

Turkish-German code-switching patterns revisited: what naturalistic data can(not) tell us

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This paper offers a review of what we know about Turkish-German code-switching patterns as found in naturalistic conversations, based on the typology of code-switching offered by Muysken (2000, 2013), namely insertion, alternation, congruent lexicalisation and backflagging. I will argue that the variability in code-switching patterns found among Turkish-German bilinguals in Turkey and Germany is problematic for approaches to code-switching that seek to test universal constraints on this phenomenon. Some speakers switch between Turkish and German in highly unexpected places and produce, for example, switches within a relative clause, or in clauses containing copulas or evidential markers, where there is no categorical equivalence between elements from the two languages at all. Interesting variability is also found in the application of the Verb Second rule, for example in utterances where speakers switch from Turkish to German after a Turkish adverbial clause. Some bilinguals apply the German Verb Second rule after the Turkish adverbial clause and thus treat the Turkish adverbial in the same way as any German constituent that occupies the first position in the utterance, while others add a German adverb to the Turkish adverbial clause before switching to German. I will argue that experimental research into Turkish-German code-switching patterns can help provide explanations for the variability that cannot be obtained from corpus data only. Of course experimental studies should be based on the available evidence that has been obtained from naturalistic studies in order to avoid eliciting responses to examples of code-switching that are very far removed from those occurring in spontaneous data and that thus have low ecological validity.