'Embedded language' and 'matrix language' in insertional language mixing: some problematic cases

It is mostly assumed that the way in which languages may be combined within a syntactic unit is such that language A is dominant and language B (embedded language) is inserted (in the form of single words or of larger constituents) into the grammatical frame defined by language A (matrix language). The grammar of the matrix language provides the grammatical frame of the sentence as a whole, while the grammar of the embedded language is used only in complex insertions to determine the structure of the inserted constituent.

On the contrary, we will provide empirical evidence that, on the one hand, simple insertions do not necessarily take on the morphology of the matrix language, but may be treated according to the rules of the embedded language; and, on the other hand, that the language of complex insertions does not necessarily follow the grammar of the embedded language. The ‘dominance’ of one language over another in intrasentential code-mixing seems rather to be a matter of gradience and can mean different things in different situations of language contact.