imperfect acquisition refers to an erosion of L1 in children as a result of a lack of exposure to the target language, both in quality and quantity. Erosion is most often seen in third generation heritage learners of Brazilian Portuguese, that is, children of first or second generation immigrants (Ferreira 2005). Thus, the research investigating the relationship between CS and contact-induced language shift certainly links them close together. However, researchers are careful to highlight that they are not mutually exclusive, and point out that the process happens slowly.

Boyd (1993) argues that the structures of the languages in contact, as well as socio-historical aspects of that contact, play an integral role in deciding whether or not CS and borrowing between languages is an aspect of expansion or a signal of attrition. Her study focuses on two groups of immigrants to Göteborg, Sweden. One group is composed of Finnish immigrants and the other is made up of American immigrants. The Finnish community has a long standing history of immigration to Sweden. The Swedish words are integrated into

the Finnish more readily. This lexical transfer can eventually result in loanwords from the L2 language. On the other hand, the American immigrant communities in Göteborg are significantly smaller, dispersed randomly across various parts of the city. The Americans studied showed a lower rate of borrowed words or lexical transfer from Swedish. Thus, the author concludes that the unification and establishment of a particular immigrant community's expatriate identity directly affects their CS production and lexical borrowing. Similarly, the occurrence of CS found in the Brazilian print media would suggest that the expatriate community in Southeastern Massachusetts has created a well-established identity.

Hill (1993) explores language death and how attrition is an early indication of such death. Attrition in this article is defined as a process which manifests in an environment that profoundly subordinates the minority population, especially on a political and economic level. The process of attrition begins with grammar simplification and later a loss of grammar rules, until structure and productivity is lost. The author uses three different case studies to demonstrate: one involving indigenous people in Queensland, Australia, another in Mexico's Malinche region, and finally a study of the Wasco language spoken on a Chinookan Reservation in Oregon. All three groups are facing possible language death because of the social, political, and economic factors that are unfavorable to language symbiosis. Therefore, these groups can be marginalized for using their language. Eventually, they internalize the views and opinions from the greater majority, thus leading to a devaluation of the language within the group of minority language speakers. These speakers find it necessary to curb the usage of their language in order to integrate into the larger community. It is important to contrast with the present study because the current climate in the Southeastern region of Massachusetts is one which embraces linguistic diversity. There is an array of print media in Portuguese. There are a number of businesses that are owned or operated by the Brazilian community. However, if the social, political, or economic factors that support the current symbiosis of languages were to change, then CS may be an indicator of language erosion. In the worst case scenario, it would mean the loss of Portuguese spoken in the region, or language shift.

Although the study conducted by Major (1993) explores the acquisition of Portuguese and loss of English by five American English speakers who immigrated to Brazil, it has important implications for this study because of the idea of language loss and the concomitant creation of a new social identity. The study focuses on the loss of L1 native accent as a result of L2 acquisition. The results showed that L2 (in this case, Portuguese) clearly influenced L1 (English) and that the greater

the proficiency in L2 the more likely it is to influence L1. The results support the idea that a speaker will exhibit convergence as a means of social acceptance, efficient communication, and the creation of a positive social identity. At the same time, they will demonstrate divergence in order to emphasize their differences. In Mayor (1993), speakers who exhibited the most L1 loss were those that closely identified with Brazilian culture. It would be interesting to explore if increased L1 loss will manifest as the Brazilian community continues to assimilate into the culture in the United States. This adaptability also supports the forging of a unique identity within the new, larger culture

In sum, previous research shown here demonstrates that CS may happen alongside language shift and the possible creation of a new social identity. As stated before, a community might transition from the use of one language to another as a primary means of socialization and communication (Giacalone Ramat, 1995). The transition can only happen under circumstances in which the minority language is devalued by the society and its native speakers. In order for devaluation to occur, there must be a specific set of social, political, and economic circumstances that would propagate a negative perspective of the use of the language. Then the society must reinforce the perspective with negative consequences for its use. Evidence of CS would be one piece of the puzzle in determining if language attrition (and eventual language loss) might occur in Brazilian communities in Southeastern Massachusetts.

### **Methodology**

The methodology consisted of gathering evidence of CS and non-standard Portuguese samples in various locations in Southeastern Massachusetts. Samples from newspapers and magazines published by immigrants in Portuguese-speaking communities were collected and analyzed for evidence of CS. In addition, samples of advertisements and notices, where CS or non-standard language occurred, were collected or photographed.

Data was collected in the towns of Stoughton, Quincy and Brockton. All of the locations chosen have well-established Brazilian communities, which have been documented by The United States Census Bureau and can be referenced in the map featured below in Figure 1. The Census does not differentiate between Brazilian Portuguese, Azorean and Cape Verdean Creole. Despite this compilation of languages and dialects, it is clear that the South Shore has a significant population of Portuguese speakers.

The well-established communities would suggest, based on research by Boyd (2009), a higher occurrence of CS or borrowing present in print media. Samples were collected from Brazilian Portuguese language newspapers such as Brazilian Times,

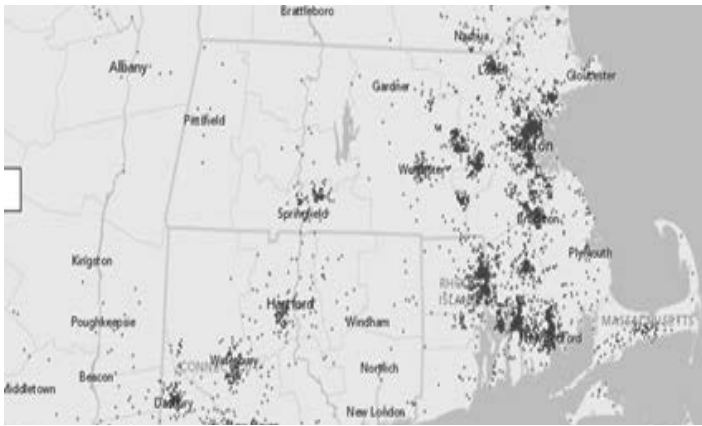


Figure 1. Map of Massachusetts and Portuguese-speaking populations.

Jornal dos Sports, and A Semana. Also, Brazilian magazines like Bate Papo and Tempo de Vitória were selected. In addition, several examples of written advertisement, which were hung on walls and in windows of Brazilian stores, churches, social clubs and bakeries, were either collected (if there were samples available) or a digital picture was taken (See Appendix 2). The advertisements were analyzed for examples of CS, orthographic errors or examples of non-standard Portuguese. Then, examples were carefully compared with the data gathered from previous studies in the areas of code switching, attrition and language shift.

### Results and Discussion

The following are the results of data collection in the aforementioned towns of Southeastern Massachusetts. Categories of CS and other non-standard language are presented, according to the types put forth by Poplack (1980). CS samples were divided into two subcategories, those that were orthographically correct, as in example (1) and (2) and those that were not, as in example (3).

(1) Mais de \$3.000 em prêmios, books <livros>, fotográficos, joias. (“More than 3,000 dollars in prizes, books, photographs, jewelry”)

(2) tratamento estético e make up <maquiagem> & hair design <estilo de cabelo>. (“esthetic treatment, make-up & hair design”)

(3) Procuo trabalho de \*house kepper <empregada>. (“I am looking for housekeeping work”)

Orthographic and grammatical errors include misspellings as in (4), absence of diacritic marks in written Portuguese, and non-standard capitalization.

(4) \*Concertamos <consertamos> seu celular quebrado. (“We fix your broken cell phone”)

(5) \*conheca <conheça> a kiddie academy faça uma visita, transporte escolar, câmeras de \*seguranca <segurança> (Meet the Kiddie Academy, come for a visit, school transport, security cameras)

In example (5) the cedilla is omitted in “conheca” and “seguranca” but correctly includes it in the same line in the word “faça” (Imperative form of “to make,” used in the colloquial expression “come for a visit”). It can be inferred from this discontinuity that the exemption of the cedilla is not due to the fact that the average computer keyboard in the United States does not have a key allocated for the diacritic mark. It could suggest that the Portuguese used in the United States is being amended to more closely resemble English since the English language does not use any diacritic marks unless the word is a foreign word that has been adopted into the vernacular. Samples belonging to a category of false cognates, such as in example (6) were gathered.

(6) \*Aplicar < candidatar-se> pessoalmente. “apply in person”

Also, hybrid words that blended English and Portuguese, and any other anomaly that couldn’t be classified, was put in that category. Table 1 summarizes the occurrence of each type of category found in the data.

Table 1: Summary of Data and Categories

Category of Instances	Number of Instances
CS (Correct Spelling)	64
CS (Incorrect Spelling)	8
Subtotal:	72
Orthographic Errors	27
False Cognates/ Anomalies	14
Total:	113

As can be noted in Table 1, there were 113 total number of data items collected, among them, examples of orthographic or grammatical errors, CS samples, false cognates and language anomalies. They were collected from six print sources. In general, print sources followed the standard orthography of Brazilian Portuguese. However, there were 35 instances in the data of incorrect spelling either in Portuguese or English. As also be noted in Table 1, the most common category of data collected was examples of CS. More specifically, the most common was the emblematic form, also known as tag switching, as defined by Poplack (1980). Its prevalent usage suggests an increasing degree of bilingual competence

among the Brazilian community. These examples of CS may also indicate a certain level of attrition in the written and spoken Brazilian Portuguese in the Southeastern Massachusetts. Based on the research of the Brazilian print media, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not this high frequency of emblematic CS is indicative of attrition or is contributing to an erosion of the native language simply because of the relatively small size of the samples collected. However, it can be noted that within the vernacular CS examples are leading to words that are morphological hybrids such as \*parquear (“to park”) in place of estacionar or \*estou bisado (“I am busy”) instead of estou ocupado. The listed examples are almost exclusively spoken and rarely written although examples of these morphologically mixed words will occasionally appear on social media site such as Facebook. However, anomalies or false cognates such as \*aplicar (“to apply for a job” instead of candidatar-se) can be seen as the enrichment of language and expression through the addition of English words at a community level. It should be noted that there is a verb “aplicar” in Portuguese which means has many meanings, including “to invest.” The most frequently reoccurring examples of false cognates were similar to (7) from the Jornal Dos Sports. See Appendix 1 for additional examples from Brazilian Times, among other print media.

(7) Serviços em \*corte <tribunal> (“Court services”).

This terminology was used in several different newspaper advertisements for lawyers and legal advocates. The problematic aspect is the use of the word corte as an equivalent to “court” in English. The actual definition in Portuguese is a royal court, such as a sovereign and his or her councilors. The word in Portuguese that actually denotes what is being expressed by this advertisement as corte is tribunal or “court.”

The divergence from the monolingual is rapidly becoming the norm in local Brazilian communities; as a result the inclusion of both English and Portuguese is ubiquitously utilized in all of the magazines and newspapers that were assessed. This suggests not only a superior level of bilingualism within the Brazilian communities of this region, but also the presence of bi-literacy. Tokuhama-Espinosa (2003) suggests that the borrowing of words from English may be perceived to augment the “prestige” of the language, at least on an individual scale, which could be another explanation as to why tag switching is so pervasive in the Brazilian Portuguese print media.

The research done by Hammarberg (1993) explores the acquisitional process of L2 with particular emphasis on the learner’s creative role in the process and the natural linguistic restraints that govern it. The linguistic restraints are analyzed by using recent theories of second language acquisition such

as markedness, simplification, and transfer. The standpoint taken by Hammarberg is that “strategic creativity and natural constraint” (p. 440) must be unified to achieve an integrated view because each plays an essential role in the L2 acquisition process. The results of German learners of Swedish showed that learners would opt for structurally uncomplicated solutions or they would transfer the rules from L1, also known as target-simplifying or transfer solutions. There was an especially unequal acquisition between cognates versus non-cognates suggesting that cognates were easier for the learner to lexically integrate. This may explain the usage of false cognates from Portuguese to English, through the acquisition process. Thus, the adjustment in the semantic usage of “corte” shows a lexical acquisition of the English non-cognate amongst the Brazilian community.

### Conclusions and Further Research

The data collected suggest that there is no language contact without the presence of CS. This has been shown in the research by Poplack (1980), Bolonyai (2009), Gardner-Chloros (2009), and Boyd (1993) and also found in this study. Yet, the mere existence of CS within a community cannot be proven to categorically indicate language shift. There is certainly a connection between language attrition and CS. The connection, evident in the evolution of morphological hybrid words and amendments to the definition of words that are false cognates, occurs in Brazilian communities in the United States but is not occurring in Portuguese speaking countries. A complete language shift to English is unlikely for the local Portuguese speaking community in the near future simply because negative socio-economic and political ramifications for speaking Portuguese do not currently exist. Most likely a language shift will occur in this community only if there is a complete cessation of immigration of Brazilians to this region of the United States. Even then, the language shift would not be evident for generations. The presence of CS in their community’s media is a prominent indicator of their emerging identity as Brazilians that immigrated to America and signifies a pervasive proficiency in both languages among the bilinguals within this community.

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## About the Author

Stephanie Castellarin is a graduating senior majoring in Spanish and minoring in Portuguese. Her research on language shift in Brazilian Portuguese print media was completed during the fall semester of 2014 under the mentorship of Dr. Fernanda Ferreira (Foreign Languages). Stephanie plans to pursue a career in interpreting.