

Spring 5-17-2014

# Teachers' Attitudes Towards Code Switching within a Bilingual Classroom

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Teachers' Attitudes Towards Code Switching within a Bilingual Classroom

By

Wendy Olmo-Castillo

April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014

A project submitted to the

Department of Education and Human Development of the

State University of New York College at Brockport

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Education

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**Abstract**

Within the United States, the number of native Spanish speaking students entering our schools has increased as the years have passed (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). Once they are in the school system, these students are labeled as English Language Learners (ELLs) or Limited English Proficient (LEP) with each entering with varying levels of the English language as well as their native language, Spanish. As more of these students come in, the more students our schools need to accommodate for their linguistic and academic needs. Thus, the purpose of bilingual programs is to develop students' native language and develop their second language through the use of content. As these students are fortunate enough to develop both language skills, it is common to see bilingual students code switching within a single conversation. Some researchers and educators see code switching as a negative aspect while learning a language while others see it as a stage within the process of learning a new language. This thesis project investigates the functions of code switching, in what kinds of situations students code switch, and whether or not teachers see code switching as an asset or deficit.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Within the United States, the number of immigrants has been increasing as the years have passed. As more immigrants are migrating to the United States, the number of heritage language learners has increased in our school systems (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). As these learners enter our school systems, they are labeled as English Language Learners (ELLs) or Limited English Proficient (LEP). This population of learners has our schools accommodating their education to support their cultural and linguistic differences (Schreffler, 2007). Accommodations used with ELLs can be seen in various forms but the most appropriate, commonly implemented, and state mandated support practiced with these students is an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) push in support teacher/class and/or enrollment in a bilingual program (Baker, 2011). The purpose of bilingual programs is to develop the student's native language and develop his/her second language through the use of content. As these students are fortunate enough to develop both language skills, it is common to hear students code switching within a given conversation. According to Palmer (2009), code switching is the ability to use more than one language within a single utterance, regardless of the level of integration between the languages. Some researchers and educators see code switching as a factor that negatively impacts the students' learning and may hinder the development of the target language while others may see it as a stage within the process of learning a new language or a sophisticated use and understanding of the language grammars. This confusion or mixed perception of code switching can alter and set a tone for the environment of a bilingual classroom which may affect the learning of the students.

With the increase of English Language Learners in the Rochester City School District, more schools have been implementing a bilingual program to accommodate the linguistic and academic needs of these students. The use of code switching can also be seen used with the students enrolled in these programs, especially in the Dual Language Program. As the teachers work with these students to increase their proficiency of the target language, they develop their own attitude/perception on the use of code switching within the classroom.

### **Problem Statement**

After researching, interviewing bilingual teachers, and observing first and second grade dual language classrooms, it is interesting to see the types of code switching being used within the classroom and how different teachers respond to this form of communication. However, not all teachers have a positive attitude towards or value the use of code switching within the classroom. With English Language Learners it is common to see students utilize both languages but with the high importance of developing proficiency in English. Teachers may see code switching as hindering the learners' ability to learn the target language to their full potential. According to teachers involved in studies and the teachers in the bilingual program at School 12, code-switching is seen as an incomplete knowledge or incompetency in one language. Therefore, the second language students have to rely on their first language (Reyes, 2004). This is a common misconception among teachers in bilingual programs because researchers have found that code switching does not always show incompetency in one language but instead requires a higher level thinking of the grammars and structures of both languages that monolingual speakers do not have (Moore, 2002). Code switching serves more than one function within the classroom including further supporting second language students. The negative misconceptions

teachers in the bilingual program at School 12 have towards code switching is a problem because it negatively affects the students' motivation to participate and negatively impacts the students' feeling of being valued within the classroom, which impacts the achievement of students.

### **Significance of the Problem**

The Rochester City School District is a medium sized district that has a diverse population. The district currently has 30,328 students enrolled in Grades Pre-K to 12. Of the 30,328 students, 7,762 of the students enrolled are Hispanic with 1,241 students enrolled in bilingual programs. Of these bilingual programs, School 12 and School 33 are the two elementary schools that implement a Dual Language Program.

School 12 is one of two of the elementary schools in the Rochester City School District, which implements a Dual Language program. A Dual Language program is a program in which the students are learning both the native language (Spanish) and the second language (English) through the use of content (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). The goal of this program is to have learners develop language and literacy skills in both languages of instruction to develop bilingual citizens (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). The program has the two languages separated either by day, by subject, by week, or by time depending on what the school has agreed upon.

At School 12, there are 12 Dual Language classrooms in Grades K-6. There are 12 teachers within the program with one teacher per classroom. Within each classroom, 50% of the students are native Spanish speakers and the other 50% are native English speakers. The language of instruction is separated by the language of the day with Monday, Wednesday, and Friday designated as Spanish instruction days and Tuesday and Thursday designated as English instruction days. The average class size within the bilingual program is about 22 students per



classroom. About 28% of the students are classified as Hispanic/Latino or of Hispanic/Latino descent and approximately 15% of the students are Limited English Proficient. (New York State Education Department, 2013).

A survey (see Appendix A) was conducted with these teachers in the bilingual program regarding the attitudes teachers have surrounding the use of code switching within the classroom. As can be seen in Appendix A, the survey consists of five questions that has teachers reflecting on how they believe code switching affects the students within the classroom and how teachers perceive the use of code switching within the classroom. Out of the 12 teachers to whom this survey was distributed, seven of these teachers were willing to participate in the survey and discuss their views on code switching within the classroom.

When teachers were asked what areas they believe code switching affects the growth of the students, two out of seven teachers reflected on how the use of code switching may help students gain confidence in the second language or may help students express an idea they may not be able to express in the target language. In this instance, these teachers were commenting on how the use of code switching can positively affect the students socially and academically within the classroom. However, the rest of the teachers all commented on how code switching can affect the students in their writing skills, their verbal skills, and reading skills. One teacher stated, "When it comes to academic work (reading and writing especially), code-switching can hinder students' growth as they may rely more heavily on one language over another, resulting in very informal written work" (Anonymous, 2013). For this case, the majority of teachers sees code switching negatively affecting the growth of students specifically in their reading and writing skills.

When teachers were asked what they do when they see a child code switching in class only one teacher stated that he/she does not acknowledge the language choice and continues with the rest of the lesson. This aspect shows the teacher accepting the use of code switching within the lesson. However, six out of the seven teachers stated that when they hear a child code switching within the lesson, they repeat what the child has said in the desired language of the day. One of the six teachers even included that she also asks the child to repeat what he/she says by using the desired language of the day. Again, question number two indicates that the majority of teachers acknowledge the use of code switching either by repeating what the student has said in the desired language or by having the student repeat in the desired language. Either way, by not accepting the original response said by the student, the response was not accepted because of the choice of language.

On the survey, the teachers were also asked to what degree do they believe teachers' attitudes on code switching correlate with the achievement and learning of the student with 1 being highly correlated and 4 being not correlated at all. The data show that five out of seven teachers believe that teachers' attitudes on code switching and student learning are somewhat correlated and two out of seven teachers believe that it is highly correlated. This shows that all of the teachers believe that their attitudes on the use of code switching within the classroom have an affect on the learning of their students.

The fourth question on the survey directly asks the teachers what problems and/or benefits they see with accepting code switching within the classroom. It is interesting to see that the data show about a 50/50 split of perceptions of code switching being a benefit or a problem. However, it is clear to see that bilingual teachers do see code switching as a problem within the

classroom, specifically with challenging themselves and using the target language. One teacher from the survey stated, “Students may rely on one language over another, this may hinder true bilingualism and result in students not being able to express themselves truly in one language” (Anonymous, 2013). This statements shows how teachers see the use of code switching as a weakness or problem when it comes to expressing themselves.

The final question asked teachers to reflect on their own view of code switching within the classroom. The majority of teachers who participated in the survey came to a consensus stating that students need to be pushed harder to use and maintain the second language, and acknowledge when it is appropriate to code switch. Stating that students need to work harder in the appropriate use of one language over the other without knowingly giving one language an importance over the other.

Overall, the majority of teachers in the Bilingual Program do not see code switching as an asset within the classroom, but rather as a problem within their language abilities. Teachers need to be aware of the message they are giving their students regarding the importance of accepting or not accepting the form of communication given by the students. Their own attitudes and perceptions affect the students' “place” or “value” within the classroom, which may negatively impact the students.

### **Purpose**

According to the framework of a Dual Language program, the languages of instruction are clearly separated. Even though the goal of a dual language program is to develop “true bilingual” students, the main focus and objective is to have heritage language learners develop proficiency in English. Through observation of the implementation of the program and teacher

discussions, the use of the non desired language on the inappropriate day is viewed as student weakness and is ultimately corrected hindering the second language ability of the students by diminishing their confidence and place in the classroom. Therefore, throughout this project, the researcher's purpose was to explore how current bilingual teachers value or do not value the use of code switching in the classroom. With this information gained, the researcher then created a manual of guidelines regarding how to support and appropriately deal with code switching in the classroom, as well as a training about the information within the manual for teachers to use as a resource to support their students more effectively.

### **Rationale**

The anticipated outcome of creating this manual of guidelines on how to support code switching is to guide, support, and ultimately help all teachers on how to appropriately support English Language Learners who code switch. This will, in turn, help teachers create an inviting, positive, and accepting environment where the learner feels comfortable to participate and express him/herself while increasing his/her proficiency in his/her second language. A student who feels accepted, valued, confident and safe in a classroom is motivated to succeed, especially in a culture that is different than his/her own (Lightbown & Spada, 2011).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Alternation:* A form of code switching between the structures of each language (Lipski, 2005).

*Assimilation:* Release one's cultural and/or linguistic traits to conform to another culture/language. (Ovando, 2003).

*Bilingual Education:* Programs created and implemented to develop and maintain first language proficiency while developing the target language as well (Baker, 2011).

*Borrowing*: Seen differently than Code Switching. It is the use of a single lexical item appearing in a sentence or utterance (Lipski, 2005).

*Code Switching*: The ability to use more than one language within a single utterance, regardless of the level of integration between the languages (Palmer, 2009).

*Congruent Lexicalization*: A form of code switching which includes the use of lexical items from each language into shared grammatical structures (Lipski, 2005).

*Dual Language Program*: Bilingual program in which the language of instruction is separated 50/50 and language is acquired through the use of content (Baker, 2011).

*English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)*: State mandated supplemental support program to aid second language students acquire the second language (English) (Baker, 2011).

*English Language Learner (ELL)*: Student who is learning the English Language. These students receive ESOL services.

*Heritage Language Learner*: Learners who speak a language other than English at home and are learning their heritage language in order to develop proficiency in the target language (Schreffler, 2007).

*Insertion*: Another form of code switching, which includes inserting material from one language into a base structure of another language (Lipski, 2005).

*Intrasentential Switching*: Code switching which occurs within the sentence. Requires a high level of skill. Used by true bilinguals (Losey, 2009).

*Limited English Proficient (LEP)*: Students with limited proficiency in the English language who receive ESOL services to increase their proficiency in the English language.

*Metaphorical Code Switching*: Code switching occurs due to the conversation. It varies

according to discourse function eg. wanting to include or exclude someone from a conversation, to convey intimacy, or to emphasize a message (Reyes, 2004).

*Native Language:* The learner's first language spoken. The language spoken at home.

*Sink or Swim:* The theory of fully submersing ELLS. Learners will either acquire the language (swim) or they will not acquire and not become successful in their education (sink) (Ovando, 2003).

*Situational Code Switching:* The knowledge of of code switching depending on the addressee, topic or situation (Reyes, 2004).

*Target Language:* The second language that the heritage language learner is developing.

## **Summary**

For teachers who work with heritage language learners, it is common to see their students code switching within the classroom. The majority of teachers in the Dual Language Program at School 12 view the use of code switching as a negative aspect and believe it hinders the acquisition of the students' second language. This misconception is commonly shared among bilingual teachers of ELLs. Therefore, teachers generally do not accept the use of code switching within the classroom. Within the following chapter, the researcher investigated the current literature addressing code switching, its functions, and how code switching can be used as a resourceful tool within the classroom by both teachers and students to enhance student learning.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Brief History of Bilingual Education

Throughout history, the United States has had some form of bilingual education or language maintenance schooling. In colonial times, once settlers had settled in their colonies, settlers established schools where their heritage language was maintained along with a class to learn English (Brown, 1992). Among the settlers, they either spoke German, Dutch, French, Swedish, etc... Along with the diversity of languages, English was the common language making any other language the language minority (Ovando, 2003). With English as the common language between diverse language speakers, the need to learn English has increased to the majority of the population using English as the main form of communication in the United States. Having English as the dominant language used in the United States has resulted in language minorities always having the short end of the stick due to a set of dominant beliefs and attitudes that promote assimilation (Ovando, 2003).

Throughout the history of the United States, the debate of having English as the official language has always brought controversy to this country, especially within education. Many people believe that since citizens in this country speak English, no other language should be utilized or maintained to promote the use of the English language among citizens (Brown, 1992). The official language debate has become an issue with the amount of immigrants and heritage language speakers who have settled in this country and now have entered into the United States schooling systems. Educators and politicians had the belief that this population of students would acquire the new language best through full submersion. Therefore, many believed in the sink or swim theory. The sink or swim theory for English Language Learners (ELLs) acquiring

the English language requires that they become fully submersed in an English-only speaking classroom. By fully submersing the learners, one of two results can occur. If they are fully submersed in an English-only classroom, they will be used to hearing and listening the language on a daily basis and eventually will have enough exposure to use the language themselves, meaning they are swimming. Or they will not acquire the language resulting in not knowing or understanding the content and curriculum which results in sinking (Ovando, 2003). This theory was used a lot with our ELLs up until the media acknowledged the demands of a meaningful access to equal education opportunity and the success of language maintenance programs on second language learning.

The fight for the use of bilingual programs has positively changed once a few turning points have started to change the view of the public. One of the turning points that changed the use of students' native language within schools and implementing bilingual programs started with Fidel Castro's Cuban Revolution (Ovando, 2003). During this period, exiled Cubans arrived in Florida to take refuge from Castro's military control. These new refugees arrived with plans to return back to their home country once the revolution had ended. Therefore, they wanted their children to maintain their native language and culture in preparation for their return home (Ovando, 2003). This want resulted in the Cuban community of 1963 establishing a successful Two-Way Bilingual Education program at Coral Way Elementary School in Dade County, Florida for students to learn English so they could function in their new community as well as maintain their heritage language (Ovando, 2003). The success of this program had caught the attention of the eye of the public and many researchers to investigate different bilingual programs and the benefits for the students.



Another turning point towards the use of bilingual programs was the Lau vs. Nichols court case of 1974. In the Supreme Court case of Lau vs. Nichols, the Supreme Court ruled discrimination against Chinese students in a school due to the fact that they could not achieve because they did not understand the instruction of their English speaking teacher (Baker, 2011). As Ovando (2003) has included, The Justice Douglas of the court had stated,

“There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education. . . . We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful” (p. 9).

This court case had found that giving every student an equal education in no way means they are given a fair and meaningful opportunity to learn.

These important turning points in education, along with countless research on second language acquisition, the passing and modifying of the Bilingual Education Act, and research on the success of bilingual education has promoted the debate on the use bilingual programs in our schools. As a result of these factors and the No Child Left Behind Act schools are provided funding for the implementation of bilingual programs to aid limited English proficient students to achieve academic standards and increase their English proficiency (Woodward, 2009). As part of the New York State Department of Education requirements, if school districts have a population of 20 or more students that speak the same language at the same grade level in a school, they are required to provide a strong version of bilingual education for these language minority students to enable them to become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural for them meet academic, linguistic, and sociocultural needs (Ovando, 2003). According to Woodward (2009),

“Requirements for the identification and instruction of ELLs in New York are found in Commissioner’s Regulations Part 117 and Part 154. CR Part 117 provides the standards for screening every new pupil to determine if the pupil is gifted, has a possible handicapping condition in accordance with subdivision 6 of section 3208 of the Education Law and/or has limited English proficiency in accordance with subdivision 2a of section 3204 of the Education Law. CR Part 154.1 provides the standards for the education of limited English proficient students. The regulation requires that “each school district shall provide pupils with limited English proficiency equal access to all school programs and services offered by the district commensurate with their ages and grade level, including access to programs required for graduation.” In addition, subdivision 2e of Section 154.2 defines a bilingual education program as “a program of instruction composed of two components: a language arts instructional component, and a content area instructions component. Such instruction shall take into account the first language and culture of such pupils.” The language arts instructional component is provided through ELA, ESL, and Native Language Arts(NLA) instruction. The content area component is provided through NLA and ESL instruction. If the building does have 20 students with the same native language other than English, then either a free-standing ESL or bilingual education program must be provided to the pupils” (p. 6).

The following bilingual programs can be implemented and available for ELLs; Structured Immersion Programs, Partial Immersion Programs, Transitional Programs, Maintenance or Developmental Programs, and Dual Language Programs. The more common and more successful program based on various research is a Dual Language Program.

### **Description of Dual Language Classrooms**

Out of the different forms of bilingual education, research has shown that the Dual Language Program has been shown to be the most successful when it comes to students meeting their academic and linguistic needs (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Research shows that ELL's who are proficient in their native language are more successful in acquiring and learning their second language (Ellis, 2008). ELL's in full submersion programs or weak forms of bilingual education often have an achievement gap between their L2 and their L1 making it difficult for them to be successful (Collier & Thomas, 2004). This type of bilingual program is different from any other

form of bilingual program because it is the only one where the gap between ELL's L2 and L1 closes as they are receiving rigorous and meaningful instruction ( Collier & Thomas 2004). Dual Language Programs are different than other forms of bilingual education because the students in these programs maintain their L1 while developing proficiency in their L2 through content based instruction while other forms prepare ELL's for full English only instruction classrooms (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Dual languages programs are developed and seen as enrichment programs where native English language students can be challenged to learn the curriculum through the use of a second language with the goal of developing bilingual individuals.

One of the characteristics found in a Dual Language classrooms is that ELLs are maintaining their L1(Spanish) and developing their L2 (English) alongside with native English speakers while they maintain their L1 (English) while developing their L2 (Spanish) (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). It is not only important for learners to learn the languages through explicit instruction, but through natural interaction and exposure of the languages as well. These classes have a 50/50 population of 50% native Spanish speakers and 50% native English speakers with hopes that they both acquire academic and social aspects of the languages.

Within Dual Language classrooms, the language of instruction is separated into their designated schedules (Collier & Thomas, 2004). The language of instruction can be separated in a variety of forms depending on the program. It can be separated by the language of the week, the language of the day, different subject areas can be taught in a certain language, or separated by morning instruction and afternoon instruction (Gomez, Freeman & Freeman, 2005). Whichever way the program has decided to schedule the languages, it is done with a clear separation of the languages so that they both can be used 50% of the time so that there is equal

exposure to both languages being taught.

During instruction, the students are learning the language through content-based instruction in both languages (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Based on how the language is separated, the subject is taught through its designated language. Teachers do not reteach the lesson in the other language rather they continue to build upon the concept with language accommodations/strategies to accommodate to learners' needs (Collier & Thomas, 2004). The ultimate goal for Dual Language programs is to great students who are equally proficient in both languages so they can meet their academic and linguistic needs.

### **Description of Code Switching**

Within any setting where two languages are being utilized, it is common to see speakers use both languages. Using both languages is especially common within a dual language program, where students who are native in two different languages are placed in a single classroom learning and using each other's native language through the learning of the content. Once learners are learning and acquiring a new language, it is very likely to see these learners go back and forth between both languages, especially as they each acquire more of the languages. This phenomena is known as code-switching. The formal definition of code-switching is when the use of two or more languages within a single utterance or conversation takes place (Reyes, 2004). Out of the different languages spoken in the United States, this phenomena is more commonly seen within bilingual hispanic students code switching between Spanish and English (Lipski, 2005).

### **Distinction Between Code Switching and Borrowing**

Code switching sounds like a simple concept, but is in fact more complex then it seems.

As stated by Palmer (2009), “ Research on code switching demonstrates that fluent bilinguals use code switching as they use many other linguistic resources, drawing upon both (or all) of the codes available to them in a patterned and structured way in order to express their meaning” (p. 42). For a bilingual student to be able to code switch between two languages he/she must understand the grammars and the structures of each language to be able to use them with ease as they express their understandings and meanings within the classroom. Within code switching both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and learning (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012). Therefore, code switching within bilingual students is a complex phenomena where the students utilize all language resources that are available to them in order to understand and express themselves within the classroom. The concept of code switching is different than the concept of borrowing within languages.

Code switching is the use of two or more languages in a single utterance but in a complex way. Borrowing is like a loan or placement of single common words or phrases within sentences or utterances (Lipski, 2005). To be more specific, Palmer (2009) defines borrowing as, “a single lexical item appears in a sentence or utterance otherwise entirely offered in on language” (p. 44). Borrowing is distinctly different than code switching because a completely monolingual speaker can engage in borrowing while in a conversation without having knowledge of the grammars, vocabulary, and structures of the language. Spanish is a very common second language within the United States that can be seen within a community and within the media (songs, movies, TV shows). It can be very likely for a completely monolingual English speaker to borrow a word or phrase that he/she frequently has heard in Spanish into a sentence or conversation he/she is

having. In this case, the speaker would be English monolingual speaker, with little to no knowledge of the Spanish language but still using or borrowing words and phrases in a basic way. The borrowing in this case by no means makes the speaker “bilingual” but simply interested in what he/she has seen or heard.

However, borrowing can be different for newly arrived Hispanic students in a Dual Language Program. Newly arrived students in Dual Language Programs are exposed to both languages and have the comfort and support of using their native language. Once ELLs frequently hear and learn the new language, they begin to use the new language. Borrowing within a newly arrived student in a Dual Language Program can be seen as the beginning stages of code switching. When newly arrived students begin to borrow lexical items in a utterance, they are testing and playing around with the new language as they are learning it (Lipski, 2005). Testing the language is different from the instance before because in this case the speaker is a Spanish dominant speaker with the goal of learning a new language and becoming bilingual.

There are some words in English over others that Hispanic bilingual students tend to borrow more of. Some of the words or phrases borrowed include so, but, anyway, you know, I mean (Lipski, 2005). These words/phrases are commonly borrowed because they tend to be used and heard a lot in conversations. Therefore, the more they are exposed to different words and phrases, the more likely ELLs start to begin to test the language by inserting vocabulary/phrases into conversations.

### **Three Types of Code Switching**

As discussed in the previous section, there is a difference between bilingual students code switching, monolingual speakers borrowing, and newly arrived dual language students

borrowing. When newly arrived dual language students begin borrowing words/phrases into their vocabulary, it is the start of testing the language or an earlier stage of code switching. But what does research say about other types/stages of code switching?

According to Moore (2002), “code switching highlights different stages in the unfolding of meaning for the bilingual learner” (p. 290). The different types of code switches that dual language students utilize are correlated with the level of linguistic proficiency they have in the second language e.g. beginner, intermediate, advanced. In the research of Lipski (2005), he discusses three different types of code switching that learners utilize within the classroom. The order in which each type will be discussed is based off of which type is utilized within the level of English Language Learner. Examples of each type of code switching have been observed in first and second grade dual language classrooms in the Rochester City School District.

The first type of code switching that Lipski (2005) discusses is the most basic type of code switching that was previously discussed. As mentioned before in a previous section, borrowing when utilized by a dual language student who is maintaining his/her native language while learning his/her second language is seen as testing the new language and the beginning stages of code switching (Lipski, 2005). This form of code switching is called insertion and is utilized by beginner dual language students. An example of insertion can be found in a first grade dual language classroom while students were socializing in between lessons.

#### Conversation A: Conversation during transitional periods

Student 1: A mi me gusta ver Los Power Rangers

Student 2: Yo tambien. Yo soy el Power Ranger verde.

In this case, the student is a Spanish dominant student who inserted the title Power Rangers , a

TV show that this student and his friends really enjoy, into the conversation that is mainly in Spanish. The reason for insertion in this case is because the title of the show that the boys watch is originally in English. But other forms of insertion shows the vocabulary of the lesson being used. The next example of insertion is also in a first grade dual language classroom during a Science ESOL lesson about pets.

Conversation B: ESOL Science lesson on pets

Teacher: What kind of pet do you have?

Student 1: Maestra, yo no tengo un pet. Pero yo quiero un dog.

Student 2: Santa Clause me trajo un dog!

In this case, Student 1 is a newly arrived student from Puerto Rico and is responding to a question the ESOL teacher has asked. When the teacher asked about what kind of pet he has, student 1 shows comprehension of the question because he answers her question correctly and even inserts familiar vocabulary terms. Student 2 continues to add on to his response by commenting on her own experience with pets.

Another form of code switching can be found used with intermediate to advanced ELLs. Congruent Lexicalization includes the use of lexical items from each language into shared grammatical structures (Lipski, 2005). In this form, a student relies and draws on both resources to properly express his/her understanding and meanings. This code switching requires a lot more skill and understanding of both language grammars and structures. An example of congruent lexicalization can be found within a second grade dual language program within a conversation with a teacher and student during a guided reading lesson.



Conversation C: Guided Reading Lesson

Teacher: Que paso con el conejo en el cuento?

Student: El conejito estaba going up, up, y up y todos los papers se cayeron.

This type of code switching is very interesting because the learner is showing comprehension of the story she has just read by drawing upon both resources he/she has. The constant code switching back and forth within this conversation shows how the student utilized the vocabulary and structures of both languages without violating either rules of English or Spanish (Toribio, 2004). This example of code switching is also known as intrasentential switching where the switching occurs within the sentence (Losey, 2009). This type of switching requires a high level of skill within both languages.

The third form of code switching can also be seen used by intermediate to advanced ELLs. The form of code switching called alternation is when code switching occurs between the structures of each language (Lipski, 2005). This form of code switching usually has a separation of the two languages (Lipski, 2005). In the following example of alternation, the teacher of a first grade dual language classroom was grabbing the attention of a Spanish dominant student during the lesson.

Conversation D: 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Dual Language Classroom

Teacher: Jay (pseudonym)

Student: Que?

Teacher: Dejate de hablar y ponte a trabajar!

Student: What! I wasn't talking!

In this example of code switching you can see the clear alternation between languages as well as

the separation of the two. This shows how the student has the ability to alternate between either language with ease showing a high level of oral proficiency in both languages. This is also known as intersentential switching where the switching between English and Spanish are within single clauses (Toribio, 2004). Within this type of code switching, Toribio (2004) discusses how this type of code switching allows for greater expressive possibilities and suggests that the speaker has a high level of proficiency in both languages.

### **Functions of Code Switching**

Now that we have an understanding on the different types of code switching used with students in dual language programs as it pertains to the different levels or knowledge of the English language, the curiosity about the kinds of situations and why we see students code switching has sparked the attention of researchers around the U.S. It is very interesting to see students who have knowledge in two languages alternate between the two in a particular conversation. Students who code switch know when to speak, when not to speak, what to talk about and with whom, when and where and in what manner consciously know they are code switching (Reyes, 2004). But in what contexts and situations do these students code switch. In Reyes' (2004) research, she discusses two functions of code switching in which bilingual students are found code switching. According to Reyes (2004), code switching varies according to the situation known as situational code switching and within the conversation known as metaphorical code switching.

Research has found that children who code switch develop the knowledge on how and when to use their two languages depending on the addressee, topic of the conversation, and the situation (Reyes, 2004). As previously mentioned by Reyes (2004) situational code switching

occurs depending on the situation when the conversation takes place. The following table includes different instances of code switching, which can occur due to the situation within a school setting.

**Table 1**

<b>Examples of Situational Code Switching</b>	<b>Description</b>
Situation Switch	Code switching when it occurs to academic and non academic conversations.
Insistence	Code switching when a child is putting emphasis on a specific idea. Usually includes the child repeating the same utterance in both languages.
Clarification or Persuasion	When a child is giving more information to clarify an idea.

(Reyes, 2004)

These examples of when students code switch give an idea of when and why students code switch according to the situation within an academic context. Based on the situation, either academic or social, students use code switching as a communicative strategy to get their ideas across more effectively.

The other form of code switching Reyes (2004) discusses has to deal with code switching occurring within the conversation, metaphorical code switching. The following table includes example of when students code switch within conversation.

**Table 2**

<b>Example of Metaphorical Code Switching</b>	<b>Description</b>
Representation of Speech	Code switching to represent what other people have said.
Imitation Quotation	Code switching when you are imitating someone or changing your voice to play a

	particular character.
Turn Accommodation	Code switching between speaker's turn.
Emphasis	Code switching to put emphasis on a command.
Person Specification	Code switching occurring when children referred to another person during the conversation.
Question Shift	Asking a question in the conversation in a different language.

(Reyes, 2004)

The two tables of examples as to why students code switch show how code switching is not done out of curiosity, laziness, or language incompetency but instead for a reason. Each type of functional code switching whether it is situational or metaphorical all had a reasoning behind the use or purpose of each. Which negates the general perception of the use of code switching within the classroom.

### **Perception's Around Student use of Code Switching in the Classroom**

As continuously mentioned, it is very common to see learners code switch within a dual language classroom, especially the more they acquire each language. But how is the use of code switching perceived within the dual language classroom? As one of the components of a dual language classroom, the students are learning and using two languages at separate times of the day, week or subject. There is a clear separation of the use of each language. Therefore, when students combine both languages in a single utterance, this is seen by teachers and administrators as inappropriate or errors (Palmer, 2009). Teachers in a dual language classroom usually want to encourage students not to combine the languages. To a lot of educators and researchers, the use of code switching is seen as a sign of weakness or lack of proficiency in the desired language

(Palmer, 2009). The Dual Language Program believes that students learn a language more fluently if students “stay” in the desired language (Palmer, 2009). The more they are “forced” to use the target language, the better they learn it. Therefore, code switching does not fall into the theory of “staying” within the target language. It is believed that if a student relies too much on the native language, then he/she will not fully develop the second language. Therefore, the use of code switching in a well implemented dual language classroom is discouraged.

### **Student Feelings in the Classroom**

When working with any type of student, it is important that he/she feel comfortable in his/her own classroom and that the teacher has created a positive and welcoming learning environment for his/her students to grow. In a society where English is the dominant language spoken in students' communities and schools, the language that heritage language learners bring into the schools and classrooms is not seen as important as the dominant language, English. This is even more true since there is great importance on high stakes testing, especially with the ELA state exams. As seen through observations of dual language programs, some students have been scolded or embarrassed in front of the classroom when they are not speaking the language of the day or lesson. In observing a first grade ESOL class, some beginning ELLs did not participate unless the teacher unexpectedly called on them because they were too shy to speak in their second language. As stated from Toribio's (2004) interview with a bilingual student about his/her school community, “A teacher comes up to you and tells you, 'No, no. You know that is a filthy language, nothing but bad words and bad thoughts in that language.' I mean they are telling you that your language is bad” (p. 134). In this quote, the student is showing the perception the school community has on the use of a foreign language within the school. The student now has a

negative experience with using his/her own language within the school thinking that it is “bad” to use. This negative experience is very similar to when a teacher says to a student, “no, today is an English/Spanish day” or “in here we speak English/Spanish”. As a teacher, he/she is not allowing the student to participate or express their understandings unless he/she can say it in the desired language. The ability of fully speaking in the desired language if it is the student's second language can be a very difficult task for students who are recent arrivals to the United States. Students who do not feel comfortable in their classroom environment do not feel valued and are not eager to participate in classroom activities. It is important to make it clear to all students that they are valued and that any differences between them have no bearing on how they will be treated by you or others in the classroom (Van Stone, 2013). Students who feel valued and comfortable in the classroom are more likely to branch out socially and academically. Therefore, neglecting or not accepting the use of code switching from our students as a part of their learning process can give a negative experience to the student as he/she is trying to participate in classroom activities.

### **Research on How to Utilize Code Switching within the Classroom**

When teaching students who are learning a second language, imagine them as using a twelve string guitar, rather than limiting themselves to two six string guitars (Toribio, 2004). In this metaphor, the twelve string guitar is seen as the students using resources from the two languages that they know and are learning as opposed to separating the two languages with two six string guitars. Using a twelve string guitar is a more difficult skill due to the player having the knowledge of all the notes and chords of the guitar. A person who is using a six string guitar does have a lot of talent, but is not seen as impressive compared to a person who can play a

twelve string guitar. This comparison is very similar to our dual language students. Rather than just learning one language (a six string guitar), they are learning and utilizing both. But students who are utilizing code switching correctly are using the two languages together rather than separating them just like a person who can play a twelve string guitar rather than two separate six string guitars. Students who utilize code switching within the classroom are truly showing their “bilingual ability”. They are building a bridge between both languages (Toribio, 2004).

Research has shown teachers not negating code switching in the classroom, but instead embracing it and using it as a tool for scaffolding. In Canagarajah's (2011) research, the teachers have provided a safe space for students to adapt their multilingual repertoire for learning purposes and teachers have collaborated with students in using code switching as a resource.

Within the classroom, code switching can be used in a variety of ways. Depending on the lesson objective, whether is it a vocabulary objective vs content knowledge objective, code switching can be very useful when teaching heritage language learners. Code switching employed by teachers and students as a resource can be used for constructing and transmitting knowledge, classroom management, and interpersonal relations (Saxena, 2009). If the objective of the lesson is for the students to learn a specific skill or understand a new topic/idea, code switching can be used to make sure that the heritage language learners understand an important detail of the topic. Code switching for comprehension or confirmation checks can be a good tool for teachers of heritage language learners to make sure all students are getting something out of the lesson.

Another way code switching can be utilized in the classroom by teachers is to make sure there is a consistent flow in student responses and to assure everyone has a chance to participate

in classroom discussions/activities (Saxena, 2009). One important aspect of learning is making sure that students are engaged in the lesson and are demonstrating their knowledge through questions and responses. To make sure our heritage language learners are included in the discussions, code switching can be used to make their responses flow with ease and to allow them to utilize the resources they have to get their point across and/or demonstrate their knowledge.

Teachers code switching within the presentation of the lesson allows for heritage language learners, especially beginners, to better understand the lesson. This method is called responsible code switching, when the teacher plans ahead of time when he/she should code switch in the lesson to enhance the students' cognitive skills and to clarify or reinforce the lesson material (Lewis et al., 2012). In this case, when the teacher is using code switching, it does not show weakness or lack of knowledge, but using code switching responsibly to better accommodate to their learners' needs, so that the students are using the first language to guide them through learning their second language (Lewis et al., 2012).

Code switching can also be seen as a culturally and linguistically sensitive pedagogical method (Losey, 2009). With the amount of diversity teachers are seeing in their classrooms, the schools are asking for teachers to implement culturally sensitive methods in their teaching to accommodate and differentiate for their learners. Teachers who code switch and allow students to code switch within the lesson are welcoming the kinds of diversity that can be found in the classroom, as well as accommodating those learners that need it.

To conclude, teachers who implement code switching in their lessons, allow for students in their classroom to enhance their learning by accommodating their needs. Code switching



should not be viewed as a lack of knowledge in one language or a sign of weakness/laziness. As previously mentioned, code switching must be used responsibly within the classroom so that students can benefit from teacher and student use to linguistically and academically grow. The next portion of this project includes the description of a manual including the knowledge of code switching within the classroom, how teachers can use code switching in the classroom, and sample common core lessons for teachers to use as a reference.

### Chapter 3: Description of Product

As stated by Lipski (2005), “In bilingual societies in which one of the languages is clearly dominant from a sociolinguistic point of view, code switching is more frequent from the subordinate language to the dominant language” (p. 8). Therefore, it is common to see code switching as a common practice amongst dual language students at James P. B. Duffy School #12. There are a number of dual language teachers at School #12 that believe code switching used within the classroom is a negative aspect for the learning of students within a dual language program. The goal of this research project was to determine the perception that dual language teachers at School #12 have towards heritage language learners code switching within the classroom, and to provide them with truthful and accurate information about code switching.

A survey was developed to collect data from dual language teachers who taught in the bilingual program at School #12. The researcher observed how a number of heritage language learners often code switched inside and outside the classroom. The survey was intended to collect data on the perception that dual language teachers have on the use of students code switching within lessons. This information is important to obtain and analyze since research shows that Bilingual Education discourages the use of code switching (Fennema-Bloom, 2009/2010). The researcher felt that a survey would be the best way to collect data due to her colleagues' work and time schedules. The survey consisted of five questions, which included multiple choice questions and written responses. The questions asked were in regards to dual language teachers' beliefs and views on the use of code switching during classroom lessons, if dual language teachers accepted the use of code switching within the classroom, and how dual language teachers responded to student code switching.

After collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher was able to conclude how the majority of the dual language teachers at School #12 believe that code switching is a negative aspect used within the lessons and can ultimately affect the language acquisition of ELLs. These findings are a problem

within the dual language program at School #12 since the previous research discussed has proven code switching as a high level skill that bilingual speakers utilize as they are learning and using the second language. This negative perception of students' abilities can negatively affect student participation within the classroom. In order to promote student participation and student motivation, Van Stone (2013) has stated for teachers to make it clear to all students that they are valued and that any differences between them have no bearing on how they will be treated by the teacher or others in the classroom. Dual language teachers need to be positive, tolerant, and supportive of everything that their students bring to the classroom in order to create a positive classroom environment where students can feel comfortable to participate in all types and levels of conversation, regardless of their language abilities (Van Stone, 2013).

After further investigation on code switching, the data and current literature demonstrate the need for dual language teachers to have a resource to use with their ELLs. The researcher felt that a manual of how to utilize code switching within the classroom would be beneficial to the dual language teachers at School #12 so they can accommodate all learners and ensure student acceptance and participation. Therefore, the researcher created a manual, which includes (1) a description of pertinent and positive information on code switching, the types of code switching, when and why students code switch, misconceptions dual language teachers often make about code switching, and how teachers can use code switching as a positive within the classroom, and (2) sample lessons of New York State Common Core ELA lessons from Grades K-6 with examples of how teachers can use code switching as a scaffolding strategy to ensure the learning and participation of all students and how teachers can respond to students' code switching.

As previously mentioned, the first part of the manual includes a description of pertinent and positive information on code switching, the types of code switching, when and why students code switch, the misconceptions dual language teachers often make about code switching, and ways teachers

can use code switching within the classroom. The data from the survey shows and proves the misconceptions and negative views that dual language teachers have towards the use of code switching. The negative perception that is shown from the survey shows the need for teachers to be educated on the reality and correct use of student and teacher code switching to better accommodate for their learners. Each subsection includes important research-based information related to its topic showing how the use of code switching leads to the positive growth of language use and acquisition rather than a deficit. Also included in this section is information and ways dual language teachers have used code switching in the classroom to accommodate their ELLs. This section is important for dual language teachers at School #12 to see how other dual language teachers use code switching as an advantage to teaching and student learning with the hope that teachers can use the examples to implement within their own teaching methods.

The second section of this manual is what the researcher feels teachers will appreciate more. Along with important, positive, and current information regarding the use of student code switching and the ways teachers can use code switching to benefit their students, the second part of the manual includes real New York State Common Core ELA lessons pulled from [engageny.org](http://engageny.org) from Grades K-6 with examples of when teachers can plan to code switch and how to respond to student code switching. For Grades K-2 and Grades 3-6, the NYS ELA lessons for these two grade sections have the same format. Therefore, for each grade level, the researcher decided to pull a section of a lesson from each grade that points out when and how teachers can code switch and respond to students code switching. For each lesson, there is the unit number and lesson number within the unit, an outline of the lesson, and learning objectives as well as the procedures to implement the lessons. Within the procedural part of the lessons, teachers will find highlighted sections and inserted stars, which highlight and describe areas of when and why to code switch.

This manual is intended to be used by any dual language teacher or teacher who teaches ELLs

in Grades K-6. The information and strategies in this manual can be used to help dual language teachers have an idea and examples of how to positively include code switching within lessons so that all students have the opportunity to learn and participate within lessons. If the lesson objectives are content learning objectives rather than language use objectives, then code switching can be positively used to ensure the content learning of all learners in the classroom.

## **Chapter 4: Conclusions, Limitations in Research and Product, and Recommendations**

### **Discussions**

The purpose of this research project was to determine the perceptions dual language teachers have on students code switching within the classroom. A survey was developed for dual language teachers at School #12 in the Rochester City School District to complete for analyzing. From the results of the survey, the researcher was able to conclude that dual language teachers at School #12 have misconceptions and negative views on heritage language learners code switching within the classroom. The lack of proficiency, the inappropriate use within a bilingual program, and the lack of desire to “correctly” learn a new language by forcing to “stay” in one language were the more common misconceptions and views teachers generally had towards the use of code switching. But as Liebschner & Dialely-O'Cain (2005) stated, “If the ultimate goal of language instruction is to create bilinguals they argue, then the aim of incorporating systematic code switching behavior into the classroom is both worthy and appropriate” (p. 235). Research shows that such unnatural complete separation of language will not allow bilingual language development and will hinder the development of either language (Palmer, 2009). Therefore, the researcher felt that a teacher-friendly manual of ways to utilize code switching within the classroom would be beneficial for dual language teachers. Thus, the researcher developed a manual providing teachers with the positive, current, and accurate information on code switching within bilingual classrooms, a list of ways teachers can use code switching to benefit their learners, and sample NYS Common Core ELA lessons from Grades K-6 for teachers to have an example of how code switching can be used within lessons. If used correctly so that it does not negatively affect the language acquisition of the second language, this manual could be a great resource for dual language teachers to accommodate to all learners.

### **Limitations in Research and Project**

There were some limitations to this thesis project. One limitation to this project was the sample

size of participants. The dual language program at School #12 is only a small program within the whole school. The program only has twelve dual language teachers of which only seven of these teachers completed and returned the survey. The researcher wonders if the data would change if the sample size was larger at School #12, if the survey was administered to a dual language school, or if the survey was administered to dual language programs in other Rochester City Schools.

The second limitation to this study was the location of the study. Rochester has a large Hispanic population but not as big as other cities. In bigger cities where the population is much larger, the dominant language in the Hispanic community may or may not be English. If this thesis project was created in a different location, the data collected might have drastically change.

Lastly, another limitation to this project was the amount of information on code switching in schools outside of the U.S. and code switching in U.S. schools but with languages other than Spanish and English. To keep the information accurate and relevant, the researcher had to overlook a number of studies to ensure accurate information and references were used in creating the manual. Further research and studies should be conducted within the U.S. with regards to Spanish and English code switching so that teachers are given accurate and relevant information on which they can rely.

## **Recommendations**

In bilingual societies where there is more use of the second language, code switching is used more frequently (Lipski, 2005). Code switching is more evident with the Hispanic population within the City of Rochester. Current and future researchers should continue to conduct new studies on the phenomena of code switching as the Hispanic population continues to grow and change. Future researchers should also continue to develop more resources such as manuals, books, or professional development trainings for dual language teachers to use so that dual language teachers are up to date on current and new information and have reliable resources upon which to draw. Professional development needs to be offered to dual language teachers on the accurate information of code

switching so that the negative misconceptions can be avoided and so teachers can incorporate all ways to accommodate their learners. Further research and forms of data collected, such as student performance results should be conducted to expand on this topic to further support the use of code switching within the classroom.

## **Conclusion**

When teaching a second language to heritage language learners in a dual language classroom, teachers are bound to find students code switching between English and Spanish as they learn both languages. Teachers in the past and present have had negative perceptions on the use of student code switching and have discouraged its use within the classroom with the perception that it will increase the students' language proficiency in the second language. Current research has proven that this is not the case and indeed code switching is a higher level of thinking that draws upon all language resources that the students have. The negative perceptions that teachers have towards code switching has become a problem within dual language classroom because heritage language learners are not given the opportunity to use all language resources they have available to them when participating in classroom discussions and activities. Therefore, rather than eliminating this use of language, teachers should embrace it and use it to their advantage when teaching two different population of students, native English speakers and native Spanish speakers. For this research project, the researcher has resolved this problem by creating a manual that teachers can use as a reliable resource filled with current literature on code switching and ways to positively and properly use code switching within lessons. The researcher has also included sample NYS ELA lesson plans so teachers can see examples of when and how to use code switching. With the use of this manual, teachers can allow heritage language learners to express their meaning and show understanding with all the language resources they have as well as accommodate their learners to the best of their knowledge.



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**Appendix A**

Attitudes Surrounding Code-Switching Survey

1) In what areas do you believe code-switching affects the growth of the students?

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2) When you see a child code-switching in class, do you...

- a. Ask the child to use the language of the day.
- b. Repeat what the child said in the desired language.
- c. Do not acknowledge the language choice and continue with the lesson.
- d. Other \_\_\_\_\_

3) To what degree do you believe teachers' attitudes on code-switching correlate with the achievement and learning of the student?

- 1- Highly correlated 2- Somewhat correlated
- 3- Not very correlated 4- Not at all correlated with student achievement

4) What problems or benefits, if any, do you see with accepting code switching within the classroom?

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5) As a teacher to heritage and native language learners, what are your views/attitude towards code switching within the classroom?

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