

# Early Bilinguals' Attitudes Towards Code-Switching in Monterey County

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# Organization of Presentation

- Study's Objective
- Structure
- Past Studies
- The Present Study
- Results and Discussion
- Suggestions for Future Studies



# Objective of the Study

- The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes that early bilinguals (people exposed to Spanish and English before the age of 5) have towards code-switching and Spanish and English as important aspects of their culture in Monterey County.



# What is Code-Switching?

- The ability that bilinguals (people who speak two languages) have to alternate easily between two languages in the same sentence.
- A characteristic that stands out when there are languages in contact, like Spanish and English in the US.
- It has communicative value, and it is used among members of a particular social group or speech community.
- It is used by bilinguals only when they interact with other bilinguals.

(Bullock & Toribio, 2009; Carvalho, 2012)



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# Types of Code-Switching

Code-switching is NOT the random mixture of two languages. On the contrary, it follows the grammatical rules of each language that is used.

There are two types of code-switching:

- When it happens between two sentences (inter-sentential code-switching):

Example: “Préstame el libro. I need to read it.”

- When it happens in the same sentence, between clauses (intra-sentential code switching):

Example: “I told you que lo necesito.”

(Bullock & Toribio, 2009)



# Past Studies

Anderson (2006) examined the attitudes of bilinguals towards code-switching between English and Spanish.

- 274 participants (211 female and 63 male)
- Instruments: 8 fairy tales that contain grammatical and non grammatical code-switching, recordings of the narrators telling the stories, and questionnaires that evaluated the biographical and linguistic characteristics of the narrators.
- Results: Bilinguals have the ability to distinguish between grammatical and non grammatical code-switching, and express preference for grammatical code-switching.



# Past Studies (cont.)

Montes-Alcalá (2000) focused on bilinguals' general attitudes towards oral and written code-switching and their preference for one or the other:

- 10 participants (4 female and 6 male)
- Instruments: the beginning part of a fairy tale that participants had to finish telling and writing using code-switching, and an attitudes questionnaire.
- Results: Bilinguals are capable of producing oral and written code-switching equally. They accept oral code-switching (60% have a positive opinion) more than written code-switching (40% have a positive opinion). 60% of the participants consider that code-switching is part of their identity, but only 20% think that code-switching results in earning respect from other people. They do not consider that code-switching contributes to the loss or maintenance of Spanish.



# The Present Study: Research Questions

- Do early bilinguals in Monterey County show preference for grammatical code-switching?
- Do early bilinguals have negative or positive attitudes towards code-switching?
- Do early bilinguals have negative or positive attitudes towards Spanish and English as important aspects of their culture?





# Participants

- 26 participants: 17 females and 9 males; average age: 21 years
- 25 were born in the U.S. and 1 was born in Mexico (arrived in the U.S. at the age of 2)
- All are students of CSUMB
- Places where they live: Holister 1, Marina 1, Soledad 1, Watsonville 4, Seaside 6 and Salinas 13.
- All were exposed to Spanish since birth, at home and in their community.
- 65% come from monolingual homes
- High linguistic competence in both, Spanish and English (self-evaluated).



# Instruments and Data Collection

- All the instruments were presented online (Internet). They were adapted from Anderson (2006) and Montes-Alcalá (2000).
- Biographical and linguistic questionnaire
- Two oral texts that narrate the story: *El ratón de ciudad y la ardilla de campo*
  - One featured grammatical code-switching
  - The other featured non grammatical code-switching
  - Both texts were followed by questions about the linguistic competence of the person narrating the story.
- A questionnaire with 15 questions that probed into participants' general attitudes towards code-switching and Spanish and English as important cultural aspects.



# Analysis of Texts with Code-Switching

Like in past studies cited (Anderson, 2006), the participants in this study seem to show some preference for the text with grammatical code-switching:

- They describe the person that told the grammatical story as someone with more bilingual competence than the person that read the non-grammatical text, and they believe she is better-spoken.
- The high values of the standard deviation in the responses in both texts indicate the presence of a variety of opinions.
- However, the differences are subtle. It is necessary to investigate more texts and include more participants.



# Analysis of Texts with Code-Switching (Cont.)

- Q1: Do you think this person has more competence in Spanish or English or in both languages with the same level of fluency?

**Grammatical Text:**                      **Both languages: 19; Spanish: 6;  
English: 1**

**Non-grammatical Text: Both languages: 11; Spanish: 8; English: 7**

- Q2: On a scale of 1 to 5, please describe your impressions about this person. Base your opinion taking into account the way in which this person told the story.

**Not well-spoken (1) vs. Well-spoken (5):**

**Grammatical Text:**                      **Mode: 5; Stan. Dev.: 1.13; Aver.: 4**

**Non-grammatical Text: Mode: 3; Stand. Dev.: 1.24; Aver.: 3.42**



# General Attitudes Towards Code-Switching

The results of the participants' general opinions on code-switching seem to reflect the same results reported by Montes-Alcalá (2000):

- In general, participants seem to accept code-switching (Q1) and reject the idea that it indicates a low linguistic competence in both writing and speaking (Qs 2 and 3).
- However, they seem to reject the use of code-switching in both speaking and writing, although they have more negative opinions about written code-switching (Qs 4 and 5).



# General Attitudes Towards Code-Switching (Cont.)

Participants expressed their preferences choosing one of these values: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; and 5=Strongly Agree.

- Q1: It bothers me when people speak Spanish and English at the same time.  
**Mode: 2; Standard Deviation: 1.13; Average: 2.62**
- Q2: People mix languages when they write because they do not know either language well.  
**Mode: 2; Standard Deviation: 1.03; Average: 2.77**
- Q3: People mix languages when they speak because they do not know either language well.  
**Mode: 2; Standard Deviation: 1.05; Average: 2.69**



# General Attitudes Towards Code-Switching (Cont.)

- Q4: It looks good when somebody mixes Spanish and English in writing.

**Mode: 1; Standard Deviation: 0.92; Average: 1.85**

- Q5: It sounds good when speakers mix Spanish and English in the same conversation.

**Mode: 2; Standard Deviation: 1.03; Average: 2.42**

We will now analyze what the participants think about the significance of code-switching at the personal level, and as an important aspect for language loss.





# Attitudes Towards Code-Switching from a Personal Standpoint

In a certain way, the results indicate ambiguous attitudes towards code-switching at a personal level:

- Participants seem to accept code-switching as a part of their identity (Q7), but they also seem to agree with the questions that refer to the negative perception that others might have about their use of code-switching (Q 8).
- For the participants, there seems to be no link between code-switching and the loss of Spanish (Q 9). This opinion can be considered very positive, since it does not reflect the general belief that code-switching is one of the causes of the loss of Spanish in bilinguals.





# Attitudes Towards Code-Switching from a Personal Standpoint (Cont.)

- Q7: The mixture of English and Spanish reflects who I am.  
**Mode: 4; Standard Deviation: 1.38; Average: 3.58**
- Q8: When I mix languages, other people think I am stupid.  
**Mode: 4; Standard Deviation: 1.17; Average: 3**
- Q9: In my opinion, the mixing of English and Spanish leads to the loss of Spanish.  
**Mode: 2; Standard Deviation: 1.08; Average: 2.96**

Now let's look at the participants' attitudes towards Spanish and English as important aspects of their culture.



# Attitudes Towards Spanish and English

The participants' opinions on the value of Spanish and English as important cultural aspects are the most homogeneous, with lower standard deviation values than the ones shown in previous questions:

- They consider that both Spanish and English play an important role in their cultural identity.
- It is important for them to relate with Spanish speakers, and this is also shown in the positive opinions that they expressed about their community in the personal interviews that were conducted with each participant.
- Regardless of the importance that Spanish seems to have in participants' lives, surprisingly they do not consider Spanish to be an essential aspect of the Hispanic identity. Could this perhaps mean that cultural identity that goes beyond linguistic identity?



# Attitudes Towards Spanish and English

- Q10: Spanish is important to how I see myself as part of my culture.  
**Mode: 4; Standard Deviation: 0.98; Average: 4.08**
- Q11: It is important to me to associate with Spanish speakers.  
**Mode: 4; Standard Deviation: 0.87; Average: 3.96**
- Q12: English is important to how I see myself as part of my culture.  
**Mode: 4; Standard Deviation: 0.95; Average: 3.77**
- Q13: It is necessary to speak Spanish in order to be considered Hispanic.  
**Mode: 2; Standard Deviation: 1.24; Average: 2.46**



# Conclusions

The results of this study are similar to those in past studies (Anderson, 2006; Montes-Alcalá, 2000):

- Participants seem to exhibit certain sensitivity towards grammatical and non-grammatical code-switching, preferring the first one.
- The participants' opinions seem to reflect certain ambivalence towards code-switching:
  - On one hand, they consider it a part of their identity, but on the other, they seem to have a negative view of its use in both written and spoken texts.



# Conclusions (Cont.)

On the bright side...

- Participants seem to have positive linguistic opinions about code-switching since they believe that it does NOT result in language loss.
- Also of importance is that fact that they seem to regard both Spanish and English, and contact with Spanish speakers, as important aspects of their cultural identity.
- However, and surprisingly, they do not seem to consider Spanish as an essential aspect of Hispanic identity.



# Suggestions for Future Studies

- Extend this investigation to more participants and investigate late bilinguals' attitudes towards code-switching in Monterey County.
- Compare early bilinguals' and late bilinguals' opinions about code-switching in this county.



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