

# Assignment 2(2207783)

*by* Na Xiang

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## CODESWITCHING IN THE BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

Na Xiang (2207783)

### I. DEFINITION OF CODESWITCHING

In bilingual classrooms, bilinguals and multilinguals often switch between languages during their communications, which is commonly viewed as a practical solution to overcoming language difficulties that may cause problems in understanding of the subject matter. Some teachers may also switch their languages due to various reasons such as aiding understanding or improve efficiency of class management. The alteration of languages would be either within utterances or between utterance. This phenomenon has been described using various terms such as codemixing, codeswitching, and translanguaging. 

According to Baker (2021), codemixing is typically defined as language switching that is done subconsciously due to a lack of proficiency or inadequate language knowledge, whereas code switching and translanguaging refer to language switching that is done consciously when switching is used to accomplish various functions. Codeswitching and code mixing are sometimes used interchangeably. But Baker (2014) suggests it is insignificant to distinguish the terms “codeswitching” and “codemixing” because it is hard to distinguish the two on many occasions. Besides, as he implied, bilinguals, as early as two years old, had learned to switch their languages in different contexts with different people. There is a purpose or logic in their codeswitching. Just as Christian J. Faltis implied, "all codeswitching that occurs between and among bilinguals, however, expects and aims for meaningful communication"(MacSwan, and Faltis, 2020, p. 41). The recognition of its communicative purpose is quite significant for the codeswitching of bilinguals. It helps eliminate negative attitudes towards 

codeswitching because codeswitching is initially regarded as an indicator of incomplete language development of bilinguals when it is first discussed by researchers. With the support of research in the 1980s codeswitching had been recognized as a discourse strategy from a socio-functional perspective rather than a sign of language deficit due to a lack of knowledge or words in the communication (Auer and Li, 2007, p. 279)

Later, the term "codeswitching" was challenged for its name, which implied languages were separate and countable codes that could be added to one's native language, while many scholars argued it could arouse misunderstandings when languages were viewed as named codes that were socio-historical constructions excluding external aspects such as language communities (García, 2009). A new term, "translanguaging" was coined by García (2009) based on the term first introduced by Williams (1994) to emphasize the entirely new nature that "bilinguals have one unitary language system that enables them to draw on and use features of their named languages" (MacSwan and Faltis, 2020. p.55). As it is mentioned in García (2009, p.44) "translanguaging, is an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages as has been often the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable". That is, the notion of codeswitching may concern more on its nature as codes due to the implication of its name, which highlighted the discussion of linguistic features and rules, while the notion of translanguaging emphasizes more on bilingual practices.

Some researchers differentiate between the terms codeswitching and translanguaging in their studies by limiting codeswitching to mixing languages within a sentence. Some suggested the two terms had different connotations. They argued the two terms shared the overlapped part but codeswitching emphasized its linguistic part of codes and translanguaging might cover a broader part including the cultural and political connotations. Some others thought the two terms could be used interchangeably on certain aspects such as in describing bilingual practices. Baker and Wright (2021) mentioned that codeswitching is a type of translanguaging, but translanguaging is broader which includes a range of language practices beyond code-switching. Translanguaging highlights the fluid and dynamic nature of language use and emphasizes how bilingual speakers draw on their linguistic and cultural

backgrounds to communicate effectively in different contexts. (Baker and Wright, 2021, p.104). However, except for different connotations or perspectives indicated by the names, in many cases, “codeswitching” and “translanguaging” both refer to the same practices – the alteration of two languages by bilinguals in their communications.

In this essay, the term “codeswitching” will be adopted based on Baker and Wright’s definition. It would be used to refer to “any switches between languages that occur within or across sentences during the same conversation or discourse” and the benefits of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom may come from the discussion of “translanguaging” in the studies when the term was used to describe the language practice of using two or more than two languages in the classroom (Baker and Wright, 2021, p.145).



## II. BENEFITS OF CODESWITCHING IN THE CLASSROOM

Although codeswitching used to be viewed as a sign of deficit language development of bilinguals or multilinguals, many scholars made efforts to support the value of codeswitching. Research in the 1980s revealed the significance of codeswitching as a discourse strategy rather than a random language mixing due to the incompetence of language proficiency (Auer and Li, 2007, p.279-280).



Baker figured out four potential advantages of switching from one language to another in the bilingual classroom: promoting a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the subject discussed; helping develop the weaker language of bilinguals; facilitate home–school connections and cooperation; and enhance the incorporation of individuals (proficient speakers with early learners) (Baker and Wright, 2021, p.145).

Baker and Wright (2021) expound, based on the sociocultural theory of learning, restrictions on the single use of a second language would reduce the students’ thinking power because language learners in lower proficient levels may be unable to accomplish the learning tasks relying on the second language. The restriction of

Citation Needed

language use may prevent the students from making full use of their existing L1 knowledge when they are not competent enough to think in the second language. Codeswitching may help the students understand the subject better in the classroom because it allows cross-linguistic and cross-cultural transfer based on students' L1. With the help of L1, students could construct meaning in L2 easily when they fully understand the subject and the tasks which would further enhance their L2 language development. Codeswitching in the bilingual classroom enables students to recall and make use of their existing knowledge related to their L1. As Fu (2003, 74) ~~figured out~~ in his research, "I believe thinking (reasoning and imagination) and the ability to organize ideas are equally, or even more, important than language skills in learning to write. If we let our students express themselves and present their ideas in their primary language, we give them opportunities to continue the development of their thinking. With this development uninterrupted, they can write well in a second language once they develop proficiency in it."

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Also, codeswitching may provide more opportunities for bilingual students to develop both languages in the bilingual classroom. Students may employ different languages in tasks of different levels. The use of two or more languages in the bilingual classroom may help promote the value of both languages. **Recognition or freedom** to use minority languages at school would greatly shape or influence the students' perceptions of those languages. Positive attitudes toward those languages will encourage students to develop their weak languages in the classroom.

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Furthermore, the use of more than two languages in the classroom would make it possible for parents to give more support to their children after school even when they do not have adequate knowledge of their children's L2.

What's more, codeswitching may be beneficial in constructing a sense of competency and proficiency in language learning among individuals from disadvantaged groups. With the help of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom students can approach literacy and other academic tasks in both languages with greater

confidence (Cummins, 2007). And the confidence would have a positive impact on student's overall academic achievement accordingly.

Then, codeswitching employed by teachers in the bilingual classroom would function as scaffolding, ensuring the efficiency of the management because the class would be fully understood by every student within a limited time. According to Lin's (1996) research, codeswitching in Hong Kong classrooms followed certain patterns and served pedagogical and social functions. For instance, it was used to indicate the beginning of a lesson or to discipline students.



### III. TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF CODESWITCHING

In the past decades, bilingual teachers experienced different language instruction requirements from the separate language approach to bilingual education and dual-language education in the classroom as theories about language and language policies changed considerably.



During the 1970s-2000s, there was a long-standing tradition that teachers were required to use separate named languages for different instructional purposes such as literacy and content teaching. In the classroom, language mixing in student communications was discouraged (MacSwan & Faltis, 2020, p. 39). The approach of using separate named languages for different purposes was influenced by the "Fishman Rule" which implied mixed use of languages in a particular domain was viewed as an indication of potential language loss, and therefore should be discouraged. It was proposed in 1967 by an influential researcher, Joshua Fishman, who developed the concept of diglossia based on Charles Ferguson's work (1959). Also, the idea of diglossia that separate languages should be employed for different functions within specific domains coincided with the monoglossic language ideologies which viewed languages as separate, countable objects (MacSwan & Faltis, 2020, p. 42-43). As Faltis concluded, though there were variations in the late bilingual programs with different implementations, they were designed predominantly in monolingual language norms

and standardized codes (MacSwan & Faltis, 2020, p. 43).  15

Although the idea had been challenged by many scholars since the 1980s (MacSwan, and Faltis, 2020), it has a far-reaching influence on teachers' perception of codeswitching. The situation was improved since the year 2000 when there has been a shift in the social and multilingual perspectives on how language is perceived and understood which resulted in a reevaluation of codeswitching and bilingualism (MacSwan, and Faltis, 2020, p.39).

As Baker (2021) suggested, children's perception of codeswitching and translanguaging would be significantly influenced by the language models provided by their family members and others at schools or communities. As one of the most common language models students would learn at school, teachers' perception of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom would have a profound impact on the student's educational experiences, their learning outcomes, and their perception of their languages and bilingual abilities.  16

However, it's found that different teachers nowadays still hold different views on code-switching in bilingual classrooms due to their educational experiences and instruction requirements of different schools (MacSwan, and Faltis, 2020). Owing to the widespread impact of the Fisherman Rule and other educational programs and ideologies, such as English immersion programs, some teachers or schools still regarded codeswitching as an indicator of incompetence or inadequate language proficiency in one or both languages. Consequently, codeswitching was viewed as a harmful phenomenon that needed to avoid or correct through teaching in the classroom. The negative attitudes towards codeswitching in the classroom would have a considerable impact on the assessment of students' outcomes in the classroom; students' perception of the languages, their bilingual abilities, and even their academic achievements. Some teachers may welcome codeswitching in the bilingual classroom because they believed that codeswitching was beneficial in improving teaching efficiency; encouraging students' engagement; promoting language motivation and language development, etc. Many teachers were uncertain and inconsistent about the status of codeswitching in the classroom. Some teachers were unsure whether

critical evaluation

codeswitching was a temporary phase in the bilingual and biliteracy development of students, and therefore permitted its usage based on this developmental perspective. Some viewed codeswitching as a natural aspect of communication for bilinguals but they were not sure about their choice because they did not get deliberate support or guidance from schools or language planning in school districts.

Since the teacher's perception of codeswitching played an important part in the bilingual classroom, several measures should be taken to ensure the acceptance of codeswitching in the classroom to facilitate language acquisition and student engagement. First of all, it is crucial for teachers to learn the advantages of code-switching and to apply it correctly in the classroom. Moreover, it's equally essential for administrators of schools and governments to learn the importance of codeswitching in the classroom so teachers could get clear guidance or support on codeswitching in the classroom such as "how to interpret students' participation when they engage in codeswitching and how to design instruction that incorporates it and acknowledges it as part of sound bilingual pedagogy and as a normal part of developmental bilingualism."

(MacSwan, J. and Faltis, C.J. 2020, p.203)



#### **IV. BENEFITS OF CODESWITCHING IN THREE STUDIES**

Then I would like to review the benefits of codeswitching in a bilingual classroom in three recent studies.

The 1<sup>st</sup> study is from "A Sociolinguistic Perspective of Codeswitching in French as a Foreign Language Class in Malta and its Implications for Learning" by Anne-Marie Bezzina and Joanne Gauci (Romanowski and Jedynak, 2018). It studied the codeswitching in the teaching and learning of French as a Foreign Language in the classroom among students with Maltese as their L1 and English as their L2. After examining various functions of codeswitching demonstrated in classroom teaching, it indicates that codeswitching is a useful tool in a classroom with students of mixed abilities, and it helps create a favorable classroom environment that prevents students from feeling discouraged or confused. Teachers' use of codeswitching would help the

student comprehend information more effectively. Also, codeswitching in the classroom would encourage students to participate verbally in class. Furthermore, codeswitching in the classroom promotes clarity and efficiency in classroom management and improves teaching efficiency accordingly with the help of students' first language. However, it also revealed the fact that there is a need for teacher preparation and continuing professional development to receive training or formal instructions on the issue of language distribution.  18

The 2nd study is “How Hybrid Language Practices Provide Resources for Student Participation in Mathematical Practices” by Judit Moschkovich (MacSwan and Faltis, 2020). The author employed a sociocultural framework to explore how bilingual students use language when engaging in mathematical activities. As the author summarized, codeswitching functioned as a resource for communicating mathematically instead of a linguistic or cognitive deficiency in the teaching of bilingual mathematics learners. Codeswitching of teachers would provide scaffolding support to make the subject matter understood or to enhance specific mathematical abilities among students. Additionally, codeswitching can decrease students' cognitive load with the help of L1 and reinforce authority and discipline in the classroom. Codeswitching is also utilized to facilitate the connection between spoken languages and visual representations. Code-switching would serve multiple functions beyond simply compensating for unknown words. It would be employed in explaining, justifying, describing mathematical situations, and providing additional information  19

The third study is “Codeswitching in the Multilingual English First Language Classroom” by Visvaganthie Moodley (2007). It explored how junior secondary students (native speakers of isiZulu (also known as Zulu)) used codeswitching when learning in multilingual classrooms where English was the primary language in South Africa. It found that teachers' perception of codeswitching had a positive impact on student's perception of their native language and the cultural values and native language(s) of the learners themselves when the culture and language of the students were welcome in the classroom. Also, codeswitching in the classroom was not only

significant in education but also important for socially acknowledging and valuing the native language of students in the process of acquiring English as a first language because it encouraged multilingualism in a country that was already culturally and linguistically diverse. It promoted an understanding that languages and real-world experiences were mutually beneficial and equally important to one another. Even if the instructors were not completely fluent in both languages, they can still inspire the students to value their native language in the classroom by incorporating some words from the student's native language for activities like joking or scolding.

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~~The world is changing fast and so is the classroom of language learning.~~ Research has demonstrated that codeswitching or translanguaging is helpful in bilingual classrooms. The benefits include improving the effectiveness of instruction and classroom administration, encouraging learner engagement, making use of existing bilingual resources for students, affecting bilingual learners' perceptions of languages, etc. Therefore, teachers should update their knowledge to embrace the dynamic perception of language in their classrooms to ensure the benefit of students. Additionally, it is equally important for government officials and school administrators to understand the significance of codeswitching or translanguaging in bilingual or multilingual classrooms. With the help of deliberate guidance and training, codeswitching in the classroom can become a consistent and effective approach that is not solely dependent on individual teachers' personal choices.

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## GRADEMARK REPORT

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### FINAL GRADE

78/100

### GENERAL COMMENTS

#### Instructor

Your discussion is clearly focused on the topic and is an excellent response to the detail being asked for.

You have highlighted excellent knowledge of the common purposes as well as benefits of using code-switching and where and how it can be used in lessons within a multilingual context.

You have presented a lot of evidence from various studies that emphasise the use of CS in language learning within bilingual settings. However, some critical thought on the use of CS would have added interest - for example, do you yourself believe that **all** bilingual classes should actively use CS? Why / why not? What about those teachers who use *the target language to stimulate thinking* without CS? Did they lose out on anything, do you think? Are there any situations where you think CS is useful, but not always necessary? Why / why not?

This is excellent displaying comprehensive coverage of theory. Perhaps more focus on Dual Language Education c.f. Gort 2006:

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mileidis-Gort/publication/234892074\\_Strategic\\_Codeswitching\\_Interliteracy\\_and\\_Other\\_Phenomena\\_of\\_Emergent\\_Bilingual\\_Writing\\_Lessons\\_from\\_First\\_Grade\\_Dual\\_Language\\_Classrooms/links/0912f5102bc2da864a000000/Strategic-Codeswitching-Interliteracy-and-Other-Phenomena-of-Emergent-Bilingual-Writing-Lessons-from-First-Grade-Dual-Language-Classrooms.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mileidis-Gort/publication/234892074_Strategic_Codeswitching_Interliteracy_and_Other_Phenomena_of_Emergent_Bilingual_Writing_Lessons_from_First_Grade_Dual_Language_Classrooms/links/0912f5102bc2da864a000000/Strategic-Codeswitching-Interliteracy-and-Other-Phenomena-of-Emergent-Bilingual-Writing-Lessons-from-First-Grade-Dual-Language-Classrooms.pdf)

The overall impact excellent. Some further explicit critical thought on the findings of recent studies would have been beneficial and could potentially be revised as a publication :).

You have provided an excellent conclusion. Well done.

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PAGE 1

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**Comment 1**

Excellent concise introduction.



**Comment 2**

Tense? learn

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PAGE 2

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**Comment 3**

How does Williams (1994) define codeswitching?



**Comment 4**

Excellent use of references and command of the literature.



**Comment 5**

Precisely focussed discussion.

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PAGE 3

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**Comment 6**

Very useful distinction.



### Comment 7

Analytical commentary.



### Comment 8

register ?



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PAGE 4

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### Strikethrough.



### Comment 10

Avoid informal style



### Comment 11

Can you elaborate further here?

PAGE 5

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### Strikethrough.



### Comment 13

Same sentence?



### Comment 14

Reference for Dual language education - Lyndolm Leary?

Lindholm-Leary, K.J. (2001) Dual Language Education. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

PAGE 6

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### Comment 15

Interesting focus.



### Comment 16

Rigorous handling of the literature.



### critical evaluation

Critical evaluation and independent discussion of key issues.

PAGE 7

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### Comment 17

Excellent.

PAGE 8

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### Comment 18

Effective grasp of key discussion points.



### Comment 19

Interesting.

PAGE 9

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### Comment 20

How does this use of CS relate to the Chinese context?

**Strikethrough.**



### Comment 22

Excellent - the mark recognises work at a high level.

PAGE 10

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### Comment 23

Have you included the latest research from the field?