CODE SWITCHING BETWEEN SPANISH AND ENGLISH
IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SOCIETY

By

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# Code Switching Between Spanish and English in Contemporary American Society

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Code Switching Between Spanish and English in Contemporary American Society

I. Abstract

In the United States, code switching, or the alternation of two or more languages within a speech or conversation, happens most often between Spanish and English. Study of this linguistic practice began in the fifties, and since that time, researchers have used a broad array of grammatical, social, and stylistic approaches to examine it. Despite the range of studies, most continue either to oversimplify the practice or to elaborate on one aspect of it, neglecting other important factors. The goal of this study is to offer a far more comprehensive look at the practice of code switching by categorizing and quantifying the various circumstances and functions of this linguistic practice.

Using an untraditional, relaxed method of observation, I collected several samples from 38 people during one 16-hour period. While in many instances the results obtained only confirm what other researchers had already observed in more traditional studies, two new categories of code switching did emerge. In addition, this study differs from most others in that it looks at all the major functions that code switching can serve in a discourse, instead of focusing on just one or two. By relating the uses of code switching to one another in proportional frequency and function, this study offers information that will be useful to future research.

In order to realize this study’s implications for future research, however, and to appreciate the full impact of these results, it is crucial to have a basic understanding of code switching in general. The first part of this study will therefore discuss the place of code switching in contemporary bilingual communities in the United States and in the study of linguistics, as well as illustrate the extraordinary progress that has been made since the study of this phenomenon began. From there it will then be appropriate to introduce the results from this study and discuss their implications.
II. Introduction

The United States has never been a country whose citizens spoke only one language, much less only English. The settlers who came here to colonize and explore the new land spoke English, French, German, Spanish, and many other languages. They met native tribes who spoke several languages; they brought over African slaves who spoke several more. Since the colonial era and the subsequent establishment of the nation, America has been the destination for numerous immigrants. Over time, the nation’s immigration policies have changed. Early in the 1900’s, most immigrants came from Europe. Today, immigrants come from many countries on all the continents.

As a result, there are more than three hundred languages besides English being spoken in American homes today and being addressed in formal settings such as the Department of Motor Vehicles and ESL (English as a Second Language) classes in schools. By far, the most prevalent of these ‘foreign’ languages is Spanish, and the number of speakers is growing. In the 1980’s alone, the Spanish speaking population of just California increased by 300% (R. Macias 1995:231). Now nearly one half of the total Hispanic population of the Southwest is under 20, which means “the potential for [a] large-scale language shift is greatly increased” (Reichman 1997:355). Certainly, across the nation the increase was not as dramatic, but it was still significant: the Washington Post recently reported that the Hispanic population of some southern states more than doubled in the 1990’s (Pressley 2000:A3). While it is true that not all people of Hispanic descent speak Spanish, the majority of them have retained their Spanish language over several generations. Spanish speakers comprise one of the largest and most formidable minorities in the country today.

Monolingual English speakers have dealt with the incoming Spanish speakers in a variety of ways. A small percentage have taken it upon themselves to learn Spanish. A much larger percentage have greeted the Spanish speakers, and indeed all people who speak a language
other than English, with resentment and condescension. They see no reason to learn Spanish, as they view English as the dominant language in both the country and the world. Those that feel the most threatened by the existence of Spanish in America have pushed for English-only laws, some of which have passed in state legislation.

What is often overlooked is that the great majority of immigrants to the United States accept English as the predominant language. They are eager to learn English, for it is the main gateway to opportunity and success in our society. Spanish-speaking Americans are no different. They want to speak English, and even if they raise their children as Spanish speakers, they still want their children to know English just as well if not better. In a recent poll, the majority of Hispanic parents were willing to forego their children’s bilingual education if it meant more time devoted to learning English. Spanish speakers want to have the same opportunities that the native English speaker does, but they also want to preserve their heritage and retain their language (Amselle 1997:52). More than 60% of Spanish-speakers in America today are completely fluent in Spanish and English, and an additional 25% attest that they can get by in English, but feel more comfortable speaking their native Spanish. On the contrary, very few English-speaking Americans are completely fluent in Spanish or in any other foreign tongue.

Nevertheless, language contact will affect both languages involved and in turn the speakers of each language, whether they are fluent in both or not. Even monolingual English speakers have encountered language phenomena related to language contact, most notably in the instance of borrowing, which describes words that are now part of one accepted lexicon or vocabulary, but were originally taken directly from another lexicon. Indeed, it is difficult to hold a normal conversation in English without including vocabulary that was once incorporated from a different language. Contact with Spanish has introduced many food names (taco, fajita) and several place names (Rancho Bernardo, San Antonio, Via de la Valle), as well as general nouns (fiesta, hacienda, siesta). One uses such words with little thought to their foreign origins.

In most cases of close language contact, the monolingual speaker is usually under great pressure to learn the other language. However, the modern monolingual American often feels
immune to such pressure, perhaps because he feels that English is so obviously the dominant language. Though this bias is certainly widely held, it is also true that Americans can often still avoid close contact with foreign languages. For one thing, the country is quite large, and people are not forced to live close by anyone else. The great majority of the population lives outside the city limits, usually in suburbs. Furthermore, the society is also rather segregated. People rarely live in multiethnic communities, choosing instead to live among groups that share their interests as well as their race or ethnicity. The people in the suburbs tend to resemble one another, and people rarely commingle with other types. Perhaps most importantly, the power structure is still dominated by English speakers, offering validation to the opinion that English is superior for this country. Unlike in some countries where people have to live close to one another and thus are forced to form a multiethnic community and to interact with one another, Americans can usually avoid it.

Because of the necessity of English in the United States, the bilingual speaker here is often much more affected by language contact. Many English terms and words are accepted into the other languages. The bilingual speaker uses these borrowed terms as effortlessly and subconsciously as the monolingual speaker uses the borrowed words in his language. However, because the bilingual speaker is constantly and actively participating in language contact, his manner of expression and speech itself are also usually affected. Some of the most common ways for the effects of language contact to be manifested in speech is through phenomena such as interference, transference, and code mixing or switching.

To one who overhears a bilingual conversation, all of these phenomena may sound like a mixture of one language with another. However, they are distinguished by certain factors, in particular by the degree of fluency of the speaker and sometimes by the manner in which words are used in the discourse during the switch. Interference usually occurs with people who are just beginning to learn a foreign language and also even with children who are being raised in a bilingual setting, but it can continue to occur up to the point when a speaker becomes fully fluent in his second language. It usually happens when a person tries to apply the rules of the language
with which he is more familiar to the language he is trying to learn. For example, an English speaker who is learning Spanish might want to say *depend en* for “depend on” rather than the correct *depend de*, which he would interpret as “depend of.” Or a Spanish speaker in the reverse situation may say something like “Since I am attending the school” when he means to say “Since I’ve attended the school” or “Since I’ve been attending the school.” In both cases, the speaker is applying the linguistic rules and logic he knows best, but the results are often wrong.

Transference is very similar to interference, and again occurs often in the course of learning a second language. It is defined as “the adoption of any elements or features from the other language” (Romaine 1989:92). In other words, just like interference, it occurs when one tries to apply previous knowledge to a new situation. However, unlike interference which has a supremely negative connotation, transference can often be positive. For example, a speaker may reason that because in French the word ‘table’ is feminine, it should also be feminine in Spanish, as both languages descend from the same root. This correct deduction demonstrates an instance of positive transfer.

Code switching, sometimes referred to as code mixing, is a common phenomenon with the majority of instances of close language contact in bilingual communities (Romaine 1989:2), and it seems particularly noticeable with Spanish and English today in our country. Despite being widespread, however, there is still much controversy as to how to define it. The famous phrase, “Sometime I begin a sentence in English, *y termino en español,*” gives an accurate example of both the phenomenon and the speaker’s concept of his speech patterns, but it does not provide a clear definition. To an observer, code switching is just what it seems to be: the act of switching between codes (languages) in a discourse. But on a very basic level, interference, transference, and even borrowing could be defined the same way. What distinguishes code switching?

Again one must recall that a high degree of fluency is necessary for code switching. The switches are made without effort, without hesitation, and often without extensive thought. Interference, on the other hand, arises from a lack of fluency and usually includes some hesitation and confusion. Though the level of fluency may be somewhat higher for transference,
for it can be positively manifest as one becomes more familiar with the rules governing the languages one speaks, this phenomenon is still categorized by a certain effort and deliberation on the part of the speaker.

One would think that because borrowing does not require fluency in a second language, it would be easily distinguished from code switching, but this is nowhere near the truth. In fact, the decision over where to draw the line between these two phenomena has been debated for years and there is still no final resolution in sight. Twenty years ago, Richard Anthony Hudson tried to distinguish the two by demonstrating that borrowing refers to the use of a word element of foreign origin that has since been accepted in the native language, while code switching refers to the act of slipping into that foreign language for a phrase element. Thus, to use Hudson's own example, “Let's have some boeuf bourgignon” represents and example of borrowing, while “Let's have du boeuf bourgignon,” with the introductory French article du, represents an example of code switching (Hudson 1980:58).

The definition seems straightforward, but many scholars who followed him wondered if the distinction held up in practice. They asked if it was not possible to code switch for just one element or word rather than for a whole phrase. A Spanish-English speaker could speak of the “spirit of compadrazgo,” for instance, and since this word is not accepted in everyday English vocabulary, it should be considered code switching. Or, in Hudson's example for borrowing, if a French-English bilingual used French inflection with the borrowed terms, it may be more appropriate to say he is code switching. These discrepancies have no satisfactory resolution, and it seems that there may be too many variables for a solid, unequivocal stance on the issue (Romaine 1989:6).

As such, Carol Myers Scotton has suggested using a social context, rather than a structural one, to distinguish the two (1988:159). This type of distinction works well, for while borrowing can be done by almost anybody at almost any time, code switching is usually only seen in specific social situations and between certain people. It indicates a style shift in an effort to negotiate or renegotiate aspects of the conversation relative to the speakers. Furthermore,
borrowing is usually repeatable, whereas a code switched utterance will never recur (Scotton 1992:36). For the purposes of this study, a combination of definitions will be used. Scotton offers the following definition: “the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation, without prominent phonological assimilation of one variety to the other” with regard to situational circumstances and speaker motivations (1988:157). Shana Poplack further cites important qualifications of code switching, namely that it occurs “without the benefit of pausing, retracting, repeating, or indicating the intended shift” (1988:218). In addition to the standards outlined here, one needs only to take into account that there is no awkwardness of any kind and that the shift seems quite natural.
III. Background

Every documented community of bilinguals code switches (Romaine 1989:2), though rates of code switching vary immensely. It seems to be a natural result that when people have two languages at their disposal, they are going to use both of them. Around the world, there are bilingual communities of French and Arabic, Hebrew and English, and Hindi and English to name a few. Despite the diverse array of bilingual communities available around the world, most studies on the topic have historically involved English, primarily because most linguistic theorists have historically hailed from Anglophone nations (Romaine 1989:6). In America, there are large bilingual communities of Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, and French speakers, but by far the largest minority language in this country in Spanish. Fully half of the population of Los Angeles, and nearly 30 million people nationwide are Spanish-speaking Hispanics (Pressley 2000:A3); no other minority language group in this country can boast such high figures. Thus, researchers have a tendency to focus on code switching between Spanish and English, and this study is no different. It is not only convenient to do so, but it seems highly pertinent to the current situation in the country, as the number of Spanish speakers increases in proportion each year and there is more and more contact between the Spanish and English languages. Some statisticians believe that the number of Spanish speakers could eventually surpass English speakers in certain areas of the country (Muller 1989). As the Spanish and English languages have more and closer contact, they will continue to influence each other. Studying code switching between these two languages can reveal what some of those influences are and may also indicate overall patterns in code switching behavior.

Observation of code switching began sparsely in the early decades of the twentieth century. In the fifties, research on this speech pattern became much more widespread, but the practice of code switching was largely discounted as an indication of the speakers’ lack of fluency
in both languages. It was believed that growing up bilingual would inhibit mastery of either language as an adult. However, during the next decade, a time of civil rights and cultural sensitivity, a new feeling emerged towards bilingualism. Against the backdrop of a new appreciation for diversity, people made an effort to ensure that the value of bilingualism was acknowledged. Bilingual education began in schools in part because it was now considered important to foster one’s cultural roots but also because educators wanted to help children become fully bilingual adults, with instruction in both English and Spanish. However, some researchers still doubted whether it was possible to achieve fluency in this manner and cited the practice of code switching as evidence of their concerns.

It was not until the mid-sixties that a more modern view of code switching emerged, heavily promoted by Gumperz. In his studies that eventually spanned three decades, he found that code switching was not entirely random. Though switches were performed at a subconscious level, they took place at certain junctures and only certain elements could be switched (1982). He hypothesized that the use of code switching could be significant in the relationship between the speaker and the addressee or within a discourse (1967, 1971). He also provided a new and precise definition for code switching, one that allowed for a more accurate and accepting view of the phenomenon. Other linguists followed his lead, and code switching ceased to be viewed as a mark of linguistic inferiority, and a line between interference and code switching was thus established.

Despite this shift in the academic perception of code switching, there remains a very negative connotation towards it in some parts of society today. As mentioned above, the early studies on code switching were done in predominantly Anglophone countries, where the prevailing rule is one language for one country. Perhaps because so few of the earliest researchers were completely bilingual and so few were intimately familiar with a bilingual setting, they could not differentiate between such phenomena as interference and code switching. Furthermore, Romaine believes that coming from a monolingual country, they may have placed more value on monolingualism and regarded bilingualism as “inherently problematic . . .
[representing] an undesirable mode of organization for a speech community and the individual” (1989:6). Regardless of the basis for their misperceptions, society as a whole believed them and felt justified in viewing code switching as a sign of linguistic inferiority.

Today research has progressed to the point where code switching is regarded as an intricate and complex mode of discourse, one with several rules that govern its use. These rules are not only grammatical but social, and linguistic theorists have only begun to study the depths of this mode of communication and its implications not only for the study of bilingualism, but for the study of social and communicative interactions among various sets of people.

This progress in the academic realm has not yet wholly transferred to popular society. Of course few monolingual Americans have consciously devoted much thought to the specific practice of code switching, but many if not all have seriously contemplated the presence of languages other than English in the United States. Outside of the bilingual community, many people still have a tendency to believe that using a mixture of two languages indicates a lack of fluency at least in English, if not in both languages involved. In addition, Americans demonstrate a marked resistance to foreign languages, Spanish in particular. Often it is not only the use of code switching, but also the use of the foreign language in any context that alarms Americans. Some people think that the speakers do not know English; the more paranoid think that the speakers are talking about them. Either way, they resent the use of Spanish. This reaction may be changing, however, as more and more Americans accept that Spanish is here to stay and take steps to learn the language. Currently about 60% of American high school graduates have had two or more years of Spanish (Porter 1996:15).

Contrary to the monolingual population, members of the bilingual community have given a lot of thought not only to the use of their ‘foreign’ language, but also to the practice of code switching. Interestingly, they have also had a tendency to view the phenomenon negatively, due in a large part to the accepted belief that it is an indication of a lack of fluency. Many have becomes hypersensitive to their use of language and strive to avoid mixing the two languages they have at their disposal, especially in an English-speaking setting. When dealing with the
English-speaking segment of society, they feel the need to use only English, but there are varying degrees of compliance. For instance, in writing for academic journals, a mode that is characterized by a formal use of the English language, some bilingual Spanish writers such as Ysidro Ramón Macías will pepper their work with some Spanish words or phrases, particularly when they are writing about a culturally Hispanic topic. Others feel that no matter what the topic, in order to be taken seriously by the academic world dominated by Anglophones, they must restrict themselves solely to English.

Sometimes even within their own community, bilinguals feel the need to restrict themselves to one language. Often it is a matter of necessity, as they may be conversing with someone who does not speak English; or a matter of courtesy, as they may be conversing with someone to whom it is tradition to speak the native language. Other times it is a matter of perceived respectability, for there is a perceived pejorative connotation to code switching (Edwards 1994). One bilingual college student says, “I don’t like to switch [between Spanish and English] because it sounds like I’m not thinking before I speak” (Monriques 2000). A woman who is bilingual and has a business in a bilingual community refuses to use Spanish at work. She speaks only English in her shop because “if I speak Spanish, I’m like their sister or daughter . . . and they think they can drop in whenever they feel like it [without an appointment] . . . . If I speak English, I’m more of a businesswoman.” She will usually greet some of her elderly customers in Spanish and converse with them in Spanish because they are more like family to her and she does not want to “put them off.” However, she does try to maneuver the conversation back into English (White 2000). Her brother-in-law, who works in a professional office, says he and his Spanish-speaking co-workers refrain from speaking Spanish in the office because they are afraid of possible recrimination from management, spurred by monolingual employees (Nuñez 2000).

Recently code switching has acquired a much more positive connotation, at least among members of the bilingual community. Ysidro Ramón Macías embraces the idea of a Chicano way of thinking that can only be expressed in terms of the Spanish language and the unique blend of Spanish and English: “. . . the spirit of compadrazgo, or close ties to certain individuals, is part of
the Mexican heritage and is connected to the Spanish language” (1997:42). Code switching has become an integral element to the modes of communication available to the bilingual community. It does more than merely add flare or ethnic flavor to the discourse. The way code switchers speak is part of their identity and helps them to relate to each other and to the world around them (Rodriguez 1997).

Many bilingual speakers today code switch much more openly than their parents or grandparents. One young adult interviewed in the course of this study reports, “With my grandmother, I almost always speak Spanish . . . [with] my parents, it is usually one or the other [Spanish or English] . . . but mis primos y mis amigos, we speak both all the time. I don’t know why . . . . It’s how we talk” (Hernández 2000). A monolingual speaker who has bilingual friends admits, “Sometimes I feel left out when they switch for a long time – more than a couple of words – but usually I can figure out what they’re saying . . . . It doesn’t bother me at all” (Connors 2000).

In addition to this general trend among younger generations, there is a recent rise in the publication of Chicano literature. This term is widely used to describe all literature written by Chicano authors. Some is written in Spanish, some in English, but nearly all of it contains some code switching, though the amount can vary immensely. To be sure, the recent ascent of Chicano literature signals a trend for the culture, but it is also evidence that the way bilinguals use language, including code switching, is reaching a higher level of acceptability. Furthermore, it indicates a certain permanence of the status of code switching as an acceptable mode in the communication patterns of bilingual speakers.

Though this idea of permanence may seem to be a small point, it is actually quite significant for two reasons. First, at least in the case of Spanish and English, code switching is not just a stage in language development (Hamers & Blanc 1989). That is to say, on an individual level, it is not the intermediary step one reaches after one knows Spanish well but before one has completely become fluent in English. The incidence of code switching continues long after

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1 The term Chicano dates from the 1930’s and is taken from Chihuahua (a region in Mexico) and Mexicano (Mexican). The term was revived in 1965 as part of the newfound cultural awareness, but it was not immediately embraced by civil
fluency in both languages has been established. Second, it is not a sign of attrition for the minority language (Romaine 1989:3). On a societal level, a community that code switches is not necessarily destined to become monolingual in the dominant language. Code switching is a permanent fixture in the mode of expression for bilinguals.
IV. Previous Research

Much of the previous research done on code switching has focussed more on the hows than on the whys. That is to say, most studies document how code switching works on grammatical and syntactic levels rather than on the functional level. Those that do approach the functional level often do so in a very broad manner, often merely trying to prove that code switching does serve a function. Though not as numerous, the studies on this topic are quite involved, and from them various ways of categorizing code switching have emerged. Together, all of the previous studies have helped to establish code switching as a more respected linguistic phenomenon.

The first studies seeking to affirm the grammacality of code switching initially addressed its structure within discourse. The most basic way to itemize instances of code switching is to divide utterances into intersentential and intrasentential groups. Intersentential switching means that the speaker switches languages between sentences (i.e., I'm fine. Como estás?). Intrasentential switching refers to switching languages within a sentence (i.e., I visit mi abuelo on the weekends). Neither one indicates a higher degree of fluency. In studies that Heller (1992) and Poplack (1981, 1982) have done of the topic, the two types of switches have both been found to adhere to the grammatical rules of both languages. If a switch were to be deviant from either one, it would not be uttered.

Without this basic discovery, the grammaticality of code switching would not have been established. In the seventies, Lance (1975) argued that there are no linguistic constraints on code switching, but as Romaine points out, “Probably no one believes this now” (1989:54). In 1988, Poplack and Sankoff determined the grammaticality of Spanish/English code switching and used it to predict switching possibilities for their language pairs.

The study of the function of code switching occurred simultaneously with research on the grammacality of code switching. Blom and Gumperz were the founders of the modern
perspective of code switching, which accepts that code switching is a sign of fluency. In studies that spanned three decades, they began to look at function, dividing utterances into two main groups: metaphorical and situational (1972). They believed that in the mind of a speaker, a certain language is associated with certain social roles and situations. When languages are thus linked to social situations, they begin to symbolize all that these situations entail. When the switching is done within the context of the social role it is associated with, it is situational switching. When a language usually associated with one context is used in another situation (abnormal use), Blom and Gumperz believed it has the effect of bringing to mind the ideas associated with conventional use; thus it is termed metaphorical.

A takeoff on the Blom-Gumperz model is the distinction of marked and unmarked use that Carol Meyers Scotton makes (1988). Briefly, marked refers to the unexpected use of code switching, and unmarked refers to the conventional use of code switching. Building on Gumperz’s later work, Scotton describes a marked scenario as the switch to Language B when it is customary to use Language A (at the office, among acquaintances). An unmarked scenario would be switching at a time when it is normal to do so (at home, among close friends). Paramount to Scotton’s theory is the fact that speakers would have conscious control over their switching, and they would choose when and how to code switch. She contends that “Speakers make choices and others interpret them by considering their probable implications” (1988:177).

Another takeoff on the Blom-Gumperz model is Hudson’s description of conversational and situational code switching. Conversational code switching would be attributed to an element in the discourse itself. A speaker may be prompted to switch because of a certain word in the conversation which has the effect of bringing the second language to the forefront. Situational code switching refers to instances when code switching is prompted not by something in the conversation but by circumstances surrounding the act of discourse (1980).

More recently, McClure has noted a strong correlation between code switching and topic; she found that speakers tend to use one language for certain topics and one languages for other topics (1981). This is particularly noticeable in bilingual students who, when in a bilingual setting
such as the home, may use English to discuss topics they’ve learned in English and Spanish to
discuss issues that were introduced to them in Spanish. This theory has come under scrutiny in
more recent years as it does not seem to apply as broadly to adults.

Finally, Poplack points out instances of tag-switching, when speakers insert a tag – a
non-functional, usually unrestrained utterance, as in the English ‘you know’, ‘I mean’, ‘like’ – from
one language into another (1981). Since Poplack first talked about this instance of code
switching, it has been largely ignored, perhaps because there are already so many other aspects
of code switching to discuss.

Most of the early studies on the function of code switching simply wanted to prove that
code switching serves a purpose. Because of their research, in this study we can now take it for
granted that code switching does serve a function and focus more on what that function is. In
addition, many studies present code switching as a conscious decision. It is hard to believe that
this is the case, since so many speakers are seemingly unaware of their code switching behavior
or think nothing of it. Thus in our study we will consider code switching to be primarily
unconscious.
V. Place and Significance of this Study

Society's attitude towards code switching is shifting, as are researchers' attitudes. As stated previously, both groups are becoming increasingly accepting of the phenomenon of code switching. Many members of the newest generation of bilingual speakers no longer feel the self-consciousness that their parents or grandparents did when speaking Spanish or a mixture of Spanish and English. Researchers have made a crucial advance by recognizing that code switching stems from fluency in two languages and not at all from a lack of fluency in both languages. This realization has allowed for studies that explore the grammar and place of code switching in discourse – studies that are from a positive perspective instead of a negative one. However, despite this dramatic shift in the perspectives of researchers and speakers, most studies today are based on old concepts and examples.

It is not always a detriment to rely on the findings of one's predecessors. On the contrary, it is absolutely necessary to build on and expand their knowledge in order to form a broader and more precise understanding of any phenomenon, be it scientific, social or linguistic. Without the pioneering efforts of such linguists as Gumperz and Blom concerning code switching in the 1960's and 1970's, we would never have been able to achieve the progress that was made in later decades. They began the study of code switching as a valid linguistic practice indicative of fluency, and their basic theories still hold true today.

However, it is possible to rely too much on the old studies and thus overlook a new explanation or aspect of a phenomenon. Many contemporary studies done on code switching use data (utterances recorded during the course of an experiment) from several decades ago. At that time, linguists and speakers were still battling a fiercely negative perception of code switching. As acknowledged by researchers, it is possible that speakers often feel self-conscious in the experimental setting (Lipski 1978; Zongo 1997). Certainly this self-consciousness would
have been compounded at a time when one’s normal mode of speech was under not only scrutiny by researchers, but attack by society. Sometimes the utterances used as examples seem rather stilted or contrived. For example, there is one short discourse recorded by Gumperz for a 1982 article that is constantly used as an example on how speakers code switch (see Appendix B), but the subject of the discourse itself is outdated and many bilingual speakers from this era deny that they would say it precisely in that manner. They think that the speaker seems incredibly nervous and not completely fluent or perhaps is making mistakes due to her agitation. This may or may not be true, for speakers are notoriously blind to their own speech habits and patterns. They may criticize speech behavior in others that they do themselves. However, given the controversy and the circumstances, it may not be a good idea to rely on these utterances that were recorded in a time when society tried to oppress this linguistic phenomenon and bilingual speakers tried to repress it. To avoid interference from the old social pressures, it might be better to use data recorded in the more accepting atmosphere that prevails today.

Furthermore, as we have seen above, recent research has shown a tendency to divide code switching into only two categories, i.e. marked and unmarked. The findings are valid, but the researchers may be reducing a full and complex linguistic phenomenon into its simplest parts. It is like ignoring all the different phrase structures of a language and labeling all sentences as either passive or active. It may be an integral aspect to the sentence, but the simple label omits too many other crucial stylistic aspects of the sentence.

In the conclusion to a collection of essays on code switching, Monica Heller indicates many linguistic, social, and ethnographic issues of code switching that have yet to be addressed. One of the directions that she strongly advocates involves completing a broader, more comprehensive look at code switching and its function in conversation and interaction. Now that some of the simple categories of identification have been denoted, she finds it necessary to describe “the place of codeswitching in the repertoire of individuals, and the situation of both these individuals and of their use of codeswitching in community social networks” (1988:266).
Obviously, such a study would be a vast undertaking, and it may be too great a step at this time to jump from a minimalist understanding of code switching to such a sophisticated and elaborate one. Thus, with this study, I aim only to address the first part of Heller’s proposed two-pronged approach and devise a comprehensive catalogue of the functions of code switching.

Three studies have tried to do this already. One based its findings on old, possibly biased or awkward examples like the Gumperz example mentioned above (Scotton 1988). Another used only examples from young children (McClure 1981), but it is not certain whether children below a certain age are capable of code switching or whether they are merely exhibiting a complex type of interference. A final study “created code switched utterances that, although not actually observed in bilingual speech data, would likely occur” (Becker 1997:4); in other words, they made up their examples. Though I certainly do not outrightly discount any of my predecessors’ findings, I also feel it is necessary to base this study on updated examples, recorded in our time of freer speech patterns. Only then can this study serve as a guide to the function of code switching today, for it could very well have changed in the past twenty or forty years as the social attitudes in the country have evolved. At the very least, we will have some newer and more natural examples to use in the future.
VI. Methodology

To collect data, I spoke with thirty-eight people who are members of one branch of my family. These interviews and observations were collected in one 16-hour period (9 AM to 1 AM) during a family reunion, which was being held at the grandparents’ house, so the atmosphere was very relaxed. Though we are not all immediate family, most of us had met before, and there was little awkwardness between us. Everybody spoke freely with me and in front of me. Therefore, one of my principle techniques was what Plotnicov and Silverman named “participant observation” (1990:92). Though some researchers may find fault with the laxness of the experimental mode, I found it was necessary to facilitate more natural, and thus more accurate, responses and data. This is not a new or outrageous method; Plotnicov and Silverman are two researchers who actually advocate such closeness to the study group. Of their own study on the signaling behavior of American Jews – a phenomenon that is equally difficult to simulate in the traditional experimental setting – they remark, “Indeed, were it not for our being natural members of the research population it is doubtful that we could have gained the kind of data [we did]” (1990:92). Likewise, it is due to the fact that the people I observed were so comfortable in my presence that I was able to gain the kind of data I did.

Of the thirty-eight bilingual people present that I spoke with and observed, there were fifteen between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five; seventeen between the ages of thirty and fifty; and six over the age of fifty. I did not speak to anyone under the age of fourteen, because there is some controversy over whether a youth can code-switch. Generally, it is accepted that even if a child does use both languages in the course of speech, the usage cannot be identified as code switching if the child is under the age of ten. Instead it is regarded as interference or transference. To avoid any possible question of such a discrepancy, I set the minimum age limit at fourteen. As for gender, there were slightly more females in the group than males. The
distribution of the twenty-two females and sixteen males across age ranges can be seen in the Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Distribution of Men and Women across Age](image)

All of these thirty-eight people had a high command of both English and Spanish. There were a few other people present who spoke only English, but none that spoke only Spanish. Most of the monolingual English speakers at least understood some Spanish. The grandparents in the bilingual family were born in Puerto Rico and moved to the United States almost sixty years ago; all fifteen of their children were born in the United States. Most of them married other Spanish-speaking individuals, but some did not. Twenty-five of their grandchildren were present, only two of whom spoke no Spanish at all, and two of their great-grandchildren were present, siblings whose parents plan to raise them to be bilingual.

Some people displayed an overall preference for speaking either English or Spanish. Furthermore, there were some people who did not code switch. Both of these events were expected. Poplack has stated unequivocally that not all the members of a bilingual community code switch, even when surrounded by people who do (1988:240). Heller had also observed that of the people who do code switch, they rarely use an equal amount of the two languages.
Often one language seems to be the predominant language of choice, even when fluency is not a factor.

Of course, not all of the people in this study were at the house at the same time. Most people filtered in and out throughout the day. People came in and out, and I spoke to them as I saw them, just as one normally does at a reunion. I conducted interviews very casually, usually in the course of conversation. This helped people to forget that I was paying close attention to their speech and allayed their self-consciousness. In addition to listening to their speech patterns, I also asked them how they personally felt about code switching. All answers were either recorded in a notebook or taped and transcribed at a later date.

I never asked questions specifically geared to elicit a response that contained code switching. Most of my questions were ones that you would ask in any typical conversation at a family reunion (What have you been up to? What colleges did you apply to? How are you enjoying Baltimore?). Furthermore, I did not deliberately change the language of the conversation. That is, if we had been speaking English, I would ask my next question in English, and vice versa. However, the majority of the conversations were based primarily in English.

The one time I did ask people set questions was in inquiring about their personal attitudes towards code switching, after explaining the term to them. For instance: Do you code switch? How often? How do you feel about it? How do you think others feel about it? When do you usually code switch? Under what circumstances? Why? More of my questions can be found in the Appendix A with some of the responses.
VII. Results

There are two ways in which the results must be discussed. First, one must look at the reasons and circumstances that prompt a speaker to code switch, both in his own opinion and in practice. Second, it is necessary to categorize the various functions that code switching serves for the speaker’s audience and for the meaning of the discourse itself. Sometimes the prompts and functions overlap. For instance, a speaker may be prompted to code switch because a new topic is introduced, and the function of the switch is to adhere to the appropriate language for the topic. However, often the circumstances of the switching behavior diverge from the function it serves. For example, a speaker may engage in code switching behavior because he is talking with a close friend or surrounded by others who are code switching, but the function of a specific switch may be to reiterate a point.

A. What Prompts a Switch

Several external factors can prompt a code switch. These are the physical characteristics of the addressee, the setting, the degree of formality of the situation, and the respective roles of the speakers. McClure and McClure have further suggested that topic shift can often prompt a code switch (1988), and other studies (Becker 1997, McClure 1981) have examined the relationship between code switching and language proficiency or language preference.

Many studies have indicated that speakers’ ability to categorize their own code switching behavior is quite poor (Jacobson 1990). I, too, found that speakers could rarely identify the specific instances of their code switching or the function it served for them and their listener. The most common response when asked why they code switch was “I just do.” However, the same speakers could readily identify the external forces that could prompt code switching, and as a group rated which circumstances prompted the most frequent switching (see Figure 2).
Interestingly, they often reported these factors in the negative. For example, on the issue of familiarity, instead of saying that he would code switch in less formal situations among friends or family members, one man reported, “I wouldn’t [code switch] if I was with people from the office.” He continued, “. . . not with blond-haired people either. That may sound racist, but it isn’t – I wouldn’t start speaking in Spanish with a Mexicano either, just because he looked Mexican…”

(Escobar 2000) Other members of the group echoed these sentiments.

Few studies give attention to the familiarity that must be evident between the speaker and addressee for code switching to take place and instead combine it with the concept of informal situations. However, it is a separate topic, one that can override or be contrary to factors of formality and informality. Most interviewees affirmed that familiarity with their addressee was in fact the main factor in whether or not they code switched. They tend to code switch only with family and friends. Some maintained that their code switching would be directly proportional to what they knew about their listener. The less they knew about the addressee, the less inclined
they would be to code switch, for it may remain uncertain how receptive the addressee is to code switching, how proficient he is in the languages involved, or which language he prefers to speak.

Despite the fact that formality would sometimes override other factors that would tend to discourage code switching, like formal situations or English-dominated settings, informal situations were determined to be nearly as decisive a factor for code switching as familiarity. Most people agreed that in formal situations, code switching was discouraged, no matter what language was being spoken. For example, during religious receptions it would be frowned upon to code switch. Most people said they felt freest to code switch, or at least less self-conscious about their code switching, when they were at family gatherings.

Closely related to formality levels is setting, which also rated high as a factor in their code switching behavior. The two factors are traditionally separated because formality refers to the social situation and setting refers to the actual location. Nearly three quarters of respondents said setting was a big factor. They tend to code switch most at home, and virtually never in a classroom or at work: “There are some places you just don’t speak Spanish,” one male noted (Rogers 2000).

Less than a third of the respondents cited the relationship between the speaker and addressee in their code switching behavior, indicating the roles between the interlocutors were often overshadowed by familiarity. One young man affirmed, “I’ll [code switch] with anybody, if I know them well enough” (Nuñez 2000) However, some noted that they wouldn’t code switch while talking to a Hispanic teacher or lawyer because “you just don’t do that with those types of people.” Also, younger members of the group reported that they spoke mainly Spanish with elder acquaintances, and would not code switch to English unless prompted to by that person.

McClure has noted that topic shifts may prompt code switching (1981, 1988), but the idea did not gain much favor among this population, and fewer than twenty percent cited it as a major factor in their code switching behavior. One college student said rather indignantly, “I am able to talk about anything in either language, and I do” (Méndez 2000). However, a high school student agreed with McClure, “It’s hard for me to discuss some things in Spanish – like politics or a lot of
my club activities – because I always talk about them and hear about them in English. It’s just more natural to use English with them and Spanish for things like news in the family” (Sides 2000).

Physical characteristics, suggested by both McClure (1981) and Becker (1997) as a factor that influences code switching, rated last in the opinion of those asked. Most individuals in the group knew too many people who don’t speak Spanish to presume that a stranger with certain physical characteristics spoke Spanish. If they did code switch with a stranger, it would be due to completely different circumstances, such as being introduced in a certain setting where everybody around them was code switching.

It is difficult to judge the accuracy of their responses, for I only observed them in one setting, in one group. However, even in this group certain dynamics were apparent. It was certainly true that people did the majority of their code switching with the people with whom they were most familiar and comfortable, usually with their same age and/or gender group. A lot of the people I met, whom I had not known before, did not code switch in our conversations in the beginning. Towards the end of the evening, most of them, particularly the ones with whom I had spent more time, would code switch with me.

There were two major differences between speakers’ opinions of their code switching behavior and their practice of it. First, the roles seemed to be a lot more important in the code switching behavior than the speakers had initially acknowledged. Only 32% acknowledged that this factor was important, but in the course of the observation, it became apparent that the roles of the interlocutors were indeed quite significant. Most of the code switches took place within peer groups. Furthermore, children and young adults were less likely to code switch with anybody from an older generation (aside from their parents), and particularly with their grandparents, than parents were with their children. This trend seems consistent with Brown and Levinson’s “Politeness Theory” which claims that speakers do consider communicative and social consequences of their speech (Wei 1995). Second, although it is true that abrupt shifts in language in accordance with topic were rare, several general switches accompanied topic shifts,
with a greater frequency than the speakers had at first indicated. As the high school student mentioned above, academic and school activities were discussed predominately in English, with few switches into Spanish, whereas family issues and plans were discussed predominately in Spanish, with many more frequent switches into English.
B. *Categories of Code Switching*

I collected 168 sample utterances and divided them into approximately fourteen categories of code switching. Figure 3 shows how these utterances were distributed, and supports a previous observation that women switch more than men (Alvarez 1989). The categories are graphed according to frequency in Figure 4, and the percentage refers to the percentage of the total code switched utterances. Romaine has noted that not all code switched utterances can be classified, nor is it always possible to assign just one single meaning to an item (1989). Almost 17% of utterances recorded in this study could not be categorized, and several utterances were counted in more than one category because the function was twofold. Thus the percentages do not add up to one hundred. Some categories, such as addressee controlling, in which the speaker uses language to manipulate his audience, first noted by McClure in 1981, were not expressly noted in this study. Terms like mitigating and aggravating the message seemed to be much more appropriate to what I was observing. Other categories were apparently noted for the first time in this study. I found two categories – designations and substitutions, both relatively frequent switching instances – that have not been discussed or reviewed elsewhere.
1. **Personalization.** By far the most common type of code switching in my observations, this category has also been previously noted by numerous studies (McClure 1981, Scotton 1988, Gumperz 1967). Up to one in four utterances can have this function, which is a significant number, given how many categories there are. Of course, some categories overlap. An utterance in which the primary function is personalization, because the code switched item is geared expressly toward the listener, may also have an element of clarification if the code switched item happens to clarify a point. I usually noted the element of personalization when the speaker was speaking English, but slipped into Spanish so that the listener felt that the message included him in particular. As Stolen observes, this type of code switching creates a particular atmosphere of shared ethnic experience, heritage, and distinctiveness (1992:227). In the
following example, the speaker begins her thought in English but finishes it in Spanish so that her addressee feels more involved in her message, and a more intimate atmosphere is created for the greeting.

I'm so glad you came. *Como estás?*

Often the use of Spanish in this particular setting served to create a feeling of camaraderie and belonging among the speakers.

Gumperz once typed code switching as a “we code”/”they code” model (1964). In this case, Spanish would be the ‘we code,’ the language associated with one’s personal life and ethnicity. English would be the ‘they code,’ reserved for dealings with the outside community (see also #7 Objectification). The use of Spanish in this example and this setting in general, whether consciously intentional or not, certainly created a more intimate atmosphere. People use it more to talk about issues that are of a personal concern.

2. **Reiteration.** Another common category with nearly 15 percent frequency is reiteration. This function occurs when a speaker repeats exactly what he has said in another language to re-emphasize his point.

Person 1: *Cuando fuimos a Galveston, llovió cada día.* *Every day!*

Person 2: That’s just not fair, *es injusto!* *Every day!*

The first speaker wants to be sure that his point is made, but instead of repeating the same idea using different words, he uses a different language. In the response, the second speaker also repeats his message in the other language. The switch into Spanish in this case further signifies an element of personalization. By using Spanish to commiserate, this speaker creates a more intimate and sympathetic atmosphere with the other person.

3. **Designations (Endearments & Name Calling).** This is a category that has not been noted elsewhere, but proportionally, it was quite prevalent in the discourse here at ten percent. Many
members of the younger generation, particularly females, would use Spanish for a term of endearment to designate one of their friends. In the style of a typical greeting is the following utterance:

Hey, *chica*, where have you been?
Hey, *girl*, where have you been?

The function here is almost exactly the same as the function of endearments or pet names in a monolingual utterance, much like ‘honey’ or ‘sweetie.’

On the other hand, many people would also code switch when designating someone in a negative manner:

You *pendejo*! Give that back!
You *a**hole*! Give that back!

Here, the function similarly is equivalent to name-calling in a monolingual discourse. More than half of the occurrences in this category were negative, though said equally by men and women. However, whereas the Spanish terms of endearment were balanced out by English ones, people seemed to express negative designations mainly with Spanish.

4. **Substitution (Appositives).** This was another new category, and I was surprised not to have found it documented elsewhere, since it was so common. It can be viewed as a certain type of ‘clarification’ (see #6 Clarification), but the sheer number and the nuances in function make it warrant a category of its own. One leading grammar book defines an appositive as “a word or group of words usually occurring directly after another noun or pronoun, and standing for the same thing” (Gucker 1985). For example in the sentence “Mr. Smith, my neighbor, went to Washington,” the element “my neighbor” is the appositive. Ten percent of all the code switched utterances recorded were appositives. By using this type of substitution, the speaker is able to offer an equivalent identification for a subject, usually with a definition or connection. In the following sentences:

Tonio, *mi hijo*, is the boy with the red jacket.
Tonio, *my son*, is the boy with the red jacket.

She goes to St. Anne’s, *la escuela nueva de nuestra iglesia*. 
She goes to St. Anne’s, the new school for our church.

the main function of the appositive is to give more information and further identify the noun. In the case of code switched appositives, the code switching itself signifies something even more. In the examples above, the code switching creates a degree of intimacy or personalization in the first, and a sense of community in the second. Thus just the fact that the appositive is code switched signifies that the noun that is being elaborated on is something meaningful and personal to the speaker.

5. **Emphasis.** Not quite ten percent of the code switches could be classified as emphasizing a certain segment of the utterance. The following sentence shows how the choice of one code can emphasize the underlying meaning of a discourse.

*Los Hispanicos no son importantes para los politicos o para la policia, except in*

The Hispanics aren’t important to the politicians or to the police, except in this election.

The word “politicians” is said in English to bring attention to the group which is not a part of this community. The speaker could easily have said “los politicos,” but, either consciously or unconsciously, he said it in English with an American accent. The word stands out in the sentence, and no one can miss the implication of it. Politicians are people who are not a part of the Hispanic community; the two do not belong together and the speaker wants to ensure that his audience notices that fact. Again, with the second switch, “except in this election,” the speaker is trying to call attention to his message. The election is the entire point of his statement, for he is emphasizing the fact that American elected officials care only about Hispanic votes and not Hispanic issues. He wants to emphasize this point before he turns this idea around and rallies his friends by explaining the major role that Hispanics could have in the election, and why they should want to be involved. The emphasis in the code switching utterance here is twofold. Not only is he emphasizing his point, but he is emphasizing the fact that the election is an American process and institution that is generally not sympathetic to the Hispanic community.
6. **Clarification.** Almost five percent of code switches could be attributed to clarification of the message, which occurs when a speaker wants to specify what he or she is talking about. To clarify something also means that the speaker resolves any ambiguity and averts misunderstanding or incomplete understanding. For example,

   Person 1 (aunt): What do you want for graduation?
   Person 2 (niece/daughter): CDs, a multi-disc player –
   Person 3 (Person 2’s mother): She needs things for college…
   Person 1: … [nothing said]
   Person 3: *Una lampa, toallas, mantas.*
   A lamp, towels, blankets.

Here, the switch into Spanish is meant to clarify exactly what is meant by “things for college.” It is said in Spanish for the benefit of the listener who may better understand what the items are in Spanish. Thus the switch also has an element of personalization, and is linked with topic, as Spanish is the language generally used in conjunction with household items.

Clarification should be separated from the category Substitution/Appositives (#4) by both the function and the syntax. Appositives have a precise grammar; clarification does not. Appositives are also directly related to a noun. They may clarify what that noun is, but they are limited to that function. Clarification is not as structured. It can be in any format – from a word to a sentence to a paragraph. Its function is also slightly different: whereas ‘substitution’ offers a direct equivalent to a noun, ‘clarification’ specifies or elaborates on a certain noun or concept.

7. **Objectivization.** If personalization refers to the act of including the listener and making him more at ease, objectivization is just the opposite. It is in effect the act of switching languages to resist creating a more intimate, friendly, or comfortable atmosphere. Slabbert noticed that “the strategy of switching codes is more often used as a form of accommodation rather than alienation” (1999:63). Similarly, in my study, despite the high number of code switches that
seemed to be geared toward a personalization of the message, objectification did not rate nearly as high, having only a third as many instances, at eight percent.

Mother: ... This semester, just try to do better.

Daughter: I’m already trying, pero es difícil. Mis amigos –
I’m already trying, but it’s hard. My friends –

Mother: Don’t bring your friends into this...

When the daughter switches into Spanish, perhaps due to personalization or to mitigate the tone of the conversation, the mother tries to regain control over the conversation by re-implementing English, signifying that she is not going to be diverted by her daughter’s efforts. The mother wants to remain objective and distanced, and she wants her daughter to understand that this is a serious issue, so she chooses English as her method of discourse.

8. Untranslatability. About three quarters of the interviewees believed that a significant portion of their code switching would be due to the untranslatability of a thought or word, but this category amounted to only seven percent of the utterances. Usually untranslatability was relegated to issues or concepts that are rather abstract, rather than the more defined nouns that have equivalents in every language. The untranslatable concepts are particular to a certain culture. For example in the following sentence,

In la cultura chicana, there is what we call compadrazgo, but that is missing in
In the Chicano culture, there is what we call compadrazgo, but that is missing in

Americans.

Here, compadrazgo refers to the concept of being close to one another, as friends, but it can’t quite be translated as closeness. Thus because it has not equivalent in the American language or culture, the speaker leaves it in Spanish.

Not all instances of mot juste are so obvious. In the following example, the speaker does not highlight his reason for using Spanish:

Do you remember that corrido from when we were kids?
‘Corrido’ is like a song or a ballad, and as part of the Hispanic tradition, it must be expressed in Spanish. The use of the Spanish word also serves “to express emphatically Hispanic concepts and to evoke emotional and cultural associations that the English correlate would fail to convey” (Mendieta-Lombardo & Cintron 1995:567).

9. **Mitigating Message.** About seven percent of the utterances could be classified as mitigating what is being said or asked. Some researchers have classified this as ‘controlling the addressee,’ but that seems rather manipulative, particularly since speakers so infrequently make a conscious decision to switch. Instead, in this study, it seemed to me more appropriate to use the categories Mitigating Message and Aggravating Message (#12). Often in the case of mitigating requests, the speaker would use Spanish to make the message sound more polite and less demanding. For example,

\[
\text{Can we eat in el cuarto con la televisión? Limpiaremos luego.}
\]

Can we eat in the room with the television? We’ll clean up afterwards.

Here the teenager is asking for permission from her parents, and is trying to use every tool she can in order to get her request met. One of those methods is by using Spanish, for it creates a more intimate atmosphere. By fostering such an atmosphere, she has a higher chance of having her wish granted than she would had she continued to use the more objectivizing English language.

10. **Interjections.** Under five percent of the utterances could be classified as interjections. Two examples would be:

1. [general conversation in English] -- *Dios mio*, it’s past your bedtime!
\[
\text{Goodness, it’s past your bedtime!}
\]

2. [general conversation in Spanish] -- *Hey you, ése es mi silla!*
\[
\text{Hey you, that’s my chair!}
\]

In both sentences, the speaker has used an interjection in a language that was not being used in the general conversation. This linguistic action served to get the addressee’s attention. It also highlighted what was to follow the interjection.
11. **Parenthesis.** Parenthesis could be defined as any incidental or extra information that the speaker chooses to give his listener on a certain subject he has just mentioned. These were rarely code switched at all, thus only five percent of code switches could be categorized as such. An example:

Do you remember Mrs. Sanchez – (del coro a la iglesia?) – she’s having a baby.

Do you remember Mrs. Sanchez – (from the church choir?) – she’s having a baby.

Often the parenthetical shifts have an underlying reason for being code switched in addition to the fact that they contain supplemental information. Certainly the switches call attention to information that might otherwise be ignored or overlooked. However, in this case, the speaker is trying to jog the memory of the listener by invoking the setting from which she knows Mrs. Sanchez, and the speaker is using the language from this setting to accomplish this goal.

12. **Aggravating Message.** The opposite of mitigating demands, aggravating demands would refer to the act of emphasizing the demand by hinting at the severity of the task at hand. If Spanish makes the demand seem more polite and more personal, then English makes it much more authoritative. Speakers usually shifted from Spanish into English. This category accounted for about four percent of the utterances.

*Dientes, cara, pijamas . . . Move it!*

Teeth, face, pajamas . . . Move it!

Initially speaking Spanish, the mother in this example tells her sons what they need to do now that it is time for bed. When they do not respond immediately, she switches from Spanish to English. The switch is a signal to her sons that she is becoming exasperated and they know they’d better do what she wants.

13. **Quotation.** It has long been noted that direct quotations are almost always recounted in the language in which they were originally said. In this observation, this statement holds true, but
less than five percent of the code switches I encountered could be attributed to quotations, since they are used so infrequently. An example:

He said ‘con cariño.’ What else could it mean? 
He said ‘with affection.’ What else could it mean?

14. **Topic Shift.** Topic shift is a difficult category to determine because although there are general shifts between languages and topic, they are rather gradual and not at all pronounced. There was a general trend to discuss familial matters in Spanish and academic matters in English; Spanish shows in Spanish and English shows in English. But other than that, food preparation, sports, holiday plans (Hispanic- or American-based) were all discussed in both languages.

Rarely did the language switch occur at the precise moment of topic shift, which was the criterion for this category. This abrupt switching of language happened in only two percent of all topic shifts. For example:

Person 1: … y Jenifer, cómo es ella? 
… and Jenifer, how is she?

Person 2: Muy bien. Tiene muchas amigas . . . . 
Very good. She has a lot of friends....

Person 1: Dónde está? Por qué no está aquí? 
Where is she? Why isn’t she here?

Person 2: Está en la universidad, TCJC [with American accent]. It’s a community college, but next year she should be able to transfer to the city college as pre-med.

Person 1: Then she’s getting good grades? 
Then she’s getting good grades?

Person 2: Oh, yes. She has to to keep her scholarship pero es difícil con el bebé... 
Oh, yes. She has to to keep her scholarship but it’s hard with the baby . . .

Here, the speakers discuss two things – family and school – but the former is discussed in Spanish, while the latter is relegated to English. The speakers immediately switch to English with
the name of the American university and immediately switch back to Spanish when the topic of conversation returns to personal family issues. Generally the shifts of language were not this abrupt, however, and are therefore not included in this precise definition of topic shift.
VIII. Interpretation

This study’s approach has several limitations, although its advantages outweigh its drawbacks. One of its major disadvantages from a scientific standpoint is that it cannot be easily replicated. While I did begin with a set list of questions in order to find out how bilinguals feel about their own code switching behavior, for the most part I allowed my interlocutors to determine the flow and direction of the conversation. I did not make each person recite a narrative on a certain topic, nor did I ask each of them one particular question which could have allowed me to establish a control for code switching behavior on one given topic. Instead, I let them speak freely, and I spoke freely, too, just as I would have had I not been doing this study. I was often an active participant with those whom I was observing, though sometimes I sat back and listened to the conversation around me, but again without being an impartial observer. Furthermore, I did not record the whole day’s worth of conversation for each individual. I talked with many people, sometimes for a long period of time, and sometimes for a short period of time, and the total time spent observing was only sixteen hours on the same day. It is thus impossible to make broad generalizations about the frequency of code switching across several settings. I recorded on tape code switches that just happened in conversations I observed or took part in, and I recorded by hand some random code switches that caught my attention. There are surely some that I missed, since I could not be with or around everyone at all times.

None of these limitations detracts from the purpose and value of my study, for its merit lies not in its scientific methodology, but rather in its naturalness. All of the observations are as naturally occurring as possible. In a study such as this one, this naturalness is perhaps the most important element – important enough to sacrifice some of the standard criteria of scientific method mentioned above. Not one of the utterances recorded was contrived, elicited, or in any way different from what the person might have said had I not been doing this study. Because I was a family member and friend of those whom I observed, I was quickly able to overcome the
inhibition that speakers usually feel when then know they are being observed. Most people were very interested in what I was doing. Not only were they happy to help, but they asked me questions about it and gave me suggestions – actions that a “subject” in one of these studies would hardly ever do to an impersonal observer. They knew I was not going to criticize their speech patterns, and they knew that I would listen to them, so they felt more at liberty to speak in the manner they normally do.

Thus it is important to take what is presented here seriously and to give fair weight to its implications for future study. Some of these results have never been observed in the normal study setting, and probably never would be. Very few of the people I spoke to would have cursed – even in Spanish – if they knew an outsider who could understand them was listening. Other results merely affirm what we already knew. For instance, most of the categories that I noted had already been observed. However, each category until now has usually been studied on its own or in conjunction with an opposing category. There hadn’t been a catalogue of the various instances with their relative proportions to one another. With this study, we can see that, at least in such a setting, certain functions of code switching are much more prevalent than others.

Until now, most studies have reported that bilingual speakers are supremely unaware of their code switching behavior. However this study has found that fact to be greatly overgeneralized. While it is true that bilinguals seem to be unaware of the possible functions that their code switching can serve in a discourse, they do seem to be aware of the circumstances in which they exhibit the behavior. More than 70% rated familiarity with the addressee, informality of the situation, and setting as being very important factors in their decision to allow themselves to code switch or not. I say allow because while they may not be consciously in control of the moment or purpose of their code switching, they are for the most part aware that they do it at least occasionally. They also have set general standards or rules as to when it is and is not appropriate to code switch. The setting in this study – highly familiar, highly informal, and in a bilingual person’s home – was optimally suited to allow the participants to feel comfortable code
switching. All of the thirty-eight bilinguals present did code switch at some point in the day, some more than others of course.

One interesting side note is that the younger generation seems to code switch significantly more than the older generation, and females seem to code switch slightly more than males. Though this latter observation has been noted before, the former has not. However, I am hesitant to place too much value on this one finding. Due to the relaxed nature of this study, I did not allot my time equally to each of the 38 people. I interacted much more with the people who were my age (14-25), and I probably interacted more with women than I did with men, as I am female. Nevertheless, this observation, however biased, at least warrants further attention, particularly to the ways in which code switching behavior changes with age, or from one generation to the next.

In addition to their accurate observations regarding the importance of familiarity, informality, and setting, the interviewees were also quite accurate in rating physical characteristics as a decidedly unimportant factor in whether or not to code switch. Only one person said it might be a factor. In practice, the group overall refrained from code switching with strangers whether or not they looked to be of Hispanic descent. I do not look to be of Hispanic descent, but there were several other distant family members present who did. Nevertheless, the majority of the people in the family would not code switch with me or them in the beginning. Familiarity with the addressee definitely took precedence, a conclusion that is further supported by the fact that several people whom I met for the first time at this gathering did not at first code switch with me, even though they knew I understood Spanish. It was not until later in the evening that they felt comfortable enough to speak Spanish with me. They also did not speak Spanish to the other less familiar faces until later in the day. In fact, my data is heavily lopsided, in that I recorded less than a third of the samples in the first eight hours, and the rest during the second eight. Part of this discrepancy certainly has to do with the fact that in the beginning, they were more conscious of being observed as well as less certain about my ability to understand Spanish.
However, a large part is also due to the fact that as a group they became more familiar with me and relaxed as time went on.

Given the high perceptivity of the respondents on these accounts, it was surprising that they seemed to be so inaccurate in rating the importance of roles and topic to their code switching. Only 11 people said that roles were important in determining whether or not they code switched in conversation. Yet of the 17 people between the ages of 14 and 25 there, all of them code switched much more frequently with their peers than they did with their grandparents. One girl even noted that she would only speak Spanish with her grandmother, even though they were both fluent in Spanish and English. In fact, most people spoke only Spanish with the oldest generation present, unless they were first addressed in English. Thus it does seem that roles are of a much higher importance than they first reported. One respondent who had said that roles were not that important subsequently refrained from code switching at all with elders (other than his parents) whether speaking English or Spanish. When I pointed this out to him, he seemed unaware of how he had been speaking:

“... I just didn’t really think of it. .... There are some people you speak Spanish to and some you speak English to, but I always thought I spoke both with my family – at the same time, I mean. I can’t really tell you.”

Though it is possible that not all people were consciously aware of the dynamics of their own family, other people confessed that there had been some confusion on the definition of roles. Though I had tried to explain it by using the example of elder versus younger generations, one woman still thought I meant roles as in profession. When I asked her if another definition would have changed her answer, she wasn’t sure, but thought it probably would have. Of course, this was after I had already alerted her to the strong relationship between the roles of the interlocutor and code switching behavior, so it may be that she was already biased. If I were to do this part of the study again, I would probably decide to continue to ask about roles in the manner I did, but then use a follow up question, asking the respondents outright whether they would code switch with their grandparents or with their parents’ friends.
Another issue where the respondents’ answers differed significantly from what was observed in practice is that of topic-based code switching. Here, I certainly think that much of the discrepancy is due to a misunderstanding. The question I asked (“Would a change in topic prompt you to switch languages?”), ten people claimed it would, and yet I observed only three instances of an abrupt change of language. Certainly there were more than three instances of topic shifting during the day! An abrupt change of topic does not seem to automatically signal an abrupt change of language. There are indeed general trends to use Spanish when speaking of relationships of any type or family affairs and English when speaking about topics predominately situated in the English-speaking sector of society, like school and work. However, the trend is not so definite as to warrant a change in language just because a certain topic is introduced. This is one area of code switching that would benefit greatly from the development of a universal definition for “topic-based code switching.” Linguists need to come to a consensus on whether or not this category refers to switching language abruptly with the topic or merely switching gradually in loose accordance with a topic. They also need to decide how to measure it, determining what qualifies as “abrupt” switching versus “gradual” switching. Until then, studies on the subject are bound to be riddled with inaccuracies and misunderstandings.

Given their overall accuracy in assessing the circumstances of their code switching behavior, it is surprising that bilinguals are on the whole reluctant to venture a hypothesis as to what function their code switching serves in conversation. Of the 38 people asked, only 4 people would give me an answer other than “it’s just the way I talk” or some variation thereof. The four people essentially said the same thing: “It just makes for more friendly conversation,” or personalization. Indeed in practice, this function is by far the most prevalent function of code switching, which is not surprising. If a person is going to code switch, he is going to do it with someone who speaks both of his languages. Furthermore, he is probably going to be doing it under the circumstances already set forth – in an informal situation, in a certain setting (like the home or neighborhood), and most importantly, with somebody with whom he is rather familiar. In monolingual conversations, under these circumstances, people also find a way to make
conversation more personable, often with slang words or fewer elitisms, or by using a certain tone of voice, and even with eye contact and other gestures. Bilinguals simply have one more tool available to them, and they use it.

Still, one should take note that 28 of the 168 utterances observed were unclassifiable. The code switching in these cases did not seem to serve any discernable function or combination of functions. I would conclude in these cases that since bilinguals have two language systems open to them, sometimes one language is just more handy – that it is on the tip of their tongue. In other words, “It’s just the way [they] talk.” Such an idea is reinforced by some of the people I asked about these particular unclassifiable utterances:

“No, I don’t know why I decided to say that last part in Spanish. I think it was just that it came to me easier, you know? Sometimes, you have these thoughts in your head, and they don’t have words to them yet. When they come out, they have words. Sometimes they are English words, y otros son palabras españolas [and others are Spanish words]."

Most studies gloss over the fact that a significant percentage of utterances cannot be classified. Unclassifiable information is considered essentially to be non-information. This momentary inclination to code switch should be considered another category of code switching, but it is difficult to assert that it serves a function. However, even though it seems on the surface to have little import for determining the function of code switching in discourse, it could be quite significant in other aspects of code switching, particularly in determining how it happens on a psycholinguistic and neurological level.

Another category that is often glossed over is reiteration, the second most frequently occurring function of code switching. In looking at the graph, one can see that reiteration far surpasses most of the other categories. Though the existence of this function has been noted in other studies, it has never rated as high or been discussed to any extent. To be sure, it is rather straightforward as a category but given the frequency, it may play an interesting role in the speech patterns of bilinguals. One could say that reiteration took place at a much higher level in
this study because there were a few monolingual English speakers in the group, but such an explanation would not account for the times that the reiteration was done from English to Spanish. If speakers were only reiterating their Spanish utterances in English for the benefit of the monolingual English speakers, there would seem to be no reason for them to do the opposite, as there were no monolingual Spanish speakers in the group. Obviously the motive has to be deeper than simple courtesy.

Furthermore, more needs to be done to research the two new categories, substitution and designations. These categories played such significant roles that it is surprising that no other study has observed them. Perhaps the older studies categorized these types under the headings of clarification or personalization/objectivization. However, I have never seen specific mention of these types of examples, and given that they played such a prevalent role in this study, it seems that they should have their own category. In fact, these two categories also occurred with more frequency than most of the other commonly observed categories did.

Regarding designations, it is true that most of these have an element of personalization in them. Speakers may want to utter nicknames in Spanish because that is the language traditionally associated with friends and family. However, there was also a strong tendency to curse in Spanish, perhaps because that language holds less responsibility to the outside world. Some speakers said that they would insult each other in Spanish because others wouldn’t know what they were saying. However, especially with family and close friends, using Spanish instead of English for an insult mollifies the impact; the shared bond of language lets the addressee know that the curse is not in anger, but rather in jest or exasperation.

Many of the categories that had been noted previously do not seem to occur with such frequency in practice, whereas others occur with greater frequency. While it is true that frequency cannot be used as the only indicator of importance, one must accept that greater frequency probably has significant bearing on the importance of certain functions of code switching in normal discourse. It also indicates what the normal speech patterns of bilinguals are. Thus, it is significant that such a greater number of code switches were due to untranslatability
than to quotations. However, the category of untranslatability remains largely unexamined, while there are many studies that extensively examine the instance of quotes in bilingual discourse. In fact, many of the least frequently occurring instances of code switching are the same ones that have been studied the most. Whether researchers are unaware of their relative frequency or not is unclear. It is also possible that bilinguals refrain from using untranslatable words in a more formal study setting. However, with this study to point out the relative proportions of different instances of code switching, perhaps the relative neglect of this category of untranslatability will soon be remedied.

The discovery of these new categories as well as the relative import of certain categories may reflect the principal benefit of this study and of the way it was conducted. Though older studies served as a guide, they did not predetermine the form or direction of these results. By following where the actual conversations led, I observed new categories and proportions. It is doubtful that under other circumstances, I could have obtained such data.

The major impact of this study should not only be how this data was obtained but also what it shows. Of course it defines two new categories, but perhaps even more importantly it quantifies the data so that we now know the relative proportion or frequency of certain acts of code switching. It turns out that some of the most commonly used types of code switching are some of the least studied and vice versa. We have known for quite some time that quotations were almost always reported in the language in which they first appeared, and yet people rarely use direct quotations in normal discourse. Additionally, we have long suspected that there was some correlation between topic shift and language, though again this correlation is controversial as there is no set definition or method of observation. However, until now, items like ‘untranslatability’ have been down played when in this instance it is obvious that they play as significant a role as some of the more commonly observed categories. Perhaps now researchers will be more willing to focus on certain categories, now that their importance in discourse has been established.
IX. Conclusion

In the course of this study, it has been determined that although a significant amount of code switching cannot be classified; nearly a quarter of it is due to the speaker’s effort, whether subconscious or not, to personalize his message for his audience. Some categories do not play as significant a role as previously thought, while others seem to play a far greater role. Furthermore, there are two categories – substitution and designation – that are observed here apparently for the first time, and both have considerable impact on the social significance of code switching in a discourse.

Though several of the observations coincide with results from other studies, many are significantly different. Some of these discrepancies, like those that arise concerning topic-based code switching, are attributable to the lack of a precise universal definition for this particular aspect of the code switching phenomenon. Other discrepancies, such as the two new categories and the relative proportions of the frequency of certain functions, may be attributable to my untraditional research design, whereby participants felt more relaxed and comfortable in the course of observation.

I do not advocate complete abandonment of the normal methods for studying code switching. The controlled methods certainly do provide valuable numbers and data. However, it seems to be necessary from time to time to do a more informal study such as this one to determine what differences exist between laboratory studies and general practice and to determine what trends appear. These results should serve as a guide for future research.

And there will be future research. The phenomenon of code switching is not going to disappear. Though occasionally communities will cease to be bilingual and will fully assimilate into one culture or the other, it has been noted by experts in fields ranging from history and sociology to linguistics and psychology that this will probably not happen to the bilingual Spanish/English community in the United States. The code switching of bilinguals in the Hispanic
community does not merely represent a stage in language shift. It is instead a permanent linguistic phenomenon, and a mark of identity.

Monolinguals in this country should not deride or snub the code switching behavior of bilinguals, for it takes great fluency to code switch. Furthermore, it is indicative of a richer type of speech as well as a rich culture. Where monolinguals only have one language’s vocabulary and syntax available to them, bilinguals have two, and they use them both to their fullest potential. This is of course true not only for Spanish/English bilinguals, but for all bilinguals.

There are numerous other bilingual communities in the United States and elsewhere. While it is possible that conclusions about one language pair can transfer over to another language pair, it is not certain. In fact, some researchers have recently reported significant differences in Korean-English code switching behavior, as compared to Spanish-English code switching. Using Spanish and English is only a convenient starting point. There are many other language pairs available throughout the world to study. Doing a cross-cultural study of this phenomenon would be very helpful in ascertaining what importance differences in code switching behavior have, particularly concerning whether the differences occur because of the language or the culture.

Other possible studies could address the ways in which code switching behavior differs over generations, more specifically between first generation bilinguals and second or third generation bilinguals. I admit that my data on the amount of code switching across age and gender, while interesting, is not reliable. More research from a much more scientific and regulated study needs to be done in this area. Not only should that study aim to determine the relative amount of code switching across generations, but also whether the primary functions of code switching are different across generations.

Another useful analysis would be to trace the evolution of code switching and the understanding of it from both a linguistic and social perspective. A brief history is already outlined in this paper, but it is nowhere near complete, and it concerns only one language pair in one country. Perhaps there have been difference responses and experiences elsewhere.
A more immediate research need, in response to this study, would be to pay more attention to the functions that have been largely ignored, such as ‘untranslatability of the message.’ Or one could pay more attention to the instances where speakers switch ‘just because they do.’ Researchers have too often glossed over these categories, and yet they are quite significant ones. The first issue of untranslatability could impact not only our understanding of code switching behavior, but our understanding of languages and world views, including the concept that certain ideas may exist in one language/culture, but not in another. The second issue, that of a speaker switching due to a momentary inclination, could have a significant impact on our understanding of language and in particular how language works in the brain. Though we have a comprehensive understanding of the semantics of language, we still do not know everything about its role in human contact, nor do we know very much at all about the language process in the brain. It is possible that certain aspects of code switching could help us address such gaps in our knowledge.

Whatever research is done in the future, it is important that the research designers keep an open mind. The rigidity, replicability, and control of a scientific-based method has its merits, and in some ways will remain crucial to the study of code switching, but freer methods have their place in the study of this field as well. In fact, they seem to be necessary in order to collect more natural examples and to observe more natural interactions and behaviors.
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Appendix

A. Questions Asked with Sample Responses

These questions were asked after I had explained to people what my project consisted of and also what was meant by the term “code switching.”

1. Do you code switch? If so, how often?

“Yes, but not very often at all.”

“No. Never.”

“Yeah, I do it a lot, but usually only around friends.”

“I don’t know if I do or not. I guess I probably do. I mean, I know my friends do, so I probably do too.”

2. How do you feel about it?

“I don’t really have an opinion about it. I know I do it. I’m not ashamed about it, if that’s what you’re asking. But then, I wouldn’t say I’m proud of it either. It’s just something I do when I speak sometimes.”

“I don’t mind it. I’m certainly not going to stop code switching. It doesn’t bother me to hear it, and it doesn’t bother me to do it. In fact, I rather like it because it’s something my friends and I can share in. you know how some groups have certain words or catch phrases that they use all the time? Well, my friends and I have this way of speaking where we go back and forth between English and Spanish. It’s kind of fun sometimes.”

“I don’t like for my children to [code switch] because it just sounds uneducated. I want them to know Spanish, and I’ve raised them to be able to speak both Spanish and English. That should be something to be proud of. They should know each language, but they should use each in its place. … I just want them to be accepted.”

3. How do you think others feel about it?

“I know people who don’t know Spanish hate it when I speak Spanish in public. I guess they think I’m talking about them or something. (I’m not.) As for switching itself, I don’t know. I guess they’d think that I wasn’t competent in English. [me: does that bother you?] Nope. Not if I don’t know them. I’ll never see them again. What should I care? [me: what if you do know them?] Well, they know me, so they wouldn’t think I don’t know English. … I guess they might think I’m rude, though. I try not to speak Spanish around people I know don’t know it.”

“I don’t think [monolinguals] like it very much. [me: what about bilinguals?] Well, most of them do it, so I don’t think it bothers them. Although some of my older relatives don’t like mixing the two languages.”
4. When do you usually code switch? Under what circumstances?

“I would only [code switch] around people I knew really well. I know I always do it at home. Never at work, though. Or at least, not if there are [customers] in the store. If one of my friends comes in, we might start talking, but I try not to use Spanish if there’s anyone else there. Sometimes, it just happens anyway though. “I know I code switch at home, but I would never do it at work.”

5. Why do you restrict yourselves to code switching only at certain times?

“I feel very self-conscious speaking Spanish at all in public, let alone switching between Spanish and English. I’ve always felt like that, and it’s because [English-speaking] Americans do not come across as being receptive to foreigners. It’s not just Spanish-speakers. I know people who speak Chinese or Korean, and they won’t speak their native languages in public either. It’s too conspicuous, and if someone notices, you’re automatically an outsider.”

“It’s sort of like slang. There are some times and places where you can use bad grammar or cuss words, and there are some places you really can’t. It’s the same for code switching. Just because you can speak Spanish somewhere doesn’t mean that you can code switch there. Code switching is like the slang of bilinguals. No, not really slang, more like the familiar [as opposed to the formal mode of discourse].”

6. How do you respond when another person in the conversation code switches?

“You know, most of the time I don’t even notice it.”

“I’m not sure. I’d probably start doing it too.”

“As for how I’d respond with my speaking, I’m not sure. I’d probably start using the language they switched to. But in general, I kind of like it when someone code switches with me. It means we’re getting to be friends. Or, if it’s somebody I already know, it brings something into the conversation and makes it more personal.”

7. Do you notice your own code switches?

“No.”

“Usually not, but I always notice them if I’m in a place where I usually wouldn’t speak Spanish. If I do accidentally slip into Spanish (or want to slip into Spanish), I notice then.”

“I do in general, but not specific instances. I mean, I know I was code switching when I talked to my cousin Gina ten minutes ago, but ask me what I switched? Couldn’t tell you.”

8. Do you ever make a conscious effort to code switch?

“Not really. Actually, it’s usually something I try to avoid.”

“I do. Not all the time, but when I want someone to feel more comfortable around me, sometimes switching to Spanish will help.”

“I don’t. But I know my little brother will use Spanish when he wants to get something out of our parents. [me: and you don’t?] Well, I used to. …”

This is perhaps the most oft-cited example of code switching there is. Many researchers claim that it represents the use of code switching in a personal way, since they feel Person A seems to use Spanish when she is embarrassed about something. Many of the people I talked to disagreed. They deny that they would code switch in this manner, and some even went so far as to say that the speaker does not seem very competent in English. Others thought that she was probably competent in both languages, but she seemed incredibly nervous or intimidated, perhaps due in part to the presence of the recorder.

Person A: ... I'd smoke the rest of the pack myself in the other two weeks.
Person B: That's all you smoke.
Person A: That's all I smoked.
Person B: And how about now?
Person A: Estos...me los halle...estos Pall Malls me los halleron. [These...I found these Pall Malls...these were found for me.] No, I mean that's all the cigarettes...that's all. They're the ones I buy.

Later:
Person A: They tell me ‘How did you quit, Mary?’ I don't quit I...I just stopped. I mean it wasn't an effort that I made que voy a dejar de fumar por que me hace daño o [that I'm going to stop smoking because it's harmful to me or] this or that uh-uh. It's just that I used to pull butts out of the waste paper basket yeah. I used to go look in the...se me acaban los cigarros en la noche [my cigarettes would run out on me at night]. I'd get desperate y ahi voy al basarero a buscar, a sacar [and there I go to the waste basket to look for some, to get some], you know.
C. More Samples of Code Switching from this Study

1. Personalization, reiteration, emphasis.

We came here today *a celebrar*, to celebrate. And we have *muchas* to celebrate.

2. Momentary inclination

Help yourself to a drink. There’s soda on the table and *cerveza* in the fridge. Or I could get you some coffee.

3. Personalization, topic shift

Father: Lupe, Ricky, it’s time to go. *Donde está la madre?*

Son: *Quién sabe?* Who knows?

Daughter: *[Unintelligible] buscado en la cocina?* [Did you?] look in the kitchen?

4. Objectification, Aggravating message, roles of subjects, topic shift. [The following example was not counted in the study because it is between a woman and a ten-year-old boy. As I mentioned in my paper, it is not certain whether children of a young age are actually code switching or if the behavior is attributable to something else. To avoid this controversy, I only quantified utterances from people who were over fourteen. Nevertheless, I am including this example here because not only does it seem to be code switching, but it also seems to included many different levels of code switching at the same time.]

Child: *Mamí, quiero ese juego.*

Mother: *No, no compro ese juego.*

Child: *Por qué no?* Why not?

Mother: *Te he dicho ya. No eres bastante viejo.* I’ve told you already. You’re not old enough.

Child: *Sí –*
Yes –

Mother: *Manuel, dicho no!*
Manuel, I said no.

Child: But Sam and Arthur have it.

Mother: Well, we don’t do everything that Sam and Arthur do!

5. Emphasis

Person 1: And school? How’s that going?

Person 2: Pretty good. My English class is a lot of work – we have to write a ton of essays,
Pretty good. My English class is a lot of work – we have to write a ton of essays,

but I love my math class. *Es muy fácil!*
but I love my math class. It’s really easy!

Person 1: That’s good – colleges are going to love you, a girl who can do math.

6. Personalization, topic shift, emphasis/clarification. [There is also a little bit of irony when this speaker shifts into Spanish when saying, “this country, el país de la libertad” because it is this monolingual English-speaking land of liberty that is trying to intimidate him into not speaking Spanish.]

I am American, but I’m also *Chicano, y habla español.* That shouldn’t be a problem. I’m not going to force anybody else to speak it, but in this country, *el país de la libertad,* nobody should force me not to speak it either.

7. Personalization.

Person 1: Did you hear about Mark’s sister?

Person 2: *Si, la pobre.* What’s she going to do now?
Yes, poor thing. What’s she going to do now?

8. Personalization

Person 1: Hey, I haven’t seen you in forever. *Qué pasa?*
Hey, I haven’t seen you in forever. What’s happening?

Person 2: Nothing much…

9. Cultural untranslatability (both with the Spanish food and the English saying), interjection.
Mother: Do you want sopa de fideo o peanut butter and jelly? 
Do you want [vermicelli soup] or peanut butter and jelly?

Son: Peanut butter and jelly.

Mother: Ese niño. He’s going to turn into peanut butter and jelly. 
That boy. He’s going to turn into peanut butter and jelly.

10. Mitigating message, momentary inclination

Mother: Have you done all of your homework?

Daughter: Más o menos. I’m done with everything that’s due tomorrow. 
More or less. I’m done with everything that’s due tomorrow.

Mother. Bien, pero you shouldn’t leave everything to the last minute. 
Fine, but you shouldn’t leave everything to the last minute.

11. Clarification, topic shift, momentary inclination.

I definitely feel like I’m living in two worlds sometimes: the world at school y el mundo de la familia. But it’s true in other ways también, the world of English o del español.

12. Name calling

There goes La Loca again. Always yelling. 
There goes Crazy again. Always yelling.

13. Endearment, untranslatability

Whatever you say, comadre. 
Whatever you say, [co-mother].

14. Momentary inclination

You can have pancakes or huevos, but you can’t have both. 
You can have pancakes or eggs, but you can’t have both.

15. Mitigating message

Child: Tía Rina! Essy spilled her drink. 
Aunt Rina! Essy spilled her drink.

Rina: How much?
Essy: It wasn’t very much. And besides, it was just water.

Rina: OK. No importa. OK. It’s not important.

16. Personalization, emphasis

Really? You’re the greatest mother en todo el mundo! Really? You’re the greatest mother in the whole world!

17. Momentary Inclination

I wanted to call Dad, pero llamaba you by mistake. I wanted to call Dad, but I called you by mistake.

18. Personalization.

Do you know about the festival? Muchas gente va. Do you know about the festival? Many people go.

19. Clarification

Rose – mi hermana, no la esposa de Roberto – is going to have another baby. Rose – my sister, not Roberto’s wife – is going to have another baby.

20. Appositive, emphasis, personalization

Person 1: Maria, mi mejor amiga, just got back from Jamaica. Maria, my best friend, just got back from Jamaica.

Person 2: Did she like it?

Person 1: Si. She said it was great. We’re going to try to go there junto after graduation. Yes. She said it was great. We’re going to try to go there together after graduation.

21. Reiteration

Pth. Those politicians. What do they know about la mujer chicana, the chicana woman. Pth. Those politicians. What do they know about the chicana woman, the chicana woman.

Nothing!