Chapter 14
Sociolinguistic and Educational Perspectives on Code Switching in Classrooms: What Is It, Why Do It, and then, Why Feel Bad about It?

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ABSTRACT
In educational contexts, codeswitching (CS) is deployed in a binary fashion. Either CS is a productive strategy (a translanguaging, revisionists’ claim), or CS is a “bad habit” signaling linguistic deficits. Some of the variance in understanding CS results from specific contexts. When a second language is used in a content classroom, the productive use of CS as a viable strategy for explication, management, and community building may also suffer from confusion. Yet, CS in language classrooms is a concern for teachers. Confusion emanates from two theoretical accounts for CS (structural and functional). For educational uses, CS suffers from this “split personality,” with resolution found in a “contact zone” account. I draw from the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic contexts of South Africa to explain notions of CS, and specifically as CS relates to literacy in some cases. The cross-cultural components play a role in explaining CS as it relates to literacy.

INTRODUCTION
In the middle of a hypothetical science or social studies lesson, a teacher may stop and rephrase to make a point more clearly. Sometimes, the clarification may take a different linguistic form, a different dialect, or, in a bilingual situation, a second language. When these conversation shifts occur within a single conversational turn, it is called code switching (Myers-Scotton, 1992; hereafter, CS). The teacher’s instructional goal that underpins a choice to change the language of teaching may be understood as increasing students’ comprehension. But the linguistic goal may be potentially more complex. When speakers shift their language of delivery within a conversational

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The purpose of this chapter is to sort through and organize what is meant when one “codeswitches” or when someone else talks about instances of “codeswitching.” I begin with an historic and definitional treatment of codeswitching. I then explain how subsequent treatment of CS in various contexts reveals the futility in trying to pin down decontextualized accounts for CS. Consequently, the remainder of the chapter situates CS in more specific social contexts to instantiate its particular uses. These include linguistic accounts, CS in second language classrooms, CS in content area courses (science, social studies, math), and CS in early bilingual language learning. The chapter ends with recommendations for consideration of the “contact zone” as an alternative understanding for CS in purposefully bilingual social spaces as situated in a more globalized world.

**BACKGROUND**

**Determining What Is (and What Isn’t) Codeswitching**

John Gumperz is given credit for the first mention of the term codeswitching (CS). The term “codeswitching” was introduced by Gumperz in 1967, where “code” meant language or language variety. Switching referred roughly to the use of at least two languages within a conversational exchange. But several points converge here from fields like teaching strategies, educational discourse analysis, bilingual sociolinguistics, as well as specific conversation analysis and theory building in general linguistics. Li and Martin (2009) embrace the paradoxical nature of CS:

*Codeswitching is, perhaps, the most common, unremarkable and distinctive feature of bilingual behavior. In most multilingual contexts it largely goes unnoticed and unmentioned. It would probably go unmentioned and unnoticed in classrooms as well were it not for…language policies…imbued with persistent monolingual ideologies.* (p. 117)