ENGLISH/MANDARIN CODE-SWITCHING IN THE UNITED STATES:
A CASE STUDY OF A NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHINESE LANGUAGE
SCHOOL

A Thesis

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Jiayin Gao

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Department of Bilingual and Multicultural Education
Abstract

of

ENGLISH/MANDARIN CODE-SWITCHING IN THE UNITED STATES:
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Code-switching is an inevitable and interesting topic in a multilingual and multicultural educational setting. However, few studies in the United States have been investigated Chinese/English alternation among young students. This qualitative case study examined the code-switching practice among four second-grade Chinese-English bilingual students studying in a weekend Chinese language school. This study brings a new perspective to code-switching between an alphabetic language and a non-alphabetic language. The conversations between students, teachers and among students themselves were audio-recorded. Nine data collection sessions were implemented in class and each session was about two hours. Interpretative analysis was the main data analysis method. Four types of code-switching were found in this study, specifically, students used tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and borrowing. Five functions of code-switching were observed, declarative/question shift, crutching, translation, clarification/emphasis, and expressive. The research shows that in the case of Chinese American bilingual children’s code-switching usage for social identity, desire,
expression, and emotion, code-switching functions observed in this Northern California case study are found to be similar to other code-switching populations. This research indicates that students in this Northern California case study code-switched less than other code-switching populations, for example, English-Spanish bilinguals.

José Cintrón, Ph.D.

Date
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION
Background

The United States is an ethnically diverse nation where Chinese American communities are among the ethnic communities of this multifaceted society. For the past three decades, this society has witnessed a dramatic increase of Asia-origin population. The census data reflect the population of Asians and Pacific Islanders living in the U.S. increased by 290.7% between 1980 and 2010 (Shin & Kominski, 2010; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service [USCIS], 2002). The fast-growing numbers of children from immigrant communities, especially given their disadvantaged learning environment, have received much attention. Chinese is a noticeable language because it is frequently used when more Chinese-speaking immigrants move to the United States (Zhang, 2008). As the United States and China build a relationship in terms of economy, education, and culture, increasing numbers of Chinese-as-a-foreign-language courses have been offered in the high schools and colleges (Zhang, 2008). As a result, the Chinese have received more attention during recent years in the United States.

The Chinese American community is the oldest and the most populous ethnic group of Asian ancestry in the United States. Tracing back to the late 1840s, Chinese American suffered a long history of destituteness, homelessness, and racial discrimination, including 60 years of legal exclusion by federal and state governments. The early Chinese immigrants served as coolies (cheap and oppressed labors) in the Gold
Rush era and in building the transcontinental railroad system. During those periods of time, although their children were born in the United States, they were deprived of the right to become naturalized American citizens. Their children did not enjoy educational equality and were denied enrollment in public schools.

Contemporary Chinese immigrants have diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Some have already obtained the highest education degree in China but chose to move to the United States to pursue a better quality of life, especially for their children’s sakes. Although others merely received the basic education in China, their families make efforts to immigrate and hope they can get any chance on the new continent. If they were still in China, they could not provide their children with enough opportunities to succeed in the future based on their current socioeconomic status. One of the motivations of Chinese immigrants is the high quality and flexibility of the United States education system. They continue to struggle and compete with the dominant social groups to gain a greater quality of life and break the rules of social reproduction regardless how hard the life is and will be in a new country. Moreover, most Chinese parents still expect their children to maintain their home culture and language. They believe attending Chinese school is the best way.

Chinese Language

Chinese, a non-alphabetic language, requires sharply different cognitive abilities in reading compared to those needed with English, an alphabetic language. Chinese language is believed to have originated between the eighth and the third centuries BC and
has evolved through the ages. It is the official language in China, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Singapore, and the United Nations, while many southeastern Asian countries intensively use Chinese as their mass communication tool. There are two forms of written Chinese: one is the simplified Chinese adopted in Mainland China, Singapore, Malaysia, and the United Nations; the other form is the traditional Chinese adopted by the rest of Chinese-speaking regions. The only difference between two written forms is the number of strokes composing a character. For example, “愛” is a traditional Chinese character meaning “love.” There are 14 strokes in this character. However, the simplified Chinese character of love is “愛,” which only has 10 strokes. The majority of characters display differently between the two forms of written Chinese, while the rest remain the same orthographically.

From a phonological perspective, Cantonese is a dialect of Chinese and is different from Mandarin in terms of pronunciation and syntax. Although literature focuses on bilingualism in the Cantonese-English learning environment of Hong Kong and North America due to the historic immigration rush, the number of Mandarin-speaking immigrants is increasing and Mandarin ranks as the second largest language spoken among immigrants in California during the last two decades (Department of Finance [DOF], 2003). Since Cantonese and Mandarin differ heavily in terms of phonology and slightly in terms of written form and syntax, empirical findings that have been concluded may not apply to current Chinese-English bilingual education trends or meet increasing educational demands.
Although it is intuitive to assume that reading Chinese characters requires visual skills and orthographic processing, research has identified that phonology is also involved as a constituent part in processing Chinese language symbols (Tan & Perfetti, 1998). The Pinyin (which means phonetics in English) romanization system was developed in 1954 to replace the previous version of Mandarin. The syllable that can be divided into onset and rime is the basic speech unit of Chinese. The onset of a Mandarin syllable includes only one consonant. Thus, the rime segment consists of vowels for the majority of syllables. There are four tones in the Pinyin romanization system, which is attached to the rime segment and marked above the rime vowel. Any change of syllable-tone combinations can change the meaning of a character. However, the syllable-tone inventory of Mandarin is limited (1,277 syllables in total) (Chao, 1976) in comparison with the English vocabulary (more than 8,000) (DeFrancis, 1984). Large numbers of homophones in Mandarin add another fold of difficulties for bilingual learners. Tone is not represented in the written Chinese and cannot be used to differentiate morphemes.

Mandarin and English share many syntactic characteristics. Inevitably, the two languages differ significantly in more syntactic aspects. For example, the Chinese language does not have tense. Instead, it employs single syllables to indicate aspect markers and markers of modality. Another major difference between the two languages lies in stacking orders of modifying clauses. Other differences that often confuse Chinese-as-a-second-language learners include abstract characterization words standing
as complete predicates on their own and the absence of article words and forms of nouns and verbs (singular and plural).

Purpose of the Study

Two main purposes guided this thesis. The main focus was to find out what types of code-switching students employed during their peer-to-peer and teacher-to-student conversations during class and playtime. Meanwhile, this study also attempted to identity participants’ code-switching functions, such as “crutching,” “translation,” and “emphasis.” During the proposed design study, the researcher created small group pods with three students per group, with gender balance (if possible). Each pod was given discussion topics based on the Chinese school curriculum and their interests (e.g., music, cartoons/movies, and sports, etc.) to facilitate rich language samples. The group discussion activities lasted approximately 30 minutes per week sequentially for two months. Classroom activities also included student question and answer sessions with respect to textbook content. All student classroom activities were under the teacher’s supervision and were subject to the code of Chinese school academic conduct. The data were transcribed to provide a detailed analysis of code-switching between Chinese and English.

Statement of Problem

This study examined the code-switching practices among second-grade Chinese-English bilingual children studying at a weekend Chinese language school. There are about 180 registered students attending Hope Chinese School in the Hope region (a
pseudonym given for privacy). Currently, the researcher serves as a Chinese teacher at Hope Chinese School. She usually adopts Chinese as the instruction language, but occasionally it becomes necessary for the teacher to clarify or introduce new words in English. However, code-switching is a common phenomenon among Chinese-English bilingual students when they speak during class at the Chinese school. Why do they employ code-switching in their conversation? What types of code-switching are employed by them? Does code-switching serve any function in their speech? What functions of conversational interactions are employed by them? For this study, the focus is the sociolinguistic phenomenon in terms of language choices of Chinese-American children who attend one of the Chinese language schools in northern California.

Significance of the Study

A significance of this study was investigating the second generation of Chinese immigrants who study Chinese at weekend Chinese language schools. Schoolchildren of Chinese American immigrants who are regarded as the marginalized ones in the United States are often neglected or misinterpreted from social, cultural, custom, and academic perspectives. Although schoolchildren of Chinese Americans are often considered the model minority due to their extraordinary academic achievement, most of them still encounter obstacles in schools. For example, Chinese American schoolchildren have to face their limited English proficiency after they transfer from a Chinese-speaking learning environment to English-speaking school settings. Such obstacles may accompany them throughout their school years if teachers do not value minority students’
home languages and home cultures. Researchers have found many teachers do not realize the importance of maintaining bilingual children’s first languages since they are not well trained in how to educate culturally and linguistically diverse children to learn and use language in the current education setting (Tabors & Snow, 2001).

Another significant point of this study brings a new point of view to code-switching between an alphabetic language and a non-alphabetic language. Code-switching is an inevitable and interesting topic in a multilingual and multicultural educational setting. Although a great number of researchers have studied code-switching, the majority conducted the studies in terms of home settings rather than educational settings (Zentella, 1997). Moreover, research has shown that code-switching significantly exists between alphabetic languages, such as English and Spanish, since they share fundamental phonology principles (Howard, Christian, & Genesee, 2004). Therefore, transferability between English and Spanish is intensely investigated in the United States due to the vast number of native speakers and geographical contiguity. However, this study explores a research topic rarely studied, Chinese American schoolchildren who learn Chinese at local Chinese schools on an extracurricular basis.

Methodology

This study investigated the code-switching phenomenon among young Chinese-English bilingual children studying at a local Chinese language school. The target research participants were four elementary school students, three girls and one boy, who were acquiring English as L2 with Mandarin as their native language. They studied
Chinese at Hope Chinese School on weekends during the 2011-12 academic year. The researcher recruited participants on a volunteer basis only and parental permission was required. The researcher was the teacher of this classroom.

Digital recording was utilized for recording their entire conversations during class and recess periods. All the conversations and interviews were transcribed into documentation for further analysis. Interpretative analysis was employed in the data processing stage. The data are the transcripts of children’s peer-peer and peer-teacher conversations. Many steps were included in data analysis. First, transcripts were studied to identify any possible instance of code-switching. Second, each instance was coded according to students’ grammatical and pragmatic choices. These two steps were then repeated until refined code descriptions are logically consistent.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of better understanding this study, the following terms are defined:

**Code-switching**

Gumperz (1982) defined code-switching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystem” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59).
Second-generation Chinese American bilingual children

Born in the United States and “their parents were ethnic Chinese who immigrated from Mainland, Taiwan, Singapore and other Asian countries to the United States” (Lin, 1996, p. 11).

Organization of the Study

Five chapters are included in this thesis and are organized in the following way. In the first chapter, demographic background information, basic Chinese language knowledge, and the problem of second-generation Chinese American bilingual children today are briefly introduced. The second chapter, the literature review chapter, begins with relevant terminologies. Next, literature concerning four types of code-switching are examined. The functions of code-switching are discussed, and the background information about Chinese as a heritage language and Chinese school as a heritage language school are introduced. Code-switching between Chinese and English in the United States is then explored. Finally, the chapter ends with discussing the interpretational analysis methodology.

The third chapter, the methodology chapter, provides a description of target participants, setting, and procedure, along with the data analysis methods and data collection. In the fourth chapter, the research results are explained and examples to support the results are provided. The fifth chapter, the conclusion chapter, contains conclusions, elaborate findings, the limitations of this study, and suggestions for future study.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-switching is a common phenomenon in a bilingual and multicultural society. Many researchers have claimed code-switching does not necessarily implicate that bilingual speakers are linguistically deficient even if speakers actively engage in code-switching (Reyes, 2004; Ruan, 2003; Zentella, 1997). Much research has been conducted on the topic of code-switching across languages.

Code and Code-switching

Code-switching is defined as “the alternating use of two or more ‘codes’ within one conversation episode,” where codes can be defined as languages or dialects (Auer, 1998, p. 1). Myers-Scotton (1992) defined code-switching in a similar way, “the use of two or more languages in the same conversation, usually within the same conversational turn, or even within the same sentence of that turn” (p. vii). Gumperz (1982) defined code-switching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59). Although Gumperz (1982), Myers-Scotton (1992), and Auer (1998) provided various definitions of code-switching, they shared common linguistic aspects in terms of linguistic alternations within or beyond a sentence (Auer, 1998; Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1992). In this study, the term “code” primarily indicates two different languages—Chinese and English. For example: Kate: *Wait.* 你是不是用 invisible ink 啦? (Have
you used invisible ink?). In this example, Kate spoke Chinese and English together to express her thought.

Code-switching and Code-mixing

The terminological issue in terms of code-switching, code-mixing, and borrowing has been continuously debated in the field of sociolinguistics. Bokamba (1989) defined code-mixing as “the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems within the same sentence and speech event” (p. 278). Succinctly, code-mixing takes place at intra-sentential language alternation, which means language alternation occurs in a single sentence. Moreover, Bokamba believed code-switching refers to inter-sentential language alternation, where one sentence is followed by another sentence expressed in another language. Many researchers supported statements that code-switching and code-mixing are different linguistic aspects (Halmari, 1997; Tay, 1989); however, others thought code-switching covers language alternation phenomena in terms of both inter-sentential and intra-sentential levels (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1993).

The concept of code-switching and code-mixing has also been debated in the study of language alternation. Many researchers have suggested code-switching and code-mixing share the same linguistic phenomenon that language alternation happens at both inter-sentential and intra-sentential levels, which implies it is unnecessary to distinguish code-switching from code-mixing (Clyne, 1991; Milroy & Muysken, 1995;
Romaine, 1995). In this study, the terminology is followed based on the concept that code-switching covers language alternation phenomena at both inter-sentential and intra-sentential levels.

Code-switching and Borrowing

Muysken (1995) put forward the concept of borrowing as “the incorporation of lexical elements from one language in the lexicon of another language” (p. 189). Based on a study of code-switching between English and Spanish, Peñalosa (1980) suggested, “as in all kinds of borrowing throughout the world, it is nouns that have been most extensively borrowed” (p. 56).

The relationship between code-switching and borrowing has also been discussed in the study of language alternation (Myers-Scotton, 1992; Pahta, 2004; Poplack, 1980). Pahta claimed, “switching involves the use of two languages in one utterance, whereas the term ‘borrowing’ is used of embedded elements that have been integrated into the host language” (p. 79). Poplack (2004) mentioned code-switching differs from the other major expression of lexicon – borrowing.

However, other groups of sociolinguistic researchers had different insight concerning the relationship between code-switching and borrowing. Myers-Scotton (1992) concluded, “there is little reason to differentiate the two forms as processes, that is, either in terms of their derivations or the ML morphosyntactic processes they undergo for surface realisations” (p. 30). Moreover, Treffers-Daller (1991) stated, “both code-switching and borrowing may be considered in the first place as the interaction of
lexicons” (p. 259). Myers-Scotton further developed this statement and concluded, “while codeswitching and borrowing are always possible between any two languages, the specific outcomes depend on the existence of ‘lexicon-driven congruencies’” (p. 30). Myers-Scotton also believed it is not necessary to distinguish code-switching from borrowing since these two issues share similar linguistic processes. Myers-Scotton (1992) maintained, “efforts to distinguish code-switching, code-mixing, and borrowing are doomed” (p. 1) and we can “free ourselves of the need to categorize any instance of seemingly non-native material in language as a borrowing or a switching” (Myers-Scotton, 1992, p. 1). In this study, the arguments from the second group, that there is no need to distinguish code-switching from borrowing, are adopted.

Types of Code-switching

According to Poplack (1980), there are three types of code-switching: tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, and inter-sentential switching. However, as stated before, Myers-Scotton (1992) believed it is not necessary to distinguish code-switching from borrowing since both concepts are universally relevant processes rather than two different processes (Myers-Scotton, 1992). As a result, I categorize four types of code-switching in this study, tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and borrowing.

Tag-switching, also known as extra-sentential switching (Muysken, 1995), requires only a minor integration of two languages. Tag-switching involves inserting a tag or a short fixed phrase expressed in one language to a sentence expressed totally in
another language. Tags are commonly employed in English conversations and include “You know,” “I mean,” and “Wait,” etc. Intra-sentential switching involves switching within a clause or sentence. This type of code-switching, regarded as the most difficult one, requires bilingual learners to fluently speak both languages. When bilinguals apply intra-sentential switching, the shift needs to be done without any hesitation, pause, or interruption in the middle of a sentence. Inter-sentential switching involves switching across the boundary of two clauses or sentences, where each clause or sentence is expressed in either of two languages. The definition of borrowing in linguistics is that “use of embedded elements that have been integrated into the host language” (Pahta, 2004, p. 79).

A Sociolinguistic Approach to Study the Functions of Code-switching

Many researchers have engaged in the study of motivation about code-switching (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Reyes, 2004; Zentella, 1997). Blom and Gumperz (1972) concluded, through code-switching research conducted in a Northern Norway community, that there were two types of code-switching (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). One is situational code-switching, meaning speakers practice code-switching with a change of situation, interlocutor, or the topic of conversation. The other type is metaphorical code-switching, also known as conversational code-switching (Gumperz, 1982). The language alternates without a change of situation. Metaphorical code-switching is often employed as a conversation strategy, including topic shift and emphasis or clarification of a message.
The Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model was developed from Gumperz’s (1982) research with respect to language alternatives and was formalized by Myers-Scotton. It plays a leading role in the structural approach studies of code-switching from a sociolinguistic perspective (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The MLF model aims at explaining structures of intra-sentential code-switching. According to Namba (2009), MLF can be identified “as the first language of the speaker or the language in which the morphemes or words are more frequently used in speech” (Namba, 2009, p. 2).

Zentella (1997) presented a detailed analysis of conversation functions through observed conversations among five girls and their interlocutors in a Puerto Rican community (Zentella, 1997). In Zentella’s classic study in El Barrio, she integrated qualitative methods of linguistic anthropology with quantitative methods in the sociolinguistic field (Zentella, 1997). She said “Methodologically, anthropological linguistic analyses profit from joining the qualitative ethnographic methods of linguistic anthropology with the quantitative methods of sociolinguistics” (Zentella, 1997, p. 13). She believed many factors dominated the usage of code-switching. Researchers needed to distinguish the causes of code-switching from structural linguistic consequences ensuing from such switchings (Zentella, 1990). She introduced three factors with respect to functions of code-switching. She concluded that observable “on the spot” variables include physical settings and linguistic and social identities of participants. Her findings included that “bilingual children use different languages depending on interlocutor, the topic of the conversation, and context” (Zentella, 1997, p. 83). The “in the heads”
variables discussed in her study, which are not directly observable, included “the shared knowledge of how to manage conversations, how to achieve intentions in verbal interaction, and how to show respect for the social values of the community, the status of interactants, and the symbolic value of the languages” (Zentella, 1997, pp. 82-83). She also determined a third group of factors, “out of mouth,” which focuses on linguistic knowledge with respect to phonological, lexical, and syntactic limitations of code-switching. Zentella further summarized that variables should emerge with the reinterpretation of numbers in terms of social facts and her approach was readily applicable to diverse communities (Zentella, 1990).

In my study, I primarily focused on the functions of code-switching proposed by Zentella (1997) because her categories and theories are applicable in a Chinese-speaking community (Zentella, 1997). Similarly, Reyes (2004) conducted research about the code-switching patterns in Spanish-speaking children’s conversations (Reyes, 2004). The results of code-switching functions between Spanish and English also shed light on my research. In addition, besides the categories proposed by Zentella, I applied Appel and Muysken’s (1987) categories into my study of code-switching between Chinese and English in order to provide a rich description in my research.

A. Declarative/Questions Shift

The first function of code-switching is “declarative/questions shift.” Zentella illustrated that “[t]he language shift accompanies a shift into or out of a question”

**B. Crutching**

The second function mentioned by Zentella is “crutching,” which happens when “[t]he speaker did not remember or know the switching word(s)” (Zentella, 1997, p. 97). This linguistic element often occurred in the format of a few short phrases, which particularly suited the bilingual school children in this study. In Zentella’s study, she illustrated the reason why she called these kinds of switching “crutching:”

I call these switches ‘crutches’ because, like a person with impaired use of one leg who depends on a crutch to keep walking, a bilingual who is stumped in one language can keep on speaking by depending on a translated synonym as a stand-in. (Zentella, 1997, p. 98)

Zentella (1997) said there were many situations of crutching: the children knew how to say what they wanted to express in both languages; the children did not know how to say what they switched in the other language; the children knew how to say the two languages but they temporarily forgot one language so they switched to make up the lapse of memory.

**C. Translation**

The third function proposed by Zentella is “translation.” She provided a definition of translation that “[t]he speaker shifts to the opposite language for the translation of a statement, command, question, etc. The translation maybe exact or slightly changed” (Zentella, 1997, p. 96). Translation is a primary conversation strategy
observed in my study in which case speakers shift to another language to translate an expression, such as a statement and a question.

**D. Clarification/ Emphasis**

The forth function proposed by Zentella is “clarification/emphasis.” Zentella also provided a detailed statement: “The central role of clarification switches can be attributed to the children’s age, status, and need to make themselves understood” (Zentella, 1997, p. 96). Code-switching can be used to put emphasis on a specific command (Reyes, 2004). Qian, Tian, and Wang (2009) studied the code-switching phenomenon in a concrete case of two English language teachers who participated in a Primary English Curriculum Innovation project in Beijing, China. The data consisted of 20 videoed lessons over a four-year span. The results clearly showed code-switching is a discourse strategy allowing teachers to promote classroom interaction and foster a close relationship between teachers and students.

**E. Expressive**

Beside Zentella’s categories, I also applied one category from Appel and Muysken’s (1987) work into my study of bilingual children discourse, which is “expressive function.” Bilingual speakers emphasize their feeling or perceptions through switching to another language.

**Chinese as a Heritage Language (HL)**

Topics with regard to heritage language maintenance should not be ignored in the study of language alternation among Chinese/English bilingual children. Home language
learning in a multicultural and bilingual society is a different issue from mother tongue acquisition in a monolingual environment. Home language learning is motivated by the language’s cultural and aesthetic values (He, 2008). According to a 2003 Asia Society report, about 150,000 students were attending Chinese heritage language schools in the United States to learn Chinese (AsiaSociety, 2005).

The target participants recruited in this study, second-generation Chinese immigrants, were learning Chinese as their heritage language at a local Chinese school. To minimize the influences of assimilation in the dominant culture, minority immigrants attempted to keep their home culture and language through various ways (Liu, 2010; Zhang, 2004). Attending heritage language schools is one of the ways of helping second-generation Chinese American children learn and practice their first language in a formal and educational environment. Zhang (2004) maintained Chinese parents had positive attitudes concerning the home language maintenance, and they regarded “their home language as an important resource from which the children can benefit academically and cognitively” (Zhang, 2004, p. 45). In a study of Chinese American immigrant children, Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) found “the younger children are often subject to the language assimilation pressures in their immediate school environment and fail to recognize the potential payoffs of learning the HL in the long run” (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009, p. 92). However, parents of Chinese second-generation children enthusiastically supported heritage language maintenance. The authors further suggested teachers of mainstream academic curricula need to pay close attention to heritage
language maintenance to motivate young children to learn the home language. For example, schools can award honor credits for those young children who take classes at language schools. A similar situation also happened in the Chinese language school where the researcher collected data. The parents were aware of the importance of learning home language and enrolled Chinese American children to go to Chinese schools. However, some second-generation children lacked motivation to keep their home language. Zhang (2004) illustrated the reason might be “the complicated Chinese written system challenges the children’s learning interest” (Zhang, 2004, p. 49).

Moreover, Chinese American bilingual children often express they do not like the way of learning Chinese: “rote drilling instead of a creative and fun activity” (Zhang, 2004, p. 43).

Chinese Language Schools

Chinese language schools aim to help students learn Chinese language and become more familiar with Chinese culture. Globalization trends and international cooperation with China promote more non-Chinese native speakers to learn Chinese in Chinese language schools. However, most students come from native Chinese speaker families. Confucianism has been a powerful influence on Chinese behaviors and social structures for the past 2000 years. Researchers believe the cultural influence of Confucianism is one of the most important elements that lead to extraordinary Asian American educational achievements because Confucianism values education, family honor, discipline, and respect for authority (Zhou & Kim, 2006). In addition, the
traditional Confucianism highly values the importance of education. Chinese parents hope their children can succeed in the beauty of Chinese culture, such as filial piety, respect of the old generations, and obedience. However, the current regular school curriculum often ignores or misunderstands the need for minority students to become bilingual children. Unfortunately, many minority children lose their first language so they are not able to communicate with their parents. Chinese parents understand it is necessary to preserve their language and culture. Chinese school is the best way for their children to achieve this goal.

Tracing back to the history of Chinese language school can help us understand the importance of Chinese children’s attendance and how it influences Chinese communities in northern California. Zhou and Li (2003) stated in the history of Chinese language school that the first Chinese language school was established in San Francisco’s Chinatown in 1884. The function of Chinese language schools was to maintain the home language and culture for the future generations (Zhou & Li, 2003). Since the 1965 Immigration Act, more Chinese language schools have been established, not only in San Francisco’s Chinatown but also in middle class suburbs, to meet the increasing educational demand of new Chinese immigrants.

Today, most Chinese language schools are weekend schools and usually take two hours per week for language instruction. In addition to literacy development, other knowledge, such as Chinese culture, geography, history, and conversation, is taught. The school enrollment is voluntary but on a tuition basis. Children at or above the
kindergarten age are eligible to register and are placed based on age and Chinese language fluency.

According to the Chinese language schools’ administration and educational perspectives, different Chinese schools adopt different policies regarding instruction language usage. Some schools offer flexible curricula and allow teachers to choose appropriate instruction language based on students’ linguistic backgrounds. Some schools encourage teachers to use “Chinese only” and even forbid students from speaking English during class. Both bilingual teachers and students face the dilemma in terms of language choice. Parents often demand Chinese teachers not to speak any English to their children during class, since they believe that pure Chinese immersion instruction benefits their children, and the Chinese teachers’ English accent may affect their children’s English acquisition. However, “avoiding code-switching means suppressing one of the most important characteristics of being bilingual” (Li & Wu, 2008, p. 229).

Code-switching between Chinese and English in the United States

In the United States, most studies with respect to language alternation focus on linguistic behaviors between English and Spanish or other alphabetic languages rather than linguistic behaviors of code-switching between Chinese and English (Poplack, 1980; Reyes, 2004; Valdés-Fallis, 1976; Zentella, 1997). Little research has been conducted in the field of Chinese/English language alternation and few corresponding linguistic behaviors were observed and analyzed (Liang, 2006; Ruan, 2003; Wu, 1990).
In such discourse analyses, consistent and comparative methods and sociolinguistic questionnaires were often employed to identify primary patterns of language usage among Chinese/English bilinguals with respect to speech, writing activities, and factors that influence their linguistic choices (Ruan, 2003; Wu, 1990). Ruan (2003) pointed out that interlocutors involved in the discourse, identification of culture relevant topics, and quotation of teacher’s utterances influence bilingual children’s language choices. She further concluded, “young bilingual Chinese/English children code-switched during their speech in order to realize different functions, such as social function, pragmatic function, and meta-linguistic function” (Ruan, 2003, p. 146). Compared with previous classic research, Romaine (1995) proposed researchers had different ways to assign a specific meaning to every instance of code-switching in terms of the functional aspects (Romaine, 1995). In terms of social functions mentioned in Ruan’s study (2003), Gumperz (1982) also had a similar statement in his work. Gumperz pointed out “contextualization cues:” “Code-switching signals contextual information equivalent to what in monolingual settings is conveyed through prosody or other syntactic or lexical processes. It generates the presuppositions in terms of which the content what is said is decoded” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 98).

Gumperz proposed that discourse function played an important role in code-switching. Bilinguals chose which language they wanted to use during conversation. They switched languages depending on the situations and the cognitive requirements of the tasks. Heller (1992) believed code-switching had a pragmatic function when she
conducted the research about the use of French and English in Ontario and Quebec (Canada) (Heller, 1992). Heller regarded code-switching as a political strategy to express an individual’s ethnic mobilization. The metalinguistic function of code-switching in Ruan’s study (2003) referred to the teacher’s preference to explain a new concept in Chinese and then explain it again in English to guarantee the student understood the instructions. This function was also studied by Appel and Muyken (1987). Appel and Muysken (1987) provided a definition of metalinguistic function of code-switching: “by using language the speakers’ attitude towards and awareness of language use and linguistic norms are made known” (Appel & Muysken, 1987, p. 30). They suggested this function could be found in many public domains, including performers, circus directors, and market salespeople (Appel & Muysken, 1987).

Moreover, code-switching is a channel to represent minority people’s identity in a multicultural society. Through investigating high school Chinese immigrant students’ code-switching practices in an ESL class, Liang (2006) drew a conclusion that Chinese/English bilingual students faced a dilemma when they got involved in code-switching practices in class. She further indicated that the relationship between language and identity is very complicated and even conflicting for bilinguals. The research showed Chinese immigrant students “expressed their multiple and contradictory feelings about speaking Chinese and English in class,” and they felt unhappy when they spoke English with each other during group activity (Liang, 2006, p. 155).
Researchers also actively studied Chinese/English code-switching in writing activities (Ruan, 2003; Wu, 1990). Through conducting a sociolinguistic survey, Wu found that the “existence of a diglossia situation in different writing activities in the Chinese community (with English in the high domains of education and employment, and Chinese in the low domains of family and friendship)” (Wu, 1990, p. 1). Wu adopted categories of code-switching functions proposed in the work of Gumperz (1977), Valdes-Fallis (1976), and McClure (1981), including quotation, addressesee specification, interjection, repetition, message qualification, personalization vs. objectification, emphasis or contrast, narration, and performulation. Wu claimed they are the factors of bilinguals’ language selection (Wu, 1990).

Interpretational Analysis

Interpretational analysis was adopted as the primary data analysis method. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (1999), “interpretational analysis involves a systematic set of procedures to code and classify qualitative data to ensure that the important constructs, themes, and patterns emerge” (p. 298). The steps illustrated by Gall et al. (1999) are described below. The procedure for applying the Interpretational Analysis method consists of six steps. First, a data set that includes field notes, records, documents and transcripts is created. Second, each line of this data set is numerated and divided into segments based on meaning. Third, coding is applied to categorical segments accordingly. Next, each segment of documented transcripts is assigned with a category. Then, groups are segmented by the same numerical category code among segments and
categories that have been developed. Lastly, yield constructs developed from a given
category are generated. Then, the researcher compares various categories based on their
specific meanings to decide the most important category concerning the study. “Constant
comparison is a technique that allows the researchers to identify empirical indicators that
may be found in the data” (Cowan, 2004, p. 209).

Summary

The literature review emphasizes the importance of code-switching practices
embedded in bilingual children’s conversation. Bilinguals apply code-switching as
strategies to satisfy their discourse need even though code-switching is not imperfect
speech. Through the systematic review of literature, I discovered that Chinese parents
expected their children keep their home language and culture. The majority of Chinese
parents send their children to Chinese language schools because they believe it is a good
way to help their children learn and practice Chinese in an educational and formal
environment. As a result, heritage school is an ideal place to conduct research concerning
language alternation. However, I noticed the scarcity of research literature concerning
the code-switching practice between Chinese and English in the U.S. educational context.
It was especially true in the heritage language school context, as only one study was
conducted regarding the topic of code-switching between Chinese and English.
Nevertheless, the target participant of that research was only one child so it could easily
yield biased results.
Through a complete search of scholarly materials about language alternation, the study of code-switching practices between Chinese and English has been quite limited. Currently, the increased number of Chinese immigrants has drawn the attention to Chinese language study and the need to study language alternation between Chinese and English so as to enrich the literature about code-switching.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This research study adopted a socio-linguistic descriptive design investigating the code-switching practices among four second-grade Chinese-English bilingual children enrolled in a weekend Chinese heritage language school. This study was conducted at the Hope Chinese Language School in a Northern California university community to investigate, specifically, the types of code-switching students employed with their peers and teacher. The primary data collection method was audio-taping the conversation of peer-to-peer and teacher-to-student communications during class and playtime. In addition, the research identified participants’ code-switching functions, including “crutching,” “translation,” and “emphasis,” as described by Zentella (1997). The discussions and conversations were audio-taped and transcribed for documentation and analysis. Interpretative and contrastive analyses are the prime analytical frames.

The Teacher and the Researcher

Since I was the teacher of the classroom, I was able to take an insider’s perspective to conduct this research. Being a native Chinese speaker and bilingual in English provided opportunities not available to monolingual researchers. Specifically, it allowed me to explore and interpret bilingual and bicultural issues in the Chinese-English educational settings from an insider’s perspective and allowed me to “understand[s] the cognitive, emotional, and/or psychological precepts of participants as well as possess a more profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field.”
Whenever I have spoken to American-born Chinese bilingual school children, I discovered an interesting phenomenon, code-switching, the ability to effortlessly combine English and Chinese when communicating with peers and others. Code-switching is not as common with Chinese individuals in Taiwan, even when they are bilingual. Consequently, this sparked an interest in investigating this interesting and unique communicative style/form. Moreover, the scarcity of research literature with this particular language group in the U.S. context enabled me to explore a novel research methodological design. Most research in this field focuses on code-switching between two alphabetic languages, such as Spanish and English; however, the literature on Chinese/English code-switching is scarce. As a result, I attempted to address the following research questions in this thesis.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study include:

1. What types of code-switching were employed in conversations by four six-to seven-year-old bilingual Chinese-English students in a weekend Chinese heritage language school?

2. What functions of conversational interactions were employed by these four bilingual students?
Setting

The data analyzed in this study was obtained from classroom instruction conversations at the Hope Chinese Language School. This Chinese language school runs on an extracurricular schedule on Sundays from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. during the entire school year. In addition to literacy development, other subjects, such as Chinese culture, geography, history, and conversation, are taught. The enrollment is voluntary with tuition required. Children at or above the kindergarten age are eligible to register and are placed based on age and Chinese language fluency. The majority of students are the children of immigrant graduate students, researchers, and faculty residing in the university community, but the school also attracts students from neighboring communities as well. This Chinese heritage language school provides educational services to children from kindergarten to the ninth grade. Students of Hope Chinese Language School are expected to respect teachers and classmates; obey teachers’ instructions, requirements, and rules; actively participate in class; and independently accomplish assignments on time.

The data collection period for this research project lasted approximately three months (September-November 2011). During this three-month period, nine data collection sessions were conducted in class with each session lasting approximately two hours. The entire classroom instruction was audio-recorded, which included textbook instruction and 30 minutes of classroom discussion activities. The activities were designed according to textbook content and the approved Hope Chinese Language School
curriculum. The researcher created small group pods with two students per group. Each pod was given group study topics based on the Hope Chinese Language School curriculum and what was of interest to them. For example, I provided handouts with fruit names and then encouraged the students to find them on the sheet and discuss prompt questions, such as “What is your favorite fruit?”, “What kinds of fruit are sweet?”, and “What kinds of fruit are sour?” The students were also asked to work together to figure out questions from the textbook, such as ___的尾巴长长的 (___’s tail is very long.) Students were then asked to fill out the blanks. All the student classroom activities were under the teacher’s supervision and were subject to the Code of Hope Chinese Language School Academic Conduct.

Participants

The target participants were Grade 2 bilingual Chinese-English students and were selected from the Hope Chinese Language School during the 2011-12 academic year. The four students participated on a volunteer basis and signed a consent form (see Appendix A). In addition, parent permission requests were also required (see Appendix B). Since I recorded the entire two hours of classroom activities and all the language activities took place during these regular two-hour sessions, all the students were required to participate. However, those students in the class not participating in the research were grouped together and not recorded.

Four students actively participated in this study. All the students were Chinese-English bilingual students. The four participants were born, raised, and educated in the
United States. In addition, they were fluent Chinese-English speakers with Chinese as their native home language and English as the dominant language.

Table 1

Summary of Student Participants Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Length of Years in U.S.</th>
<th>Dominant Language at Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Native</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongdong</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Native</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingting</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Native</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Native</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis Methods

In this section, a concrete example is described to illustrate how the researcher analyzed the data by adopting the Interpretational Analysis method (Gall et al., 1999). According to Gall et al. (1999), the procedure of applying the Interpretational Analysis starts with coding and data classification. The first step was audio-recording the two-hour sessions on school days. The second step was to transcribe any information related to the code-switching practices. For example, when I instructed students to write Chinese characters or told stories to students, there were no code-switching practices involved. The third step was to numerate each section sequentially and then divide the text into meaningful segments. An example of the Separate Segment is shown below:

Teacher: 加油你们会写“加油”吗？你们知道是什么意思吗？
(Can you write “good luck” in Chinese? Do you know what the meaning of “good luck” is?)

Dongdong： 加油就像那个 give me some good luck。  
(The meaning of “good luck” is to “give me some good luck”.)

The fourth step was to develop meaningful categories to code the data. This was designed for the purpose of addressing one of the research questions: “What types of code-switching were used in the classroom conversations of bilingual Chinese-English students in a weekend Chinese language school?” I identified four types of code-switching practices in the data, such as tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and borrowing (Zentella, 1997). The following example illustrates an example of inter-sentential switching; this type of switching occurs on the sentence boundary.

Dongdong: 我们都写完了。What shall we do?
(We have finished writing. What shall we do?)

Teacher: 好多事情呢。
(We will do many things later.)

The emergent categories from the text were either from the existing literature, such as “crutching” and “footing” (Zentella, 1997) or created by this study.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS
Interpretational Analyses

This study investigated the English/Mandarin code-switching practice among four native Mandarin-speaking children who enrolled in the second-grade classroom at the Hope Chinese School. Audio taping the peer-to-peer and teacher-to-student conversations was the primary data collection method. The entire data set was collected during weekly two-hour class sessions. Interpretational analysis was the primary analytical frame in this study.

Overview of Code-switching

Code-switching is a common phenomenon in a bilingual and multicultural society. It was defined as “the alternating use of two or more ‘codes’ within one conversation episode,” where codes can be defined as languages or dialects (Auer, 1998, p. 1). In this study, the term “code” primarily refers to two distinct linguistic systems – Chinese and English.

According to Poplack (1980), there are three types of code-switching: tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, and inter-sentential switching. However, Myers-Scotton (1992) believed it is not necessary to distinguish code-switching from borrowing since both concepts are universally relevant processes rather than two different processes. Moreover, other researchers agreed that “efforts to distinguish code-switching, code-mixing, and borrowing are doomed” (Myers-Scotton, 1992, p. 1) and we can “free
ourselves of the need to categorize any instance of seemingly non-native material in language as a borrowing or a switching” (Myers-Scotton, 1992, p. 1). Based on these statements, I categorize four types of code-switching in this study, tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and borrowing.

Tag-switching

Tag-switching, also called extra-sentential switching (Muysken, 1995), requires only a minor integration of two languages. Tag-switching involves inserting a tag or a short fixed phrase expressed in one language into a sentence expressed totally in another language. Tags which are commonly employed in the English conversations include “You know,” “I mean,” and “Wait,” etc.

Intra-sentential Switching

Intra-sentential switching involves switching within a clause or sentence. This type of code-switching, regarded as the most difficult one, requires bilingual learners to fluently speak both languages.

Inter-sentential Switching

Inter-sentential switching involves switching across the boundary of two clauses or sentences, where each clause or sentence is expressed in either of two languages.

Borrowing

The definition of borrowing in linguistics is “embedded elements that have been integrated into the host language” (Pahta, 2004, p. 79).
The Functions of Code-switching

This study followed the research pathway described in Zentella’s (1997) work with respect to functions of code-switching. Through analysis of observed conversations among five girls and their interlocutor in a Puerto Rican community, Zentella concluded many factors commonly regarded as functions of code-switching. In my study, I primarily focused on the declarative/question shift, which means language shift follows a shift into or out of a question (Zentella, 1997). The most frequently practiced conversation strategy observed in my study, crutching, occurred whenever “the speaker did not remember or know the switched word(s)” (Zentella, 1997, p. 97). This linguistic element often occurs in the format of a few short phrases, which particularly suits the bilingual schoolchildren in my study.

“Translation” was another primary conversation strategy observed in my study in that speakers shifted to another language to translate an expression, such as a statement or a question. A translation can be exactly the same as or slightly different from the original meaning (Zentella, 1997). Another observed conversation strategy, clarification and emphasis, enabled bilingual participants to effectively and efficiently express their viewpoints in two ways (Zentella, 1997). The last one is one category from Appel and Muysken’s work (1987), which is “expressive function.” Chinese American bilingual students were found to conduct code-switching practices when they were in the extreme moods, in which case they preferred to switch to their primary language, English, to express their feelings promptly.
Student Profiles

Four students were recruited as the target participants in this research. Although all of them were born in the United States and spoke English and Chinese fluently, their frequencies of applying code-switching during class time and recess period were significantly different.

Kate

Kate is a six-year-old Chinese American girl born in the United States. She kept hair in bangs and had two ponytails and had the greatest confidence among participants. She liked to wear a dress or skirt in class. From a linguistic perspective, Kate was a typical Chinese American child with English as her dominant language and Chinese as her home language. She spoke modestly fluent Chinese, which was not as fluent and idiomatic as her English. Specifically, the way she spoke Chinese was fast and combined with pauses and fillers to logically link sentences.

Both parents of this only child had doctorate degrees and worked as research assistants at a local university. Both parents were native Chinese speakers. She was also an attentive and active learner. She demonstrated her capability of concentration on class instruction and discussions. She quickly responded to questions and actively engaged in all kinds of classroom activities. Kate also enjoyed sharing her personal life with me, for example, her favorite toy, her birthday party, and the way she celebrated Halloween. She took her popularity in the eyes of parents, teachers, and peers for granted and often imagined herself as the leading role in any circumstance. She tended to perform, imitate,
or use body language when she was in high spirits. Among the four participants, she showed the highest frequency of employing code-switching practices.

*Dongdong*

Dongdong is also a six-year-old Chinese American girl born in the United States. Her father of two children was a professor at a local university. Both parents were native Chinese speakers. She was a naughty but very talented girl. The fact that she could recite a great number of classic Chinese poems proved her a surprising talent. She believed she looked like Snow White, her favorite cartoon character, due to the same hair color and style, which gives us a hint of egoism. She enjoyed story time and was very quiet when she paid full attention to storytelling activities. She was a very supportive peer in the group activities. She and Kate were close friends so they preferred to participate in small group discussions together. She also spoke English and Chinese fluently. She preferred English as her primary language to Chinese as her home language.

*Tingting*

Tingting is a seven-year-old Chinese American girl born in the United States. She is a fluent Chinese-English bilingual speaker with Chinese as the native language and English as the dominant language. She is skinny and average looking girl with a smile on her face at all times and long hair. Her father worked as a science assistant at a local university. Both parents were native Chinese speakers. She had an elder brother, a 12th-grade student at a local senior high school. She went back to China for vacation in the
summer of 2011, which gave her advantages over other participants in terms of the Chinese language. Tingting had adequate knowledge of Chinese culture, arts, sports, and music. She even knew how to play a few authentic Chinese sports, such as diabolo and shuttlecock. She enjoyed drawing to the extent that whenever she finished assignments in class she always asked for permission to draw on the whiteboard.

*Ming*

Ming is a seven-year-old boy born in the United States. He looks skinny and small but energetic, which makes it difficult for him to sit still through the whole class session. His family education background was also impressive: his father held a master’s degree and his mother held a doctorate degree. Both parents were native Chinese speakers. He had a four-year-old younger brother. According to conversations with his father, Ming practiced a modest number of code-switchings at home; but his younger brother could not speak Chinese at all. My class was often entertained by his funny jokes, which demonstrated his open-minded personality.

He enjoyed sharing a lot in class, including his personal life and his family. Since English was his dominant language, he preferred to talk to peers in English even if they ought to learn Chinese in the Chinese school. He enjoyed helping others once he finished his assignments in class. Occasionally, he also requested help from peers to finish classroom activities.
Overview of Participants’ Code-switching Usage

All four code-switching types, tag, intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and borrowing, were found in this study. Borrowing (93 times) was the most frequent type of code-switching employed by these Chinese American bilingual students. Tag-switching was the second in terms of frequency of occurrences. Kate was the most active child in this study with respect to employing code-switching practices. She practiced 95 total code-switchings, which could be attributed to her active involvement in all kinds of classroom activities. In other words, Kate had more opportunities than other students to engage in Chinese utterances. Tingting employed only three code-switchings during the entire study. She spoke Chinese very fluently and knew how to express her thoughts in Chinese in most occurrences, which led her to not fully engage in Chinese-English bilingual code-switching. The reason she spoke Chinese very fluently might be that she just spent her summer vacation in China, which motivated her to speak Chinese completely in class without needing to practice code-switching. Dongdong and Ming showed relatively equal frequency levels of code-switching in this study, 38 and 24, respectively.
Table 2

*Summary of Participant’s Code-switching Usage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tag switching</th>
<th>Intra-sentential switching</th>
<th>Inter-sentential switching</th>
<th>Borrowing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongdong</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tag-switching Practices

*Kate*

Kate employed 27 tag-switchings during nine sessions (inventions in this study).

Some representative examples follow.

Kate: 他们觉得。。他们就觉得,像那个,不那个, like,不像。。like, 不喜欢他们自己,是什么样。和那个,然后他们那个, change…
(They feel that they do not like themselves. And they change…)

In this example, Kate used a tag—like—two times to combine her sentences to make the utterance smoothly. This kind of tag-switching involves a sentence filler.

During a storytelling activity, Kate attempted to re-tell a story in which two boys tried to exchange their personal belongings with each other, since both thought the other person’s belongings were much better than their own. In such activities, Kate always responded to
questions very quickly without much hesitation. In other words, she did not spend much
time thinking about her answers. As a result, as illustrated in this example, apparently
she did not organize and express her idea in a very clear and fluent manner.

Moreover, she even translated “like” into “像” (like) three times to integrate her
sentences. This is a very interesting linguistic phenomenon since “像” (like) is not
considered a sentence filler in Chinese. Therefore, it makes no sense that Kate inserted
this word into a sentence expressed in both Chinese and English, even though “Like” is a
casual, informal, and common colloquial form of speech in the United States. Kate, a
six-year-old Chinese American girl, to some extent, has already skillfully mastered the
American style of colloquial speech. However, she did not have enough opportunities to
be exposed to Chinese-speaking context except the weekly two-hour Chinese class at this
Chinese language school. From this example we may get a hint that English has already
become her primary language.

Another example of Kate’s use of tags was that she employed conjunctions in her
speech to connect two clauses.

Kate: 我爸近视了。。。 or 你在读书，你在黑里时候，也能近视，因为没有
灯。So 我妈和爸总是 make sure 我必须得开三个灯。
(My daddy is nearsighted. Whenever you read in a dark place, you can also
become nearsighted because there is no lamp. So my mummy and daddy always
make sure that whenever I read I must turn on three lamps.)

In this example, Kate applied two conjunction words (or, so) to connect two
clauses. Another one, make sure, is a short fixed phase inserted in the sentence to
emphasize her expression. This utterance happened in a storytelling activity. The protagonist of that story was a boy who wears glasses. Kate connected her personal life with this story character by talking about how her father became nearsighted and how her parents protect her eyes. Kate enjoyed talking a lot about her personal life in class and actively engaged in class discussions.

In the following example, Kate employed a typical English tag: OK.

Kate: 冰箱咋写啊？
(How to write refrigerator?)

Tingting: 你可以画一个。
(You can draw one.)

Kate: OK，我画一个。
(I will draw one.)

In this example, Kate used a tag—OK—to respond to another girl’s suggestion.

Kate and Tingting were grouped to finish a worksheet project. There was a puzzle with respect to a refrigerator. However, both girls did not know how to write refrigerator in Chinese due to the limited vocabulary taught in class. Tingting suggested Kate draw a picture of refrigerator to solve the puzzle. OK was the most frequent employed tag-switching word in this study. This kind of switching can be labeled as discursive since the occurrences are of more of an impulsive nature (Qian et al., 2009).

Kate also tended to use a tag—wait—when she asked the interlocutor for more time to think about questions. Here is a representative example:

Teacher: 上个学期你们参加读书竞赛，但是最后你们没有领那个奖品的有嘛？
(Is there anyone who attended the book fair last year but did not get the prize?)

Dongdong: 领啥奖品？
(What is the prize?)

Teacher: 应该是一个小的奖杯。
(It should be a small medal.)

Kate: Wait。我那个 last year, 我们有。我放我钢琴上了。
(I had one last year and I put it on my piano.)

In this example, Kate employed a tag—wait—to ask the teacher to provide some time for her to respond to the question. At the beginning of the class on October 2, 2011, the teacher asked whether the students had received any prize for a book fair. Since the book fair took place in May 2011, Kate felt the need for more recall time. She paused briefly to think about the question. Speaking “wait” in Chinese in such a context is not polite. If she had expressed “wait” in Chinese, it should have been a non-lexical utterance, for example, “um” or “let me think about it” expressed in Chinese. In this example, Kate used a short and direct word to express her feeling that she needed time to consider that question.

In addition, she also frequently employed “I mean,” “wait a minute,” “actually,” “stop,” “never mind,” “please,” “whatever,” “maybe,” “yeah,” and “but” in her utterances.
Dongdong

Dongdong employed 10 tag-switchings in her utterances during the nine sessions. Here are some representative examples. She preferred to use OK (six times) as a tag in her utterances.

Dongdong: *OK*, you are Helen, I am Xiaoyun, how about this?
(You are Helen; I am Xiaoyun, how about this?)

Kate: 可以啊！
(That is good!)

Dongdong: OK.

In this example, the teacher encouraged students to read the textbook aloud. Dongdong read the textbook with Kate together using the method of role-play reading. Helen and Xiaoyun are two characters in the textbook. Dongdong suggested she act as Xiaoyun and Kate act as Helen. In response to the teacher’s request for reading the textbook, Dongdong said OK. OK in this conversation was an interjection that denoted an agreement.

She also applied—No—(three times) as a tag in her utterances. For example:

Teacher: 那个动画片你看过啦?
(Did you watch that cartoon?)

Dongdong: *No*.不是动画片。是表演的那个。
(That was not a cartoon. It was a performance.)

In this example, the teacher attempted to play a cartoon video for the students. But she was not quite sure whether the students had already watched it before. The
teacher was told Dongdong had watched a relevant performance video but not a cartoon.

Dongdong used No as a tag to emphasize she never watched that cartoon.

*Ming*

Ming utilized three tag-switchings during the nine data-collecting interventions.

Here are some representative examples:

In the following example, Ming employed a representative English tag: Oh, yeah.

Teacher: 你上个星期怎么没来啊?
(Why you did not come to class last week?)

Ming: *Oh, yeah.* 上次我去 Lake Tahoe 了。
(I went to Lake Tahoe last time.)

In this example, Ming used a tag—Oh, yeah—to respond to a question from the teacher. Ming did not come to class on September 25, 2011 so the teacher wanted to know why he was absent on that day. Ming paused for a while and then explained. The tag—Oh, yeah—this utterance was a natural response to answer the question raised by the interlocutor. Ming demonstrated another example of using English tag: I know.

Teacher: 你再喊，你就。。。
(If you shout again, you will...)

Ming: 嗓子疼了, *I know.*
(My throat will hurt.)

In this example, Ming used a tag—I know—to inform the teacher he was fully aware of what the teacher would say. Even though Ming was sick on that day, he still talked a lot just as he behaved before in class, which distracted other students. The teacher intended to remind him that talking loudly in class was not an acceptable behavior
and can possibly hurt his throat since he was sick. Ming was fully aware that talking too much and loudly to other students in class would be reprimanded or even punished by the teacher. As a result, he said I know in a light tone, which showed he had already known he could talk loudly in class anymore.

Intra-sentential Switching Practices

Kate

Kate employed 12 intra-sentential switchings during the nine sessions of data collection. Here is a representative example:

Teacher: 加油你们会写嘛，加油，你们知道是什么意思嘛？
(Can you write good luck in Chinese? Do you know what the meaning of good luck is?)

Kate: 加油就像那个“give me some good luck.”
(Good luck means:)

In this example, the school principal asked students and teachers to write a recovery greeting card to a Chinese graduate student at a local university afflicted with cancer. The teacher instructed the students on how to write good luck in Chinese and made sure they understood the meaning of good luck in Chinese. Kate explained the meaning in English and applied intra-sentential code-switching to her utterance in this case.

Dongdong

Dongdong employed two intra-sentential switchings during the nine sessions. Here is a representative example:
Dongdong: 这个刺猬的刺扎到了小兔子。然后小兔子呢。。。刺猬就对他说，sorry 了。然后呢，乌龟就把刺猬赶走了。（The spine of a hedgehog hurt the bunny. Then the hedgehog said sorry. Then the turtle asked the hedgehog to leave.)

Teacher: 是吗? 是乌龟把刺猬赶走了嘛？她是这么觉得的。还有同学有不同的想法嘛? （Really? Did the turtle ask the hedgehog to leave? Dongdong believed this is true, Are there other thoughts?）

Kate: 我，我，我。看，像那个，这个，四个小动物，那个都在读书，然后他的那个像，这个 hedgehog spine 把这个兔子。。。说“啊噢”。（I think that all of these four animals were reading books. And the hedgehog …that bunny… said ‘ah-oh’.)

In this example, Kate applied an intra-sentential code-switching to express her thought. The students were asked to tell a story based on a picture. Dongdong thought a hedgehog spine hurt the bunny and the turtle asked the hedgehog to leave there.

However, the story should be described as: the turtle sat next to the hedgehog because a turtle’s shell can protect it. Hence, the teacher asked another student, Kate, to re-tell this story.

**Ming**

Ming employed two intra-sentential code-switchings during nine sessions of collection data. Here is a representative example:

Ming: 老师，给我我的那题。我 messed up. (Teacher, give me my quiz. I messed up.)

Teacher: 你写错啦? (Did you make a mistake?)

Ming: 对，我写一个错了。 (Yes, I made one mistake.)
In this example, Ming applied an intra-sentential switching to express his request. He had already submitted his quiz; but later he found that he made a mistake in the quiz. He attempted to ask the teacher to give him a chance to correct.

Inter-sentential Switching Practices

Kate

Kate applied five inter-sentential switchings during the nine sessions. Here is a representative example:

Kate: 我对了一个和你对了一个。
(I solved one and you solved one.)

Dongdong: 什么？
(What?)

Kate: 我对了一个谜语和你对了一个。对吧？So fair.
(I solved a puzzle and you did one as well. Right?)

In this example, Kate employed an inter-sentential switching to comment on her peer’s and her work. The teacher provided some puzzles for students to solve in class. Kate managed to solve one and Dongdong also did one successfully. Kate commented on their work in English, “so fair.” I noticed Chinese American bilingual children in this Chinese school commonly utilized this phrase. I assumed this word was heavily used in their regular school settings. However, they may not have opportunities to speak this word in home language settings, which leads them to not express it in Chinese. Based on
this assumption, I believe this is the reason for her switching to English to express feelings.

Dongdong

Dongdong employed three inter-sentential code-switchings during the nine sessions. Here is a representative example:

Tingting: 高老师我要拿两个 Sticker。 (Miss Gao, I want to get two stickers.)

Dongdong: 我要拿两个 sticker 和一个铅笔。 (I want to get two stickers and one pencil.)

Kate: 我也拿一个 sticker。 (I also want to get a sticker.)

Dongdong: What is this? 我要一个粉色的橡皮。我要 Snow White。她是 我 最喜欢的。 (I want to get a pink eraser. I want to get the Snow White one. She is my favorite.)

In this example, Dongdong applied an inter-sentential switching to express her curiosity. After a class session, the teacher would like to award well-behaved students with some stationery. Dongdong expressed her curiosity about erasers. She asked a question in English first and then raised her demand of the award. From my observations, Dongdong tended to say, “what is this?” in such occurrences. I assume that speaking this sentence in English first is one of her lingual habits.

Ming

Ming employed three inter-sentential code-switchings during the nine sessions. Here is a representative example:
Teacher: 下面我们来写点东西。
(Let us write something.)

Ming: 不要！I am so tired.
(No!)

In this example, Ming employed an inter-sentential switching. The teacher asked students to write some Chinese characters to review what they had learned from the previous class session. However, Ming felt tired and bored since the class had already lasted for over 30 minutes. Hence, he refused to do this activity. He said no in Chinese at first and then code-switched to his dominant language to emphasize and explain his reason.

Borrowing Practices

Kate

Kate employed 51 borrowings during the nine sessions. Here is a representative example:

Kate: 你有一个白色的plain的纸嘛？我想画画。
(Do you have a piece of white plain paper? I want to draw.)

In this case, the teacher postponed a class session for a few minutes due to some absent students. Kate felt bored so she asked for a piece of white plain paper to draw something. When she described the paper, she borrowed a word—plain—from English.

In the following example, Kate employed borrowing to express her thought.

Kate: 老师，这是什么?
(Teacher, what is this?)

Teacher: 是谜语。
(It is a puzzle.)

Kate: 谜语是不是 “puzzle”? 
(Is it called "puzzle" in English?)

Teacher: 是，差不多。 
(Yes.)

In this case, the teacher provided some Chinese puzzles for the students. The teacher handed out some worksheets with respect to Chinese puzzles. Kate was merely able to recognize a limited number of Chinese characters on the worksheets. She raised her questions regarding the content of worksheets. After the teacher told her the worksheets were relevant to Chinese puzzles, Kate borrowed an English term to confirm her understanding.

Dongdong

Dongdong employed 23 borrowings during the nine sessions. Here is a representative example:

Dongdong: 在英语里呢。。。 
(In English…)

Teacher: 你不能说英语。不能告诉她。 
(You cannot tell her the answer in English.)

Dongdong: 在英语里呢，是一个“R”开头。我没有告诉她，我就是给她一个clue。 
(The first alphabet is an R in English. I did not tell her the answer. I just give her a clue.)

In this example, Dongdong solved a puzzle quickly so the teacher reminded her of not telling other classmates the answer to the puzzle in English. By borrowing a
word from English, she explained she did not release the answer but just provided a clue to help her friends.

*Tingting*

Tingting applied three borrowings during nine sessions. Here is a representative example:

*Tingting:* 是不是 *volcano*?  
(Is that a volcano?)

In this example, the teacher provided a Chinese puzzle to the students. By borrowing a word from English, Tingting made a guess of the answer. Tingting tended not to practice the code-switching based on the researcher’s observations in this study. Hence, I assume that in this case she did not know how to say volcano in Chinese. She borrowed a word from English for the purpose of expressing her thought smoothly.

*Ming*

Ming employed 16 borrowings during the nine sessions. Here is a representative example:

*Ming:* 这个不好看，没有 *picture*. 只有字。  
(This is not interesting because there is no picture but some characters.)

In this example, the teacher provided a Chinese cartoon picture for the students. Ming felt that it was not interesting. He borrowed a word from English to express his feeling.
The Functions of Code-switching in a Weekend Chinese Language School

A. Declarative/Questions Shift

Kate: 我们都写完了。What shall we do?
(We have finished what we should write.)

Teacher: 好多事情呢。
(There are a lot of things remaining.)

In this example, Kate finished a worksheet assignment in class, while other students had not yet finished. Kate ought to wait until other students finished. However, she felt bored and shifted the language from Chinese to English to raise a question: “what shall we do?” She intended to draw attention from the teacher for the purpose of having the teacher assign an interesting activity to her.

B. Crutching

Kate: 就是像，青蛙找不到妈妈了。
(Just like, the frog cannot find their mummy.)

Teacher: 是青蛙嘛?
(Are they called frog?)

Kate: 像那个 tadpole。
(Like, tadpole.)

Teacher: 青蛙的小时候叫什么?
(What is name of a frog when it is in juvenile form?)

Tingting: 蝌蚪。
(Tadpole.)

Kate: 像那些蝌蚪找不到妈妈，然后像游走了找妈妈。
(Those tadpoles could not find their mom. Then they swam away to find their mom.)
In this example, Kate switched to the word, tadpole, in English. I assume that in this case, Kate temporarily forgot how to say tadpole in Chinese. After watching a video, Kate was eager to share her thoughts and re-tell the story based on that video. The word tadpole in Chinese had been repeated many times in the cartoon video, Little Tadpoles Found Their Mommy. Since tadpole was the protagonist of that cartoon, Kate must have learned this vocabulary; but this word was too new for her to be utilized in a Chinese conversation. Another girl, Tingting, reminded Kate of this word in Chinese. Kate was able to quickly recall the word. In addition, she particularly stressed this word in Chinese when she organized her next speech. Based on such evidence, I suppose Kate knew the word tadpole in Chinese, but she temporarily forgot how to express it in Chinese at that moment.

In the following example, Dongdong employed code-switching to present the function of crutching.

Dongdong: 苹果是甜的，桃子是甜的，西瓜是甜的，banana 是甜的。 (Apple is sweet; peach is sweet; watermelon is sweet; banana is sweet.)

In this example, the teacher asked students to answer questions based on a handout. The question was, “which kind of fruits is sweet?” Some fruit pictures were provided on the handout sheet. Dongdong named three fruits in Chinese, including apple, peach, and watermelon. However, she switched to English to say “banana.” I believe Dongdong knew how to say banana in Chinese since banana is a common word in daily life and her parents must have already taught her how to express it in Chinese.
Another concrete example of her mentioning banana in Chinese in the past class sessions also proved this crutching code-switching.

One example of Tingting’s use of code-switching for the function of crutching:

Tingting: 老师，他说 party pooper。
(Teacher, he said…)

In this example, Tingting and another student chatted in a low voice in class. The teacher was not able to clearly hear what they said. Tingting informed the teacher of one word—party pooper—in their conversation. Tingting thought she was offended by this word and decided to report another student’s classroom misbehavior. I assume Tingting did not know how to express this term in Chinese given the following reasons: a direct translation of this term from English to Chinese is beyond her vocabulary and the usage of this term in both languages is rare.

Ming: 7 点钟了，他在看 newspaper。
(It is seven o’clock. He is reading a newspaper.)

In this example, Ming told a story based on a picture. The reason why he switched the language to English is not clear. Zentella mentioned, “not every switch was purposefully clear in its communicative intent” (Zentella, 1997, p. 97). Zentella also listed the reasons why not every switch was clear:

They were precipitated by the need for a word or expression in the other language, by a momentary loss for words, by a previous speaker’s switch, by the desire to repair a poor syntactic break, by taboo words, and by the cross linguistic homophones that Clyne (1967) called triggers. (Zentella, 1997, p. 97)
In this case, Ming might temporarily forget how to say newspaper in Chinese so he switched his language to English. It was also possible he copied the utterance of the previous student, Kate, on how to express newspaper. Kate told a story based on the same picture and said “他爸爸就是看 newspaper” (his father is just reading a newspaper). Today, newspaper is not as popular as before in comparison with other public media that are more attractive and convenient for the younger generations, such as the Internet and television. This is also true for Chinese immigration families. Although there are a few Chinese newspapers in the study region, most Chinese immigrant families get their news from the Internet. Bilingual students might not use this word every day so it was likely for them to temporarily forget how to express this word. Meanwhile, there is no evidence to show whether the students had enough Chinese vocabulary so it was also possible the students did not know how to say newspaper in Chinese at all.

C. Translation

Kate: 什么是植物啊？
(What is this plant?)

Teacher: 植物就是像草啊, 蔬菜啊都属于植物。
(Grass and vegetables belong to flora.)

Kate: 就是像绿的, green 的, 那些东西。
(Those are green things.)

In this example, Kate did not understand what a plant was and asked the definition of a plant. After the teacher explained it to her, she understood and attempted to describe it with her own words. She said green in Chinese at first and then switched to English for
the purpose of translating. I believe she was making efforts to reinforce her understanding of this new Chinese word.

Ming showed an example of functions of code-switching: translation.

Ming: 老师，你有没有 scissor? 有没有剪刀?
(Teacher, do you have a pair of scissors? Do you have a pair of scissors?)

Teacher: 没有。
(No.)

In this example, Ming asked the teacher whether she had a pair of scissors at hand since he wanted to cut something. He said the word in English first and quickly repeated the question in Chinese. The reason for this language switching might be that he thought the teacher probably did not understand that word in English or that speaking English was not expected in the Chinese language class, especially when he needed to draw the teacher’s attention to fulfill his request.

D. Crutching/Emphasis

Code-switching for the purpose of emphasis takes place when Chinese American bilingual students express their thoughts more clearly. Here are some representative examples:

Kate: 那你写拼音行吗? Please, please, please.
(Can you write Pinyin?)

Dongdong: 我最不喜欢拼音。No, No!
(Pinyin is the last thing that I like.)

In this example, the teacher conducted classroom instructions with respect to new Chinese characters. Students were required to find and circle some characters in their
textbooks; meanwhile, the teacher also wrote them on the whiteboard. The Pinyin (which means phonetics in English) romanization system was developed in China in 1954. Some students, for example Kate, relied heavily on Pinyin to learn Chinese characters by which she was able to read with the aid of pronunciation. This kind of learning process shares similarities with English language acquisition. Some students, for example Dongdong, just acquired limited Chinese character knowledge before enrollment; however, their parents must not have taught them Pinyin to the extent that students could differentiate Pinyin from English or pronounce Chinese characters with the aid of Pinyin. In this example, Kate expected the teacher to write Pinyin on the whiteboard. Therefore, she switched to English to stress her request. However, Dongdong did not want to see Pinyin on the whiteboard and disagreed with Kate’s request. Moreover, Kate insisted her thought by repeating, “please” three times and Dongdong did similarly with two nos. Both students involved in this conversation code-switched to English to emphasize their strong opinions, which confirmed Gumperz’s description that the purpose of code-switching in the case of repeating what has been said is clarification or emphasis of a message (Gumperz, 1982).

An example of Dongdong’s use of code-switching for the purpose of emphasis:

Dongdong: *What is this?* 这是什么啊？这是什么啊？
(What is this? What is this?)

Teacher: 这是测验。
(This is a quiz.)
In this example, Dongdong noticed the teacher brought some paper to class, which raised her curiosity. At the beginning of her utterance, Dongdong used English to raise the question and switched to Chinese to emphasize her intention that she was in a Chinese language class and wanted to know what those papers were prepared for.

Another example of Dongdong’s use of code-switching for the purpose of emphasis is:

Teacher: 要不要告诉你们？
(Do you need the answer?)

Dongdong: No! 不要告诉我们。
(Do not tell us.)

In this example, the students had been solving a puzzle for a long time in class; however, they still were unable to find the answer. The teacher wanted to terminate that classroom activity by providing the answer. Dongdong enjoyed solving puzzles and was reluctant to give up. She responded aloud in English to emphasize her need for extra time solving the puzzle.

E. Expressive

Dongdong: 都弄完了。我能去帮别人嘛？
(I have done all the assignments. Can I help other persons?)

Teacher: 可以。
(Of course.)

Dongdong: 好啊。我最喜欢干，我最喜欢干。
(That is so great! I love to help! I love to help!)

Kate: Yeah！我能帮了，我写完了！
(I can help. I finished!)
Teacher: 可以，可以。
(Of course. Of course.)

Kate: Who needs help?

Dongdong: Who needs help?

In this example, Dongdong finished her worksheet first and asked the teacher for permission to help other students. When Dongdong was allowed to do so, Kate also wanted to join. Kate switched to English to express her excitement. I assume Chinese American bilingual students preferred to use their primary language to express their extreme mood. Another example also confirmed that Chinese American bilingual students tended to switch to English—their primary language—for expressing extreme moods.

Kate: 嗯？山楂片？Yummy!
(What? Haw flakes?)

Teacher: 你喜欢吃？
(Do you like it?)

Kate: 我特别特别喜欢吃！
(I like it very much!)

Teacher: 那不是很酸吗？(Isn’t the taste sour?)

Kate: 我不觉得酸。山楂片。我觉得挺甜的。Yummy! 我妈车里有。
(I do not think it tastes sour. I think haw flakes are sweet. There are some in my mom’s car.)

In this example, Kate switched to English twice to express how she loved to eat haw flake. The teacher asked another student not to eat food in class. Kate overheard the
word in Chinese—haw flake—that is one of her favorite fruit snacks and code-switched to English to express her feelings. Haw flake is an authentic Chinese fruit snack, which is hard to find in American markets. Kate insisted on utilizing English to express her feelings, which demonstrated that Chinese American bilingual students tended to switch to English in order to express their extreme emotions.

Review of This Analysis

The data collection in this study consisted of nine sessions from September 18, 2011 to November 13, 2011. Kate, Dongdong, and Ming attended eight sessions, while Tingting attended nine sessions. Kate was the most active student who practiced 27 tag-switchings, 12 intra-sentential switchings, five inter-sentential switchings, and 51 borrowings. From the researcher’s observations, Kate was an outgoing girl and quite open to any topic in class. Moreover, since her Chinese was not as fluent as her English, she preferred to pause between sentences, which brought more opportunities for code-switching. Tingting did only three borrowings during the entire nine interventions. Unlike Kate, Tingting’s Chinese is equally fluent as her English. In her Chinese conversations, she seldom paused or added any filler. Her adequate Chinese language knowledge enabled her to express her thoughts solely in one language, which led to a few code-switching practices. This also reflects that bilingual knowledge does affect one’s employment of code-switching. Dongdong did 10 tag-switchings, two intra-sentential switchings, three inter-sentential switchings, and 23 borrowings. Ming did three tag-
switchings, two intra-sentential switchings, three inter-sentential switchings, and 16 borrowings.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

This research examined the code-switching practices among four second-grade English-Chinese bilingual students who study at a weekend heritage Chinese language school. This qualitative case study investigated the types and conversational functions of code-switching in the heritage language classroom. According to U.S. decennial census statistics, the population of Asians and Pacific Islanders living in the United States increased by 290.7% between 1980 and 2007 (Shin & Kominski, 2010). Moreover, the Chinese language has become the second most commonly spoken non-English language in the United States with a population of more than 2 million speakers (Shin & Kominski, 2010). Researchers have found that as China rapidly grows its economy and effective global political leadership, more Americans have realized the importance of learning the Chinese language and culture (McGinnis, 2005; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). However, there are only a few U.S. studies focusing on Chinese children’s home language learning experiences (Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). The purpose of this thesis was to describe the phenomenon of code-switching in Chinese-American bilingual children’s conversational discourse in a heritage language school.

Findings

The interpretive analysis method was the primary methodological approach adopted in this thesis. Through nine sessions of data collection, the results revealed
Chinese American bilingual students employed four types of code-switching and incorporated five functions of usage.

Four types of code-switching were observed in the Chinese-English bilingual children’s discourse. Specifically, they employed tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and borrowing. Borrowing was found 93 times, which was the most frequent type of code-switching practiced by the target participants. Nouns were found to be the easiest type of words for Chinese bilingual children to borrow from English (i.e., puzzle, lake, tadpole). Such a phenomenon confirmed other researchers’ findings that nouns have been the most frequently borrowed in code-switching (Muysken, 1995; Peñalosa, 1980). Tag-switching (practiced 40 times) was the second most frequent employed type of code-switching. Intra-sentential switching was observed 16 times, and inter-sentential switching occurred 11 times.

Kate was the most active target student in my research in terms of applying code-switching practices. She was very vocal and energetic in class. She employed 95 code-switches in total. She was the most bilingual and demonstrated the highest fluency in Chinese and English among the four target participants. The relationship between bilingual code-switching and language proficiency has been well-studied (Genesee, 2002; Reyes, 2004). Genesee (2002) concluded, “the number of instances of ‘code-switching’ can be interpreted to reflect the child’s developing communicative competence” (Genesee, 2002, p. 190). In addition, Reyes (2004) supported, “those speakers with the greatest degree of bilingual communicative competence are the ones who most frequently
use CS [code-switching] as a strategy to meet their conversational goals and to communicate with their peers” (Reyes, 2004, p. 93). Consequently, Kate’s code-switching frequency usage is a strong indicator of her overall communicative competence in two languages.

Five functions of code-switching were found in this study. Respectively, they are code-switching for declarative/question shift, crutching, translation, clarification/emphasis, and expressive (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Reyes, 2004; Zentella, 1997).

1. Declarative/Question shift code-switching means that switching to another language happened when children attempted to ask a question. For example: 我们都写完了。What shall we do? (We have finished what we should write.)

2. Crutching code-switching was noted when students could not remember or recognize the switching word(s), switching to the other language happened. For example: 像那个tadpole. (Like, tadpole.)

3. Translation code-switching was employed by the students when they shifted to another language so as to translate a statement or a question. For example, 就是像绿的, green的, 那些东西。 (Those are green things.)

4. Clarification/Emphasis code-switching was used to express their thoughts more clearly. For example: 我最不喜欢拼音。No, No! (Pinyin is the last thing that I like.)

5. Expressive code-switching appeared when bilingual speakers emphasized their feelings by switching to another language. Yeah! 我能帮了，我写完了！ (I can help, I finished!)
This study clearly highlights that code-switching did not necessarily suggest bilingual speakers were linguistically deficient, even if they actively engaged in code-switching (Reyes, 2004; Ruan, 2003; Yoon, 1996; Zentella, 1997). Educators should understand that this way of communicating is commonly utilized by bilingual students to satisfy their discourse needs (Ruan, 2003).

Research Constraints

This study may yield limited results due to the restricted research design. This is a preliminary study of four Chinese American bilingual children at a weekend heritage language school in Northern California. A supportive family environment positively influences students’ bilingual development, and family socio-demographic background is another factor in terms of students’ bilingual fluency. Regularly and actively attending Chinese language school is an effective way to help students maintain their language and home culture. The mission of Hope Chinese language school was to teach Chinese American children Chinese language and culture. For Chinese American children, such schools can also help foster children’s Chinese identity (Lin, 1996). Therefore, attending this heritage language school on weekends can positively improve students’ language skills and their links to home culture. However, there are still many parents of Chinese American children unaware of the importance of maintaining language heritage and do not send their children to Chinese language schools. Such children do not have opportunities to practice Chinese with peers in an educational environment. According to my observation through teacher-parent communication, there are also some parents who
decide not to speak Chinese with their children at home, which may lead to rapid home language loss. This situation confirms what Baker mentioned in his research that “homeland language community decaying in vitality” is one of the factors leading the home language loss (Baker, 1996, p. 100).

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this research was to apply qualitative sociolinguistic research methods to examine code-switching practices among Chinese-English bilingual children at a weekend heritage language school in Northern California. Chinese language schools are an ideal institution for Chinese American children to learn and keep their home language and culture. It is equally as important and necessary to develop and maintain the language of one’s own heritage as it is to know English (Fillmore, 1997). Code-switching is a way for bilingual children to express themselves in two languages because they belong to two worlds that should not be abandoned one for the other (Zentella, 1997). Many researchers have found that code-switching is not a defective discourse, but a verbal strategy to convey a social identity, express multiple or contradictory feelings, and accomplish various interactive communication (Liang, 2006; Qian et al., 2009; Yoon, 1996; Zentella, 1997). However, very little research has been conducted on Chinese American bilingual students in the U.S. educational context, especially from a sociolinguistic perspective (Liang, 2006; Ruan, 2003; Wu, 1990). Below is a list of constructive recommendations that may shed light on future research:
A comparison of students’ bilingual performances within other regions in Northern California where Chinese-English bilingual programs may provide better education services to diverse Chinese language communities. Currently, more dual-language Chinese programs have been established in the United States where Chinese American children have achieved higher bilingual and biliteracy proficiency (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007).

Extend this research to investigate the role gender plays with respect to the circumstances and frequency of using code-switching. The relationship between code-switching and gender has been studied recently (Awan & Sheeraz, 2011). Generally, it is believed males and females have different gendered features when they use language (Awan & Sheeraz, 2011). The researcher found “women teachers were found more formal and linguistically stringent than male teachers” (Awan & Sheeraz, 2011, p. 414). An investigation of code-switching between Chinese American schoolboys and schoolgirls will be a very interesting topic.

A comparison of code-switching in home settings with code-switching in educational settings could highlight the role “context” plays in code-switching usage. Although researchers have widely engaged in the study of language usage in the home settings with friends or siblings (Yoon, 1996; Zentella, 1997), little research on code-switching practices among Chinese American bilingual children in the home setting has been conducted.
Summary

In summary, code-switching is not defective speech (Ruan, 2003; Zentella, 1997). In the case of Chinese American bilingual children’s code-switching usage for social identity, desire, expression, and emotion, code-switching functions observed in this Northern California case study are found to be similar to other code-switching populations. This research indicates students in this Northern California case study code-switched less than other code-switching populations, for example, English-Spanish bilinguals.

This society has witnessed a dramatic increase in the Chinese-origin population during recent years. Today, Chinese language has drawn increasing attention in the United States. Code-switching between Chinese and English, as a common phenomenon for Chinese American bilinguals’ oral language, has not attracted enough attention in the U.S. educational context. Researchers need to pay closer attention to this topic. Bilingual speakers often are conflicted about who they are and which language they speak, which relates to their ethnic identity. Regularly and actively attending heritage language schools is a good way to help bilingual children keep their language and foster a sense of authentic Chinese identity (Lin, 1996).
APPENDICES
You, ______________, have been asked to participate in a research study about English/Mandarin “code-switching” practices. The study will be conducted by Ms. Jiayin Gao, your Chinese language teacher at Davis NewStar Chinese School. Her professor is Professor José Cintrón. This study will begin in September 2011 and end in November 2011.

You will participate in eight small group language activities once per week for eight weeks for 30 minutes every time. And your voice will be recorded by digital voice recorder. You will face no risks by participating in the study. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time if you do not want to continue.

Your name will not be revealed to anyone and your name will not appear in any reports of this study. You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

If you have questions regarding this study, you can call Ms. Jiayin Gao at her phone number, [redacted], or send E-mails to her at [redacted]. You can also send E-mails to her academic advisor, Professor José Cintrón, at cintron@csus.edu.

You are willing to participate in the study. __________________

You are willing to have your voice recorded. __________________

Date __________________
APPENDIX B

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Research Consent Form

You are being asked to consent that your son/daughter _________________________ participate in a two-month long research project conducted by Ms. Jia-Yin Gao, an MA graduate student in the College of Education, Bilingual/Multicultural Education Department at California State University, Sacramento, and the teacher of your child at Davis NewStar Chinese School. Her MA thesis advisor is Professor José Cintrón, Ph.D., a faculty member in the CSUS College of Education, Bilingual/Multicultural Education Department. The data collection phase is scheduled to begin in September 2011 and conclude in November 2011.

The study will investigate the English/Mandarin “code-switching” practices of six (6) native Mandarin speaking children enrolled in one of two 2nd grade classrooms at the NewStar Chinese School. Students will be under Ms. Gao’s supervision and the NewStar Chinese School’s academic conduct code. The data will be collected during a two-hour class session once per week. Specifically, your child will be asked to participate in eight classroom language activities for eight consecutive weeks. These activities include student group discussions and question and answer sessions totaling approximately 30 minutes. Each discussion group will consist of two or three students who will be given discussion topics that are based on Chinese language school curriculum and are of interest to them (e.g., music, cartoons/movies, and sports, etc.). The discussion activities are designed to solicit rich conversational samples in Mandarin language between the students and between the students and instructor. These conversations will be audio-taped for analysis.

There will be no risk or discomfort to your child during the course of this research.

Your child will gain more opportunities to practice Chinese during class time with peers. However, it is possible that your child may not personally benefit from participating in this research. It is anticipated that the results of this study will be beneficial for Chinese language programs in the U.S. and that it will encourage parents to have their children participate in learning and maintaining Mandarin as their native language.

In order to secure confidentiality, your child’s name on the transcription will be changed in order to protect their privacy. In addition, I will destroy the digital recordings after completion of the thesis. Your child will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.
If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me or by E-mail at The faculty sponsor, Professor José Cintrón, can be reached by E-mail at cintron@csus.edu.

Your child’s participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your signature below on the first line indicates that you have read and understood the contents of this form and agree to have your child participate in the research. Your signature below on the second line indicates that you give permission to the researcher to audio-tape your child’s utterances during classroom activities.

Date Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signatures ______________________________

Date Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signatures ______________________________
REFERENCES


