ENG370 – Bachelor Thesis in English Linguistics

A sociolinguistic study on code switching: A comparison between Vegard Harm´s Code-Switching in podcast versus live television.

Faculty of Educational Sciences and Humanities

University of Stavanger - Spring 2022

Lotte Vik Karlsen

Table of contents

1.0 Introduction

This BA thesis is a study on code-switching in artificial settings compared to natural and comfortable setting. I will utilize Harm´s three appearances on live television (2x "Senkveld" and "Kåss til kvelds"), comparing them to two episodes of pre-recorded podcasts ("Harm og Hegseth). The main aim is to compare and analyze data on how many times Vegard Harm code-switches in the different settings, and link this up to relevant literature. The research question I will be exploring is: *"How does Vegard Harm´s code-switching vary from interview settings compared to his own podcast?"*. The reason I chose to work on Vegard Harm´s code-switching, is because he is a relevant and popular persona in today's media here in Norway. Harm has 500 000 followers on Instagram, which makes him able to reach out to a lot of people, these are mainly in the age group of 15-25. People look up to Harm, which makes him powerful and influential.

Code-switching (will be referred to as CS in this text) is an expanding topic in studies on sociolinguistic and ethnographic issues and concepts, but there is still a remarkable lack of information on CS amongst Norwegian and American-English speakers. Studies done on CS typically focus on areas with different mother tongues and a majority language. An example of this would be Spanish and American English in several parts of the USA. The majority of speakers in Norway speak Norwegian, as well as it´s being the mother tongue. This results in fewer instances of CS in Norway, which leads to a lack of research on the subject amongst Norwegian speakers. I look at this lack of research as a challenge, and an opportunity to learn something new about the topic. I find the sociolinguistic questions connected to CS interesting and would like to learn more about the topic itself. I will be using my own data and relevant literature to analyze and reflect on the matter.

The podcast will be refered to as the "comfortable" and "chilled" setting, whilst live television would be more "unpersonal" and "stiff" in this thesis. The reasoning for this is the fact that podcast can be looked at as "a good friend", where Harm can be himself and talk to an audience he knows better than most of the individuals who watch live television on a Friday night. Live television is often rehersed and manustricpted, as well as Harm not being the host of the programs either.

2.0 Theoretics on code-switching
2.1 Definition of the term

Miriam Meyerhoff (2019, p. 129) states that people who speak more than one language are generally sensitive to the difference in the vitality of the language they use, and they are equally aware that in some context one variety will serve their needs better than other. This results in the speaker to change the variety they are using depending on where they are, and who they are talking to. Meyerhoff (2019, p. 129) goes on to explain CS as: "The phenomenon of moving between distinct varieties". The alternation can be made using two different languages, or different varieties within the same language. Even though Meyerhoff expresses her definition of CS in a certain way, scholars have had issues agreeing on a mutual definition of the term. Chad Nilep (2006, p. 1) expresses that it can be problematic to agree on a mutual explanation of the term, since there are multiple different concerns of formal linguists, psychologist, sociolinguists, philosophers, anthropologists etc. researching CS. Nilep (2006, p. 16) proceeds to demonstrate different scholars explaining the concept, for example: "The use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode" (Heller, 1998), "the alternating use of more than one language" (Auer, 1984) and "the use of two or more languages in the same conversation" (Myers-Scotton 1993). Even though scholars have different perceptions of the term, the explanations are still extremely similar. For this project I have decided to focus on Meyerhoff´s definition of the term mentioned in the opening of the section.

2.2 When do people code-switch?

Meyerhoff (2019, p.129) divides CS into different categories, depending on what motivates the speaker to execute these variations. When the speaker´s CS is constrained by where the speaker happens to be, it´s called domain based or situational CS. Domain can be described as the social and physical setting the speakers find themselves in, whereas situational is a more idiosyncratic and personalized view of the context or situation of language use (Meyerhoff 2019, p. 129). When the CS is constrained by who the speaker is talking to, it´s called addressee based. I have purposely chosen to analyze Harm in two different settings that are different in both situation and interlocutor.

Speakers differ their way of speaking on where they are, who they are talking to, and what kind of impression they want to communicate to their interlocutors (Meyerhoff 2019, 129).

This makes it difficult to analyze and understand the reason for CS, as there are several individual factors that play a part in the setting. Sociolinguistic and ethnographic descriptions of CS accurances represent most studies on the topic. Although by their nature, they remain rather fragmented, many important perceptions are obtained from relating the manifestations of CS to aspects of the sociolinguistic situation (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 30). Gardner-Chloros (2009) continues to state that CS is considered a sociolinguistic phenomenon, a linguistic product of language contact. The reason for CS is determined in various ways mainly by the social circumstances in which it takes place. One of the main challenges in CS studies is to define to what degree social circumstances play a role in the speaker's choice to CS. Speakers can CS in several different circumstances and situations.

2.3 Why study CS

The research of CS is expanding in the field of sociolinguistics. Gardner-Chloros (2009, p.4) states that there are several reasons for this expansion in later years. Milroy and Muysken (1995) point out that research on CS was slow to start, compared with research on borrowing. Gardner-Chloros (2009) utters that there have been an explotion of the interest in CS over the last forty-odd years. Gumperz and his associates released work on the subject in the 1960s and early 1970s, which increased the interest of the subject amongst scholars. There has not been a sign of a downturn for the research of the topic in later years either. Scholars have realized that CS was not a secluded and quicky phenomenon amongst multilingual people, but a widespread method of speaking. The use of CS is constantly increasing in today´s multi-cultural world, which makes it time relevant. The various reasons for CS are also a motivating factor to explore the topic, as there are no definite and correct answers for the matter.

2.4 Expansion of English in Norway

English is currently becoming indispensable in most of Nordic countries. Social media, television, traveling, education, and politics are all factors that increase the spread and use of English in Nordic countries. Therefore, English can be seen as a second language instead of a foreign language (Hanssen, 2017, p. 13). The English Proficiency Index (EPI) from global language training company Education First (EF) rank the best non-native English speakers, where Norway comes in at 4th place. The other countries on the list are Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. This means that English is a language constantly evolving both in Norway and the other Nordic countries. The Nordic Labour Journal also wrote an article about the

expansion of English in Scandinavian countries, and Bengt Ostling (2021) discusses which language the Nordic countries should choose for its future cooperation. The Scandinavian languages have been used across national borders for official work and with citizens organisations, but Ostling believes English is a natural choice for a shift in future coorperations.

3.0 Vegard Harm
3.1 Who is Vegard Harm?

Vegard Harm is a Norwegian social media character and celebrity. He does different TV jobs, podcasts, and other assignments in the public eye. Harm has previously hosted "VG-lista", which is the biggest concert held in Norway every summer. Harm is 25 years old and born in Stokke, Vestfold. Harm got his start in the social media eye via an app called Vine back in 2013, which was an American based app where you posted small videos of yourself, similar to Tik-Tok. He is active on most social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and TikTok. Harm´s L1 is Norwegian, whereas his L2 is English.

3.2 Harm´s perception of English

Harm is Norwegian born and raised, which makes his L1 Norwegian. Harm is a seqential bilingualist, such as most Norwegian speakers. Harm will therefore CS between Norwegian and English. He is highly interested in American culture and media, which he expresses in interviews and podcasts. The typical person Harm would look up to and idolize, would be someone rich and famous living in Los Angeles. Some keywords for how Harm´s "alter ego persona" would be: rich, famous, Hollywood, actor, luxury, and extravagance. This is a persona he identifies himself with, even though he isn´t physically a part of it. This results in Harm using American English when he CS. As Meyerhoff (2019) mentioned, people differ their way of speaking on what impression they want to make on the receiver. In situations where Harm would like to express this part of his personality, the frequency of CS will be increased. Meyerhoff (2019) continues to mention that domain-based CS represents the switching that is constrained to where the speaker is in social and physical settings. These statements can also be drawn in to the matter in question, as Harm´s CS is analyzed in two different social settings.

4.0 Data collection
4.1 Methodology

I have collected data on how many times Vegard Harm CS on live television shows and pre-recorded podcast episodes. I used 37 minutes of live TV-shows, and 71 minutes of podcast. The reason for the difference in length of the two is the lack of live television Harm has participated in. I only used TV-shows where Harm was a guest, so there would be a larger contrast from his own podcast where he has more power over the content being created. I chose this methodology because it´s the most accessible way for me to do research on this topic. Other possibilities would be qualitative interviews with Harm, which would be difficult to accomplish. For future reaserch I would use a methodology where I had the same amout of information on borth of the items I was collecting data on, since this can lead to results that are not accurate.

I have been looking at sentence length CS in these observations, meaning 3+ words as a part of a conversation/statement. This is to separate CS that consist of only one word, because I find this type of CS more common in our everyday speech. Examples of this would be "oh my god" or "whatever", which are frequently used loan words in the Norwegian everyday speech. A large amount of Norwegian speakers could use these words regularly, but not CS on any other level. It´s hard to distinguish specifically when speakers CS or when they use words that have become a part of the Norwegian speech, therefore I find it necessity make a choice on what I count as CS and not for this research.

4.2 Findings

Number of CS in one episode of "Kåss til kvelds" (NRK, 2021) and two different episodes of "Senkveld" (TV2, 2019 & 2021): 8

Number of CS in two podcast episodes of "Harm & Hegseth" (PodMe, 2021): *#333 Sondres kjærlighetserklæring og Italia-bakrus and #329 Morten 13 år og artister på Instagram*: 31

Harm CS appears in conversation with all kinds of topics, but some themes in particular recurred through my data collection. Some of the topics Harm continuously expressed in American English were cultural and "higher" class subjects such as: travelling, going out to eat, to be praised by fans, drinking wine, celebrities, expensive brands and pop-culture. Harm would immediately change his personality to be more "extravagant" and speak in American

English when these subjects were brought up. This is connected to expression and identity, which we will look at later in the research. CS on subjects related to this occurred both in podcast and live television.

Two examples from episode #333: Harm and Hegseth talk about the "met-gala" that had just been arranged in Los Angeles, which is filled with thousands of famous people. Harm started speaking American English immediately after they started on the subject of celebrities. They also talked about a new purchase that took place on a shared trip to Italia the previous weekend. Harm would only express his enthusiasm about the new luxurious purse in American English.

02:15: Harm talking about famous singer Shawn Mendes at the "met-gala": *"Something happened to my body, you know what I mean! I don´t know it´s a tingly feeling"*.

21:20: Harm talking about a new expensive purse Hegseth bought in Italia:
"Oh my god we loved your new purse, you looked amazing!"

I have previously heard through all the previous podcast episodes and can conclude with them all being representative for this data collection. I therefore chose to only listen to two episoden for this reaserch. The episode choice was also unsystematic, I desided to choose the two episodes that first caught my eye.

Since there was a larger amount of content for me to analyze on the podcast, I divided the amount of times Harm code-switched by the minutes I observed.
TV shows: 37 (minutes) / 8 (times of CS) = 4,6
Podcast: 71 (minutes) / 31 (times of CS)= 2,2

This information provided me with the mean minute of the code-switching. For the shows Harm would CS every 4,6 minutes, whi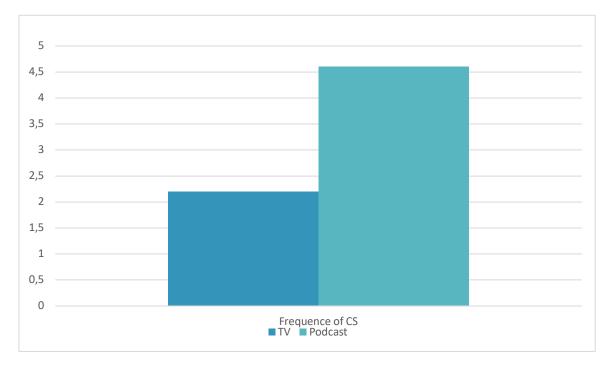lst for the podcast he would CS every 2,2 minutes. Thus, Harm code-switches around the double amount on his Podcast compared to guesting live television shows. The results I gained from this data collection were in accordance with what I expected to find before starting the project.

Name of table: *T1*

5.0 Discussion
5.1 Domain-based code switching

Miriam Meyerhoff (2019) states that individuals who speak more than one language, or who have command over more than one variety of any language, are sensitive to the differences in the vitality of the language they use (p.129). She explains that speakers are equally aware that one variety will serve their needs better than others. This will as mentioned lead to speakers changing their variety depending on where they are. When speakers change their language or variety of a language based on where they find themselves, it´s called domain-based CS. Meyerhoff (2019) also explains the theoretics behind addressee-based CS. Addressee-based CS is highly constructed by who the speaker is talking to. Harm´s CS (and all other speakers) is a mixture between different motivational factors, as it´s hard to determine just one. As I am analyzing Harm´s CS in two different physical situations, I believe the theoretics on domain-based CS are most relevant for this research. A possible issue with addressee-based CS, is the difficulties with understanding what relations a speaker has with those they are in conversation with. It´s more probable to analyze and understand why Harm code-switches when he is in different situations, because situational change is physical.

5.2 Social factors in code-switching

Gardner-Chloros (2009, p. 42) explains three different social factors that contributes to whether CS occurs at all in any given situation with language contact. These are: (1) factors independent of individuals and circumstances in which the varieties are used. This affects all the speakers of the relevant varieties in a particular community. (2) factors attaching to the speaker, both as individuals and as members of a sub-group: their competence in each variety, their social networks and relationships, their attitudes and ideologies, their self-perception and perception of others. (3) factors within the conversations. CS is a big conversational resource for speakers, providing further tools to structure their discourse beyond those available to monolinguals. Gardner-Chloros (2009) states that it´s important to remember that there are many overlaps and inter-relations between these three different factors. I will focus on the last factor revolving conversating, as this is relevant to my topic.

T1 shows two categories that are different conversational situations. One situation is casual and comfortable for the speaker (podcast) whilst the other one is artificial and more professional since it is planned in advance (live television). Podcast is a comfortable setting for Harm because there is no live audience, he does not actually see all the people who are listening to him. Whilst on television there could be a live audience, as well as cameras and producers. There are many overlaps between these three social facts, meaning it´s difficult to distinguish precisely which factor is most relevant. Conversational CS will be used more by bilingual speakers, often as a "conversational scaffolding" (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 42). Conversational scaffolding is a tool used to match the language of their interlocutor. The conversational function is also dependent on the speakers relative and communicative competence. A speaker might concioussly use CS to express a matter, but the communcative competence of the interlocutor determines how it is perceived. I do not find Harm´s CS to be a part of a conversational scaffolding. It seems more like he is using this tool to express himself, which we will get more in to later in the thesis.

Gardner-Chloros (2009, p.42) utters that there is often a relative prestige of one variety as opposed to another, or one variety is associated with something different then the other. Individuals who speak more than one language often use CS to convey aspects of their identity. We see a notable difference in the associations of the languages American English and Norwegian. Speaking Norwegian in Norway is not seen as anything special or unusual,

and is certainly the most normal thing to do. As for speaking American English in Norway in a country with one "mainly used language", speaking anything but Norwegian will be looked at as out of the ordinary. Sami is also a language spoken in Norway, but very rarely. There is no such thing as "Norwegian-Sami", as there is for example "Singapore-English". As for the speakers in Norway who do use CS more frequently in their everyday speech, usually have another mother tongue than Norwegian. For example, sequential bilingualists from other countries who have immigrated to Norway and have learnt Norwegian as their 2nd or 3rd language at an adult age. This results in listeners reacting when Norwegian speakers use CS frequently, either it is switching to American English or any other languages. Even though most of the Norwegian population know how to speak English, not a lot of speakers use the language on a day-to-day conversational basis. Thus, the analysis of speakers switching from Norwegian to English will be relatively different than if they were to switch from for example English and French in Quebec, Canada. This means that Harm´s use of CS will cause other speakers to pay more attention to what he is saying, because most Norwegian speakers do not expect marked linguistic behavior in Norwegian conversation. This will raise the question concerning Harm´s motivations behind CS, is he purposly trying to mark the statements said in American-English, or does he have other motives.

When Harm code-switches on live television, he has a physical audience who is watching him, as well as a presenter. Harm also knows there are hundreds of thousand people watching him at home. He is also aware that a lot of listen to them on the podcast, so why is the frequency of CS so dissimilar in the two settings? My thoughts around this dilemma is that Harm is aware of the type of viewers and listeners he reaches out to in the different sceneries. This is the addressee-based related side of Harm´s CS, as he varies the switching based on the audience. There is also a domain-based side to Harm´s CS, as he is in two different physical settings. I believe that both audience and physical settings affect the number of times he switches. These two bases for CS overlap with each other, and both are relevant to the reasoning of Harm´s CS. He is aware of that when he is a guest on live television shows, the enitre audience is not there specifically for him. Several of Harm´s fans will certanly watch the program solely for him, but a large quantity of viewers will watch for other reasons. When Harm records a podcast with Hegseth, he knows that the audience have actually paid to listen to their podcast, and they are most definetly purposly listening to it as well. It´s difficult to aimlessly tune in on a podcast in the same was as with a television show.

5.3 Identity

Harm is trying to express a part of his identity through CS, based on the different situations his CS occurs. As seen in T1 above, there is a noteworthy difference between frequency of CS in the two different situations. Gardner-Chloros (2009) states that the individuals CS depends on what identities they can express through each language. Speaking in an American accent can give of a more fabulous, expensive, exclusive, and famous interpretation of a speaker, compared to speaking in Norwegian. Not stating that an American speaker is more fabulous and richer than a Norwegian speaker, but it can often be perceived like that, especially in Norway. We also looked at what topics Harm repeatedly would CS on previously in the text, which agrees with the statements made about his identity in this section.

This indicates that Harm´s CS most likely is a conscious decision from his part. It´s difficult to be certain of a speaker's decision for CS, but with the reflections I have made about Harm´s motivations for switching, I would state that it can absolutely be conscious. The timing of Harm´s CS can also be interoperated as an intentional choice. Speaking American-Engslih makes Harm feel like he is expressing a part of his identity to a greater extent than when he speaks in Norwegian. The next question will therefore be, why does he CS more in podcast compared to live television? He talks about these subjects in both of the settings, so why is there still a difference in the amount of CS?

CS is a tool in conversation for bilingual speakers. It can benefit your vocabulary by giving you more words to choose from, and make you feel like you are able to express yourself better. Gumperz (1977) believes that at the most general level it can be said that grammatical distinctions which mark bilinguals´ two codes directly reflect or signal the contrasting cultural styles and standards of evolution which they encounter in daily interaction. This means that the "minority" language spoken, in this case English, will be regarded as the "we code". The "we code" language will be associated with informal and casual activities. Norwegian will be called "they code", associated with the more formal, stiffer, and less personal relations. Harm uses "we code" more frequently in the more comfortable and chilled situations, whereas "they code" for the opposite.

John J. Gumperz (1977, p.6) also states that there are relatively few passages where CS is motivated mainly by a speaker´s inability to find words to express themselves in one of the

other languages. He states that in great majority of cases, the CS information could be evenly expressed in either of the languages the speaker knows. Harm can most definitely express himself fluently in Norwegian, and his CS to American does not mean he doesn´t linguistically know the words or phrases in Norwegian. It´s most likely a way of expressing himself, that he senses suits the situation better. Gumperz (1977) continues with; Something may be said in one code and reiterated in the other code elsewhere in the same conversation. Consideration of intelligibility, lucidity, or ease of expression, important as they are in some cases, can therefore not be the main determining reasons. This strengthens the beliefs that Harm uses CS to express his identity, rather than to appear more articulated.

Looking at T1 we see a difference between Harm being in the "we code" setting, which is the chilled and relaxed podcast setting and the "they code" setting, which is the stiffer and unpersonal live television setting. This information can lead us to believe that being in a setting where you feel more comfortable and casual, will lead to a increased use of CS. Being in a comfortable and chilled environment would make it easier for most speakers to express and be themselves.

6.0 Theoretical reasons for Harm´s CS
6.1 Objective and subjective language

Another example of the reasoning behind speakers CS is objectivization and depersonalization of a sentence or word. The German-Slovenian bilingual Austrian farmer example explained by Gardner-Chloros (2009, p.67): Farmers discuss the origin of a certain type of wheat and switching from Slovenian to German in order to give countering statements more authority. She continues to state that it is typical that the majority language is often linked to being objective. This confirms that Harm´s CS from Norwegian to American English enhances the dominance of what´s being said. As mentioned previously the listener or interlocutor will pay more attention to marked linguistic behavior.

As the majority language (Norwegian) is linked to being objective, it would make American English the subjective language in this occasion. Subjective language is as a language centered around beliefs, thoughts, feelings, or attitudes. Harm usually talks about subjective matters, as well as expressing most opinions in the same style. He is constantly talking about issues that mean something to him and his identity when he CS to American English. This

indicates that he prefers to use this variety when he´s talking about something subjective, such as feelings or personal opinions.

6.2 Relatable

Another theory of Harm´s increase in CS could be the desire to appear modern and relatable amongst his followers. Gardner-Chloros (2009, p. 67) says that the symbolic associations of two different codes are often exploited in commercial and she uses Mc Donald´s as an example. The company uses English words, phrases, and slogans in all their advertisement to reach out to speakers all over the world. The same goes for the Coca-Cola logo. Embedded the world over in hundreds of languages. "The fact that CS sells products attested by the fact that some of the biggest multinational companies use it" Gardner-Chloros (2009, p. 67). CS in advertisement is often used mainly to reach out to bilingual speakers, but can also appeal to the younger generation. Harm´s audience is mostly young speakers from 15-25 years old, who are a part of this "new" American-English speaking generation. Harm could be using CS as a communication tool to reach out to his targeted demographic on Instagram, Snapchat, podcast, television etc.

This "new" generation of American-English speakers is the generation who has grown up with learning English as a foreign language from an early age. These speakers have also grown up parallel with technology and media, which has led to an increase in the exposure of American-English. This generation in Norway differs enormously from the older speakers, both by speech competence and understanding of the concept of CS to American English. (This does not apply to all older speakers, but it is a general assumption). Younger speakers intrepotation of Harm will be different than an older speaker´s. The older generation would not understand why Harm is speaking so much American-English, and they could also have a hard time understanding the things being said.

8.0 Conclusion

My main aim for this thesis was to develop a greater understanding of why Vegard Harm CS when he does, whilst comparing his CS in comfortable versus non-comfortable settings. As there are no other studies done on this exact topic, I didn´t have too many expectations. Whilst exploring my own thoughts in partnership with diverse theory, I gained a substantially amount of knowledge on the topic. I have discussed several aims and motivations for Harm´s CS to American English this far. Even though I understand these choices and reasons, it is

still hard to identify exactly why he CS more frequently in podcast compared to live television.

What I can assume from my research is that Harm´s CS is conscious to some extent. I believe he is purposely switching between the two languages, but he is not aware of all the effects it is giving. I do not believe he is purposely trying to enhance the current statement, it is more likely that he is using this tool to express his identity. T1 gives us a clear representation of the fact that Harm CS when he talks about subjects he cares for, as the podcast contains more of these matters. It is also more expected for him to bring up these subjects in his own podcast, as he is the host and not a guest. CS becomes a way of expressing his identity, which any person would find easier in comfortable settings. Even though Harm CS less on live television, he still implements some American-English there as well. It is only natural that he continues this part of his identity in most settings, just not as distinct in all situations. The audience he is reaching out to is also a big reason in how frequently he CS.

As for further research on this topic, I think it would be interesting to learn more about the motivations for simulataneous biligualist to code-switch, as opposed to sequential biligualists. I think the subject on how CS as a conversational tool will advance in society is interesing as well. If the use of English keeps expanding as rapidity as now, I would expect there to be a change in use and interpretation of CS in conversation as well. If speakers will become more prone to English use in everyday speech, will the effects of CS to English evaporate and become more common?

9.0 Reference list

Auer, P. (1998). *Code-Switching in Conversation: Language interaction and identity.* Taylor & Francis Group.

Cremer, J. (2016, 15 November). Norway moves up English-speaking ranks. The Local. https://www.thelocal.no/20161115/norway-moves-up-english-speaking-ranks/

Gardner-Chloros, P. (2009). *Code-Switching.* Cambridge.

Gumperz, J. (1977). *The Sociolinguistic Significance of Conversational Code-Switching.* Berkley.

Hanssen, V. (2017). *Nowegian-English Code-switching in 3rd and 5th Grade in a Norwegian Elementary School.* NTNU

Nilep, C. (2006). *"Code-Switching" in Sociocultural Linguistics.* University of Colorado.

Meyerhoff, M. (2019). *Introducing sociolinguistics*. Routledge.