



## Some Language Attitudes towards Bilingualism

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**ABSTRACT:** *Language attitudes can play an important role in bilingualism and second language learning. Among the many ways we hear foreign languages being used, language mixing is one of them. This code switching can be felt as a problem or as a result of being open-minded in language learning. The paper analyzes the responses of a questionnaire by a sample of 53 bilingual subjects, most of them English and Spanish speakers. As a conclusion, it is relevant the correlation between the number of languages a person knows and the language prejudices one can have.*

**Keywords:** *Code-switching, bilingual learners, linguistic education*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Language attitudes can play an important role in bilingualism and second language learning (Saneleuterio, E., 2015; 2016). If people feel comfortable talking and expressing themselves in more than one language they will transmit that confidence to the next speaker and be more open to learning new languages. Successful (SL) Second language learners have positive attitudes towards language learning due to doing well, on the other hand, unsuccessful learners may acquire negative attitudes (Bartrum, 2010 : 41). Many times, the experiences that we have had with language learning can be projected on those individuals and real-life situations where we hear foreign languages in use. Among the many ways we hear foreign languages being used, language mixing is one of them. Language mixing or code-switching, going back and forth from one language to another when speaking, is a phenomenon that is frequently used among bilingual and multilingual speakers.

There are many reasons why bilinguals code-switch. Code switching is first thought of as a “problem of retrieval affected by...factors such as language use and word frequency code switching” (Heredia R. and Altarriba, J., 2001: 164). However, another alternative is that people code-switch “as a strategy in order to be better understood... some ideas are better communicated in one language than another” (Heredia R. and Altarriba, J., 2001: 165). Another factor includes “language accessibility” (Heredia, R. and Altarriba, J., 2001: 167). Bilingual speakers employ code-switching when a word isn’t readily accessible to them or strategically when they have enough time to choose the exact word that they wish to use (Heredia, R. and Altarriba, J., 2001: 167).

The questionnaire used in this study on bilingual language attitudes is composed of simple statements that delve into these attitudes on foreign languages and language mixing from a holistic perspective.

### II. METHODOLOGY

We presented a short questionnaire on possible language attitudes towards bilingual language mixing based on various bilingual contextual situations. The objective of the questionnaire is to examine possible attitude trends in bilingual speakers towards language mixing, and to support the hypothesis that there is more tolerance towards code-switching amongst bilingual speakers with two native languages (variable 1) or those who are knowledgeable in more languages (variable 2). The questionnaire is written in Spanish, and this particular type of investigation requires a quantitative methodology based on statistical concepts. The hypothesis is multivariate asymmetry where the predictor variables (2 native languages, knowledge of many languages) are not manipulated but influence in the answers and amount of rejection or empathy.

The questionnaire was sent out to people who are bilingual in the United States of America or American and living in Spain. 53 people responded; of those 53, 49 are currently living in the U.S. or U.S. territory, 3 are living in Valencia, Spain and 1 responded from Lima, Peru. As shown in Table 1, 22 people responded that English was their native language, 21 responded that Spanish was their native language, 7 responded that both English and Spanish were their native languages, 2 responded that English and another

language were their native languages, and 1 responded that English and two other languages were their native languages.

**Table 1**  
**Sample of bilingual speakers who answered the questionnaire divided by origin**

	English (L1)	Spanish (L1)	English and Spanish (L1)	English or Spanish and another language(L1)	English and 2 other languages (L1)
U.S. or U.S. territory	21	20	6	1	1
Valencia, Spain	1		1	1	
Other		1			

Source: personal compilation

The questionnaire is divided into two parts: The first part is personal information regarding the city where they live and the languages they speak (L1, L2, etc.). The second part consists of one question and series of 10 statements all related to emotions towards different types of bilingual speakers in different code-switching situations and respondents are asked to indicate if they feel “rejection/repulsion,” “indifference,” or “identification/empathy”. There are also 2 additional statements halfway through the questionnaire that speak about code-switching in itself, and respondents are asked to indicate if they “agree” or “disagree.”

### III. RESULTS

Overall there seems to be a general sentiment of “identification/empathy” with the majority of questions, followed by “indifference,” and “rejection/repulsion” in a handful of answers. This signifies that based on this questionnaire and using these bilingual speakers as a sample group, bilingual language speakers can identify and/or empathize with code switching.

The first question deals with code-switching in song parodies, in which 26 respondents registered “identification/empathy,” 23 registered “indifference,” and 4 felt “rejection/repulsion”.

The second and third statements are in reference to the feelings towards a child or adult who mixes his/her native language (minority) with the majority language of the place where he/she lives. There is much more rejection/repulsion towards an adult (18 registered “rejection/repulsion” as compared to a child (4 registered “rejection/repulsion), and much more empathy towards a child code-switching (33 registered “identification/empathy”, 12 indifference) as compared to an adult (21 registered “identification/empathy”, 14 indifference).

The fourth and fifth statements are in reference to the feelings towards a child or adult who mixes his/her native language (majority or dominant of the place where he/she lives) when he/she tries to speak another minority language. There is also more rejection/repulsion towards an adult (9 registered “rejection/repulsion”) as compared to a child (3 registered “rejection/repulsion”).

The sixth and seventh statements are in reference to whether language mixing is only acceptable in order to create funny situations or if it is to be considered as a natural phenomenon. We had to rule out 5 sets of answers because they registered “agree” for both answers. For the most part, (36 “disagree”) bilinguals do not believe language mixing is only acceptable to create funny situations, but language mixing as a natural phenomenon is only believed by approximately half of the bilinguals (27 “agree,” 21 disagree).

The eighth and ninth statements are in reference to the feelings generated towards a child or an adult immigrant who code-switches his/her native language when he/she tries to speak the language spoken where he/she lives. Overall, there is much acceptance (child – 39 “identification/empathy,” adult – 35) and a low sense of rejection although slightly higher in adults (child – 3 “rejection/repulsion,” adult – 5).

The tenth and eleventh statements are in reference to the feelings generated towards a native born child or adult who tries to speak a foreign language that an immigrant speaks and due to this ends up code-switching between the two languages (pertinent to where they both live). There is also a general acceptance of this type of code-switching (child – 35 identification/empathy, adult – 32), however there is a significant number who are indifferent (child – 14, adult – 15), and a slightly higher number of rejections compared to the eighth and ninth statements (child – 4, adult – 6).

The twelfth and thirteenth statements are in reference to the feelings generated towards a foreigner (child or adult) who code-switches his native language with the language of the place he visits. These answers had a low sense of rejection (both child and adult - 2), a high number of empathy (child – 37, adult – 33) and some registers of indifference (child – 14, adult – 18).

#### IV. DISCUSSION

If we look at the statements that generated most rejection and/or least empathy, the second and third statements (feeling generated towards a child/adult who mixes his native language (minority) with the majority language of the place where he/she lives) and the fourth and fifth statements (feeling generated towards a child/adult who mixes his native language (majority or dominant of the place where he/she lives)) have the highest responses registered. The second and third statements registered 8 “rejection/repulsion” towards a child and 18 “rejection/repulsion” towards an adult, and 33 “identification/empathy” towards a child and 21 towards an adult. The fourth and fifth statements registered 3 “rejection/repulsion” towards a child and 9 towards an adult, and 29 “identification/empathy” towards a child and 23 towards a child. If we compare the answers of the two variables (2 native languages, more than 3 languages) in these statements, we notice that “rejection/repulsion” does not appear in any of the second, fourth and fifth statement answers. It only appears in the third statement in reference to an adult who mixes his minority native language with the majority language, where the first variable registered 4 rejections and the second variable registered 2 rejections.

Another statement that shows how the variables influence in the quality of answers is in the seventh statement that says that code-switching is a natural phenomenon. Overall, more people agree (27) than disagree (21), but not by much, whereas those who are part of the variables, 2 native languages (6), and knowledge of many languages (5), show a greater majority in agreeing (11 out of 16) as compared to disagreeing (4 – all from 2 native languages).

The rest of the statements that show a high number of empathy (eighth, tenth, and twelfth statements) all are in reference to the feelings towards a child who code-switches. In the variable groups there is also a high number of empathy (13, 12, and 12 out of 16), and more significantly, none registered “rejection/repulsion”.

Finally, the tenth statement, feelings towards a native adult who tries to speak a foreign language that an immigrant speaks and due to this ends up code-switching between the two languages (pertinent to where they both live) had 6 rejections, 15 indifference and 32 empathy, and of those 6 rejections, 4 were from the variable groups, 2 – two native languages and 2 – knowledge of many languages. This many indicate an intolerance towards this particular type of code-switching.

#### V. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, based on our findings of this questionnaire given out to a small sample group (53 people), we have seen a possible correlation between the number of languages a person knows and the language prejudices one can have. Therefore, one variable may influence the other and vice versa.

Perhaps it would have been a good idea to include the age of the person answering the questionnaire because it has been noted in other attitude studies that age is an important variable, and that the younger you are, the more open you are to bilingualism/multilingualism, as demonstrated with pre-university students (Caruara S., Lasagabaster, D., 2011: 46).

In our opinion this questionnaire has shown that bilingualism may have an influence on language attitudes in code-switching. We would need to do another questionnaire study with monolinguals and compare the results. Perhaps language mixing needs to be put forward from a holistic perspective, “where they are shown to add and promote each other, instead of demeaning and menacing each other” (Caruara S., Lasagabaster, D., 2011: 56). This type of language attitude would probably help to spread multilingualism throughout Europe, “especially in those areas where minority and majority languages live together and share the same sociolinguistic spaces” (Caruara S., Lasagabaster, D., 2011: 56).

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