

# Bilingual Language Practices in a Dual Language Immersion Elementary School

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## 1. Introduction & literature review

While a great deal of attention has been paid to the linguistic behavior of Chicano youth in terms of language maintenance and shift issues, comparatively little is known about the construction and negotiation of identity of Chicano youth in spontaneous conversation among peers. And, while researchers such as Galindo (1992, 1999), Mendoza-Denton (1996), Gonzales Velásquez (1999) and Galindo and Gonzales Velásquez (1992) have challenged the stereotypical assumptions about Chicana/Latina adult and adolescent women in conversation, little work has been done on the interaction patterns of Chicano/Latino pre-adolescents (Goodwin 1999 is a notable exception). Finally, while Goodwin (1999) has investigated the interaction patterns of Chicana/Latina pre-adolescent girls, her analysis focused primarily on same-sex interaction and it did not consider the use of code-switching as a resource in the interaction. In this paper I will examine the language practices of Chicano youth in spontaneous conversation, focusing on the management of disagreement and the role of codeswitching. This paper obviously owes a great deal to Guadalupe Valdés (Valdés 1981, Valdés and Pino 1981) and MaryEllen García (García 1981, García and Leone 1984) whose pioneering work examines pragmatic aspects of spontaneous conversation among Chicanos in the Southwest, such as direct and indirect requests (Valdés 1981, García and Leone 1984), compliment responses (Valdés and Pino 1981) and leavetaking (García 1981).

In children's peer interaction, it has been argued that girls tend to favor collaboration while boys tend to favor competition with the goal of dominance. Gilligan (1982) in a very influential work, for example, proposed the "different voice" theory, claiming, among other things, that girls' overarching concern in interaction is nurturing relationships. However, Goodwin (1999) explains that these findings are based on the interaction of middle class Anglo children. Goodwin's (1983, 1990) study of peer interaction of African American children in Philadelphia, in contrast, concludes that girls' talk is not exclusively collaborative. In fact, she found that boys and girls shared many ways of interacting, and that girls did engage in assertive and competitive linguistic behavior in ritual activities such as "instigating" or "he-said-she-said" (285). Furthermore, Goodwin's more recent work in the Los Angeles area on Mexican American and Central American girls' interactions organized around games of hopscotch reveals that girls are conscious of rules and transgression, and that they actively negotiate, accuse and judge each other's performance in a competitive fashion (1999: 402-30). Based on her ethnographic work, Goodwin (2003) argues against the "universality of gender segregation" (Separate World's Hypothesis) and the "essentialized view of male and female language practices which neglect considerations of context, ethnicity, or social class" (230).

In this paper, I take a conversation analytic approach in examining the role of aggravated disagreement and codeswitching in the management of dispute in a spontaneous cross-sex interaction among three Chicano (Mexican-American) children. The qualitative, turn-by-turn analysis considers each utterance in the context of the previous utterance. In analyzing the interaction, I pose the following research questions: (1) How do the participants manage disagreement? (2) How do the participants perform stereotypical male or female talk? and (3) What role, if any, does code-switching play in the management of the interaction? This paper begins with a brief sociolinguistic profile of Arizona and the Phoenix metropolitan area followed by a description of the research site and the methodology of this on-going project. Finally, several examples from the interaction are presented and analyzed.

## 2. Background

According to the the 2000 U.S. Census, just over 25% of the Arizona population is Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau 2000a) and 20% of the population 5 years old and over report speaking Spanish in the home (U.S. Census Bureau 2000b). This is a gain from ten years ago when less than 20% of the population was Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau 1990a) and less than 15% of the population 5 years old and over reported speaking Spanish in the home (U.S. Census Bureau 1990b). The Phoenix metropolitan area is one of the largest in the nation. Phoenix is the capitol of Arizona and, with a total population of over 1.3 million, the largest city in Arizona and the fifth largest city in the United States. The Hispanic population of Phoenix makes up over a third (34.1%) of the city's total population (U.S. Census Bureau 2000c). The Hispanic/Latino population in Phoenix is expected to become the majority population within the first or second decade of the twenty-first century. Just over a quarter of the city's population 5 years old and over speaks Spanish at home (27%) and of those residents roughly half report speaking English less than "very well" (U.S. Census Bureau 2000d). This represents a dramatic change from 1990, when only one fifth of Phoenix's population was Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau 1990c) and less than 15% of the city's population 5 years old and over reported speaking Spanish at home (U.S. Census Bureau 1990d).

Although research on Spanish in the Southwest has spanned well over five decades, little research has been carried out on Spanish-speaking communities in Arizona compared to the extensive research carried out in Texas, New Mexico and California. The majority of research that has been carried out on Spanish in Arizona has focused on the Tucson area (Post 1934, Barker 1975, Jaramillo 1995, Gonzalez 2001, Smith 2002). The lack of research on Spanish and Spanish/English bilingualism in Phoenix is surprising, given the community's size and demographics. While Phoenix is not as old a city as Tucson, Arizona to the south, its size and rapid growth, as well as the mobility and diversity of its Chicano/Latino residents make it an interesting and unique site for research.

## 3. Methodology

The data analyzed here come from an on-going data collection project examining Chicano/Latino language practices in a central Phoenix neighborhood. I worked as a participant observer in a second grade classroom from January through June 2003. During that time the central Phoenix elementary school provided a Spanish/English dual immersion bilingual education program in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. According to the district's 2001-2002 data, the student population of roughly 850 students was predominantly Mexican and Mexican-American: 90% of the students identified as Hispanic, 6.5% Anglo, 2.5% African American 1% Native American, and less than 1% Asian. The student population is drawn primarily from the poor, urban neighborhood in which the school is located, although some students travel from throughout the metropolitan area for access to the bilingual program. An indication of the economic profile of the community is that 84% of the students qualified for the free lunch program and 10% for the reduced lunch program. Given the well-documented language shift experienced in language minority communities, many of the Mexican-American students begin school monolingual in English. In contrast, given the fact that almost one fifth of Phoenix residents are foreign born and that almost one third of Phoenix residents five years old and over report speaking Spanish at home, many other students start school monolingual in Spanish. In fact, 78% of the students in 2001-2002 were characterized as having limited English proficiency. During the 2002-2003 academic year, the school continued to operate their dual-immersion bilingual education program despite Proposition 203, a ballot proposition approved by Arizona voters in November 2000 and first implemented in academic year 2001-2002 which requires that "all public school instruction be conducted in English" and that "children not fluent in English...be placed in an intensive one-year English immersion program to teach them the language as quickly as possible while also learning academic subjects", thus effectively eliminating bilingual education in the state. The school administrators made use of a provision for parental waivers. In order to qualify for the waivers, children must achieve a certain grade-appropriate level of English on a standardized exam. Therefore, in the school in question, the first month of classes is carried out almost completely in English. Then, after students take the English proficiency test, students who achieve the prescribed level of proficiency and receive a waiver then switch from an English language classroom two and a half days

of the week to a Spanish language classroom two and a half days of the week. Students who do not achieve the prescribed level of competence remain in the English speaking classroom throughout the week. While this is not the ideal structure of a dual language immersion program, it represents a survival strategy designed by the school to continue to include the home/heritage/minority language in instruction despite Proposition 203.

While taking part in the second grade classroom activities as a classroom aide, I recorded spontaneous student-student and student-teacher interactions among the 25 students, two teachers (one for English, one for Spanish) and one student teacher, in the classroom, on the playground and in the cafeteria.

#### 4. Data & analysis

The data analyzed in this paper is a 15 minute interaction involving three main participants—two girls, Julia and Jessica, and a boy, Arturo. The three students are of Mexican origin and they are all bilingual. They speak Spanish at home, and all three completed the standardized tests at the beginning of the school year with a high enough mark in English to allow them to participate in the dual immersion program. The interaction takes place on the playground in a sandy area near the climbing equipment, but it is part of a structured classroom task and not recreation. The three participants were grouped together by their English-language teacher to complete a collaborative activity capping off a lesson on arch bridges. Their task is to work collaboratively to construct an arch bridge using only the sand on the playground and some pieces of stiff paper. At the time of the recording, a minidisc recorder with a stereo microphone was placed near the students and I, the fieldworker, sat nearby, monitoring the recording and taking notes on the interaction.

Goodwin (1983) explains that, while disagreement is dispreferred in adult conversation and therefore frequently marked with hedges, delays and hesitations, disagreement is not as marked in her spontaneous conversation data with urban African American children (667). In fact, she argues, disagreement is often aggravated by varying degrees in children's interactions. In example 1, we see Arturo, Julia and Jessica manage a disagreement using several instances of aggravation and several codeswitches from English to Spanish or viceversa.

Example 1. "That was my idea" Arturo (A), Julia (J2) and Jessica (J1)

- 1 A ((placing a paper under the bridge))  
 2 J2 para qué la necesitamos?  
*what do we need it for?*  
 3 A para qué? (.) para la agua (.) eso es la agua (.) put-  
*what for? (.) for the water (.) this is the water*  
 [put sand  
 4 J1 [oh YEAH YEAH SAND ((adding sand))  
 5 A yeah I told you I'm the good (guy)  
 (1.0)  
 6 A put sand in there and make it sa- it's [water  
 7 J2 [cómo:  
*ho:w*  
 8 J2 yeah yo sé cómo hacer la water  
*I know how to make the water*  
 (0.5)  
 9 J2 yo sé- yo la hago solamente  
*I know- I'll do it alone*  
 10 A NO porque YO porque THAT WAS MY ide- [IDEA  
*NO because I because*  
 11 J2 [no yo puse esto  
*no I put this*  
 primero  
*first*  
 12 A no porque that was [my idea  
*no because*  
 13 J2 [(..) todos tenemos que (trabajar)  
*we all have to work*  
 como un TEAM remember?

as a TEAM remember?  
 14 A oh yeah  
 15 J2 duh:::  
 (2.0)

In turns 10 and 12 Arturo produces aggravated disagreements using several important features: lack of prefaces or delay, use of the polarity marker “no”, and increase of volume (especially in turn 10). Julia also produces aggravated disagreement, also using the polarity marker “no” (in turn 11) and the negative “duh” (in turn 15). After turn 15, Arturo does not respond during a two second gap and a change of topic is initiated subsequently.

In addition to aggravated disagreement, codeswitching is another resource used by participants in this interaction. While it has been noted that there is a general preference for same-code talk, Valdés (1981), Auer (1984) and others have revealed that the contrast provided by a codeswitch, regardless of the direction (for example from Spanish to English or English to Spanish) may be used as a contextualization cue, or an interactional resource similar to change in pitch, tempo or register that co-participants may employ to manage interaction, such as turn-taking or repair. In addition, Li Wei (1994) demonstrated that in his corpus of conversation in Cantonese/English bilingual families, children use code-switching in intergenerational conversation to mark dispreferred second turns in conversation (for example, refusals of offers). In example 1 Arturo switches from English to Spanish in turn 3 as he switches from explaining his previous move to producing a directive. Jessica follows his switch and utters appreciative tokens about Arturo’s idea while following his directive. Julia, however, does not respond, either in English or Spanish. After a brief pause, Arturo repeats his directive and expands on it. Julia overlaps Arturo’s turn and marks her interruption and pre-directive move (claiming knowledge/authority) with a switch back to Spanish. Interestingly, despite his aggravated disagreement in turn 10, Arturo maintains Julia’s use of Spanish until part way through the turn at the point where he shifts from disagreeing to offering a justification of his position. He repeats this same pattern in turn 12. In turn 13, Julia, who has used Spanish throughout the interaction, incorporates the English word “team” into her otherwise Spanish turn. This ties her utterance back to the voice of the teacher, who, in assigning the bridge construction task, spoke about collaboration and working as a team:

Teacher’s directions to students

Miss K. in today’s workplace almost everybody works in teams...um..how could you do better to help your team? what do you think? how could you do better to help your team? what’s a good team? wh- what makes up a good team? when you guys are working together? what?  
 Student don’t fight  
 Miss K. yeah don’t fight (.) try to get along (.) cause then you spend time fighting and then what happens?  
 Students ((overlapping soft voices))  
 Miss K. I’ve seen more people fight and then they have nothing in front of them because they just spend too much time arguing about who’s going to cut the tape  
 ((several turns of additional directions eliminated))  
 Miss K. so it takes a lot of teamwork and you all need to work together right? I’m just reminding you...

Julia successfully uses this tying to effectively win the argument, invoking the voice of authority and characterizing Arturo’s disagreement as “against the rules” of the assignment.

These same elements of aggravated disagreement moves and codeswitching are observed throughout the interaction. Although there is not sufficient space to go through examples 2-6 in detail, we may notice several disagreement strategies such as increased volume (in examples 2-5), justification of stance such as turn 6 of example 5 (“remember the TEAM?” and turn 4 of example 6 (“because your- that was my idea”), threats (such as turn 2 of example 3 “I’m gonna destroy you”), recycling of positions (such as turns 14—17 in example 4: “nuh uh” “yeah you did” “I didn’t say nothing”) and negative evaluations (turn 5 of example 2, turns 3 and 13 of example 4). In addition, the

co-participants employ a variety of strategies to close the disputes, including switching to a new topic (Jessica in turn 18 and 19 of example 4).<sup>1</sup>

Finally, we will examine an extended disagreement:

Example 7. "Menso": Arturo (A), Julia (J2) and Jessica (J1)

- 1 →A hey you're copying me  
(1.0)
- 2 →J2 puto:: cómo (...) si acaso (ellos) whee:: ((scream)) te va a  
caer en el agua menso  
*faggot:: how (...) if by chance they whee:: ((scream))*  
*you're gonna fall in the water stupid*  
((Jenny performs a car falling off Arturo's section of the  
bridge into the 'water' below))
- 3 A y aquí (.) y aquí (.) qué más?  
*and here (.) and here (.) what else?*  
(0.5)
- 4 A aquí (si [aquí se pasa) y así-  
*here (if you pass here) and that way-*
- 5 J1 loo::h (.) oo::h
- 6 A oo::h I hear she said a bad word
- 7 J2 qué?  
*what?*
- 8 A uh oh
- 9 J1 (y la máquina te va a grabar)  
*and the machine's gonna tape you*  
(1.0)
- 10 J2 nuh uh (.) verdad teacher? (lo puede) grabar  
*is that true teacher? it can tape it?*
- 11 FW grabar qué?  
*tape what?*
- 12 A elso  
*that*
- 13 J1 [eso (.) que dijo ella  
*that (.) what she said*
- 14 FW sí  
*yes*
- 15 J1 [((gasps))
- 16 A [((gasps))
- 17 J1 you said a bad word
- 18 →J2 qué dije?  
*what did I say*
- 19 FW no sé  
*I don't know*
- 20 FW [qué dijo?  
*what did she say?*
- 21 A [em- (.) empieza con la em  
*it starts with em*
- 22 J1 dijo una bad word  
*she said*
- 23 FW oh
- 24 J2 nuh uh
- 25 A yeah you did (.) you [said-
- 26 FW [no escuchaba  
*I wan't listening*
- 27 A I- I don't want to say it
- 28 J1 say it
- 29 A okay (.) you said uh::  
(1.0)
- 30 A you said \*me::n- men::-\*  
*stu::p- stup::-*

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<sup>1</sup> Please see the appendix for examples 2-6.

(1.0)  
31 A \*me:nso\* (.) you said mensa (.) see that's a bad word  
*stu:pid* *stupid*  
32 FW oh  
33 J2 you're not a t-  
34 A she said that because she said uh uh uh uh it could fall in  
the water men:so (.) she said- she said that  
*stu:pid*  
35 J2 oh (hh) oh (.) please don't grabar- (.) don't garb-  
*tape-* *tap-*  
(.) don't grabar that one  
*tape*  
36 FW I won't  
37 A ((yelling into microphone)) HEY ME YES I COULD BE  
SPONGEBOB!

In example 7, Julia and Arturo are separately constructing the upper part of the bridge on which cars would pass. In turn 2, Julia produces an aggravated disagreement, employing two insult terms—*puto* and *menso*—in addition to performing the inadequacy of Arturo's bridge design. Arturo responds by justifying his design, but Jessica instead calls attention to Julia's insult term, signaling it as a trouble source. Arturo picks up on Jessica's move and joins in, expanding into an accusation. Julia proceeds to deny having said an objectionable word four times (turns 7, 10, 18 and 24). However, Jessica and Arturo collaborate to prolong the disagreement despite Julia's denial of the accusation. Goodwin (1990) claims that children in her data relied on several strategies to prolong a disagreement, including recycling of positions, justifying positions and drawing in overhearers to validate one's position. Jessica and Arturo use all of these disagreement prolongations in example 7. After the initial accusation in turn 6, they recycle their position (that Julia said a bad word) in turns 17, 22, 24, 31 and 34. They also collaborate to justify or "prove" their position by (eventually) producing the "bad word" in turns 30, 31 and 34. Finally, they turn to two sources for validation of their accusation: the recording (in line 9) and the fieldworker, who responds minimally in lines 23 and 32. The dispute draws to a close at line 35 with Julia implicitly admitting that she had used the "bad word" as accused by her co-participants, when she pleads with the fieldworker to not include it in the compilation she is putting together for the class, teachers and principal. Arturo then initiates a topic shift; having been reminded of the presence of the recording device, he then in line 37 yells into the microphone, animating the identity of a cartoon character.

Codeswitching in this interaction is again used as a contextualization cue to orient co-participants to shifts in footing and to mark dispreferred turns. Arturo, for example switches from Spanish in turn 4 to English in turn 6 as he shifts from defending his structure to accusing his interlocutor. In turns 7 and 18 Julia marks her denial/challenge of Arturo and Jessica's accusation with a divergent language choice. Jessica switches from speaking in Spanish to Julia in turn 9 (almost conspiratorially) to English in accusing her (in turn 17). She proceeds to follow Arturo's language choices throughout the rest of the interaction (line 22 and 28) as she joins with him in accusing Julia, although she incorporates the English item "bad word" in an otherwise Spanish utterance in line 22, tying her utterance back to previous accusations.

## 5. Analysis

In analyzing the data presented above, I return to the three research questions posed at the beginning of the paper. First, how do the participants manage disagreement? Just as Goodwin (1999) found in her Maple Street data, I find in this interaction that the children, especially Julia and Arturo, tend to aggravate their disagreement moves, producing them without delay, often with increased volume and polarity terms ("no"), and occasionally with insult terms. Second, how do the participants use stereotypical male or female strategies? Stereotypically male and female strategies are used in this interaction, but not always by boys and girls respectively. While Julia does use indirect requests (such as in line 10 of example 4: "necesitamos tijeras para cortarlo Jessica"), she more often uses bald and/or aggravated directives (such as in line 5 of example 3 "STOP IT ARTURO" and lines 1 and 3 of example 5). Julia does seem to promote collaboration with her references to "the TEAM", but a closer inspection of its use in example 1 reveals that the invoking of the team concept is used to

“one up” her interlocutor by calling into being the voice of the teacher to justify her position. Her position, however, is not a collaborative one and she does not compromise on the execution of her idea. Jessica seems to behave more like the stereotypical girl described in the literature. She produces appreciation tokens praising her co-participants’ work (such as “that’s cute” in line 6 of example 4), she quickly changes her mind to affiliate with co-participants (“oh YEAH YEAH SAND” in example 1) and she generally speaks less (for example she reacts to Arturo’s threats of violence in example 3 with gasps rather than sanction). However, Jessica too, takes an active, oppositional role in several disagreements. It is Jessica who instigates the accusation of Julia in example 7 by first pointing out the trouble source (“menso”) in Julia’s talk. Jessica also instigates a disagreement with Arturo in example 4, pointing out the “error” of his utterance in turn 11 and recycling her position in turn 16. In fact, it seems that all three interactants share procedures for managing disagreement. While Arturo, and not either of the girls, is the only one to use threats of violence in the interaction, Julia is the only one to use personal insults. Third, what role, if any, does code-switching play in the management of the interaction? Codeswitching is an important interactional resource for these bilingual children, although it does not seem (in this interaction) to be used to mark disagreements as dispreferred moves (lines 3 and 5, example 4 might be an exception). However, codeswitching is used to contextualize shifts in footing (i.e. from disagreeing to justifying or from disagreeing to issuing directives or from affiliating with one co-participant to affiliating with another), which is an integral part of managing disagreement.

## 6. Conclusion

Goodwin (2003) states that to provide a “more accurate picture of male and female interaction patterns” what is needed is “to look beyond middle-class White groups and study the diverse social and ethnic groups which compose our society” (243). It is hoped that this on-going project will do just that, by focusing on the language practices of poor, urban Chicano/Latino pre-adolescents. This preliminary report on an analysis of one 15 minute interaction suggests that perhaps the Chicana girls in this study behave more like the African American girls in Philadelphia and the Latina girls in L.A. perviously studied by Goodwin than the Anglo, middle-class girls who are the model of so much research on girls’ talk. Future research will examine same-sex as well as cross-sex talk-in-interaction, and issues of gender and codeswitching.

## Appendix

Example 2. “Squash”: Arturo (A) and Julia (J2)

1 A hey  
(2.0)  
2 A squash  
(0.5)  
3→J2 STOP IT!  
(1.0)  
4 J2 (mira que estoy haciendo) (.) vea?  
*look at what I’m doing (.) see?*  
5 A man that stinks

Example 3. “I’m gonna destroy you”: Julia (J2), Arturo (A) and Jessica (J1)

1 J2 vas a detruir our artwork  
*you’re going to destroy our artwork*  
2→A yes I’m gonna DESTROY YOU  
3 J1 ((gasp))  
(1.0)  
4 A (hhh)  
5 J2 STOP IT ARTURO  
6 A yes whatever

Example 4. “Cute is your mom”: Arturo (A), Julia (J2) and Jessica (J1)

1 A he’s too little  
2 J2 así MIRA

*this way LOOK*  
 (2.0)  
 3 A man, that stinks  
 4 J2 yo te hice el[...]  
     *I made you the (...)*  
 5 A [BIGGER  
 6 J1 that's cute  
 7 A cute is your mom  
 8→J2 a ver Jessica  
     *let's see Jessica*  
 9 J1 stop  
 10 J2 necesitamos [tijeras para cortarlo Jessica  
     *we need scissors to cut it Jessica*  
 11 A [your mom too:: (.) your mom is more cute than  
     mine  
     (0.5)  
 12 J2 y ponerlo así mira  
     *and put it that way look*  
 13 A yours stinks  
 14 J1 oo:h you said that my mom was more cute than your mom  
 15 A nuh uh  
 16 J1 yeah you did  
 17 A I didn't say nothing  
 18→J1 oo:(hh)oh  
     (0.5)  
 19 J1 (brrr) ooh that's cold  
 20 J2 lookit teacher

Example 5. "Remember the TEAM": Julia (J2), Arturo (A) and Jessica (J1)

1 J2 lookit  
     (4.0)  
 2 J2 it doesn't w-  
     (1.5)  
 3 J2 Arturo HELP  
     (0.5)  
 4→A why?  
 5 J1 because  
 6 J2 remember the TEAM?  
     (0.5)  
 7 A uh huh

Example 6. "I could do everything": Julia (J2), Arturo (A) and Jessica (J1)

1 J2 si las tape? si la ponemos tape?  
     *if tape them? if we put tape on it?*  
 2 A see I could do everything  
 3→J2 nuh uh  
 4 A yeah: because your- that was my [idea  
 5→J2 [ya ya ya  
     *enough enough enough*  
 6 A and this was my idea  
 7 J1 oh oh (hh) [it's cold  
 8 J2 [(.....) my idea  
 9 A that was not your idea that I did (.) that was mine  
 10 J2 espérate  
     wait  
     (2.0)  
     ((another student interrupts the dispute and it is  
     abandoned))

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# **ISB4: Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism**

edited by James Cohen, Kara T. McAlister,  
Kellie Rolstad, and Jeff MacSwan

**Cascadilla Press   Somerville, MA   2005**

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ISBN 978-1-57473-210-8 CD-ROM  
ISBN 978-1-57473-107-1 library binding (5-volume set)

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