I would like to start this paper with some terminological notes. I use the dichotomy ‘community language’ versus ‘superimposed language’ to refer to the typical unequal social-economic status of the bilingual speaker’s languages. These terms refer to local as well as global power relations and their sociolinguistic consequences. For instance, whether in Portugal, Brazil or the United States, Portuguese speaking people learn English in order to gain access to valuable information and upward social mobility, i.e. education, media and employment.

I will use the term ‘socially dominant’ for the language the individual speaker is most exposed to in her daily life. This could be either the community or the superimposed language, depending on the local situation. Thus English is more likely to be socially dominant for a particular Portuguese/English bilingual member of the Portuguese community in the US, while Portuguese will be socially dominant for most bilinguals living in Portugal.

The terms ‘matrix language’ and ‘embedded language’ are grammatical notions referring solely to local syntactic units of analysis in bilingual speech. The higher order constituent is the matrix in which lower order constituents are embedded. In mixed sentences higher and lower order constituents are in different languages. In most instances the community language functions as the matrix language and superimposed language elements are embedded. However, the reverse occurs in a minority of cases so the terms should not be confused.1

1 Since the early 1990s, Carol Myers-Scotton has been the most influential promoter of the insertion approach to code-switching and the terms matrix and embedded language.
The present article deals with verbs from a superimposed language that function as embedded elements in community language discourse. The community language may or may not be socially dominant, and I argue that this makes a difference for the way in which foreign verbs are embedded.

2. The integration of foreign verbs

There are three ways in which foreign verbs are integrated in the matrix language, two of which are common. One is the complete morphological integration. Some basic form of the foreign verb, typically the verb stem or the infinitive, is treated as the verb stem of the receiving matrix language, and verbal categories of the latter are expressed by matrix language morphology. Gloss (1) is a Moroccan Arabic/French example showing the French verb stem montr- (from montrer [môtre] ‘to show’) with an Arabic prefix and suffixes.\(^2\)

(1) \(\text{waš ġadi y-montr.i-w-l-ek} \ldots\)
\[\text{Q FUT 3-show-PL-to-2SG}\]
‘Are they going to show you…?’ MA\(^2\)/French (Wernitz 1993, 308)

The insertion of foreign verb stems without overt morphological integration in matrix languages lacking verbal morphology, such as various Austronesian languages (Van Staden 1999) can be considered as a sub-category of the morphological integration strategy, even if the integration is not overtly expressed by ML morphemes.

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I concur with the fundamentals of her original Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model (Myers-Scotton 1993), except for the definition of the matrix language. In my view, all syntactic constituents function as a matrix for lower-order constituents, whereas in the MLF model only the Complementizer Phrase functions as a matrix. I refer to earlier work for more details on this approach to code-switching (Boumans 1998, Boumans and Caubet 2000, Boumans 2002).

\(^2\) The vowel \(i\) is not a proper suffix. Embedded French verbs are modelled on a class of Arabic verbs ending in a vowel. This vowel is subject to \(\text{a/i} \) ablaut. Cf. Caubet (1993), Boumans (1998), and Boumans and Caubet (2000).

\(^3\) The following abbreviations are being used: in the main text: MA Moroccan Arabic; in the glosses to numbered examples: 1, 2, 3 first, second, third person; ACC accusative; AGR agreement; ART article; AUX auxiliary; DEF definite article; FUT future tense; IMPF imperfective; INF infinitive; M masculine; NEG negation; PASTPART past participle; PL plural; PROGRPART progressive participle; PRT preterit; REL relative clause marker; SG singular.