Code Switching Among Bilingual and Limited English Proficient Students: Possible Indicators of Giftedness

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Code switching includes the use of complete sentences, phrases, and borrowed words from another language (Brice & Brice, 2000). It is a common linguistic phenomenon noted among bilingual populations. In order to code switch effectively, students must possess a high level of understanding of the 2 cultures, as well as a deep understanding of the underlying structures and purposes of 2 language systems. Code switching, rather than reflecting the traditional view of a disadvantaged and semiliterate background, actually reflects an intellectual advantage. However, code switching has not commonly been perceived as a positive trait by schools, teachers, or the majority culture. Assessments for nomination and identification of giftedness have traditionally been either single-language oriented or use concepts and behaviors that are reflective of the majority culture. This article explores some of the aspects of code switching and possible resultant behaviors of bilingual children who are gifted.

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Introduction

"Hola, readers!" as the introduction for a scholarly article is an example of code switching, or the use of complete sentences, phrases, and borrowed words from another language (Brice & Brice, 2000) or from another context for emphatic purposes (Rader, 2002). Code switching is a common linguistic behavior noted among bilingual (e.g., Spanish-English speakers) and other culturally and linguistically diverse populations: African American populations switch from "home language" to "school language" or from African American Vernacular English to Standard American English (Novak, 2000), teenagers indicate who is "in" and who is "out" of peer group conversations (Rader), gay men lisp and use verbal exaggerations more when communicating among themselves (Bowen, 2002), and Instant Messenger users demonstrate a shortened method of spoken language rules (Moore, 2002). Code switching is prevalent throughout our society, delineating differences between cultural, generational, and technological users. Yet, it is not clear what, if any, differences there are in code switching behaviors between ability levels, particularly in bilingual populations.

Certainly, culturally diverse students are underrepresented among identified gifted populations. A bilingual child's ability to interface between two languages and cultures has received little attention, and there has been limited study of bilingual gifted students' use of multiple languages as a characteristic behavior. Historically, code switching has been discouraged in the educational system and society at large because of concerns that code switching will influence one or both of the languages and lead to language decay (Aitchison, 1991) or because of a perception that code switching is considered a sign of limited language proficiency in one or both languages (Cheng & Butler, 1989; Kogan, 2001). The use of code switching is perceived most negatively by monolingual speakers and majority cultural and generational groups in terms of understandability, attractiveness, and correctness (Hidalgo, 1988). In addition, because of its ability to demonstrate inclusion and exclusion from groups, code switching can be perceived as a negative social trait by members excluded from the group (i.e., monolingual speakers).

Teachers' reactions to code switching are typically quite negative, even when they themselves employ it. Phillips' 1975 seminal study of teacher usage of code switching found that 70% of teacher code switching from English to Spanish is for "disciplinary-manipulative" purposes and serves to reinforce the dominant language and to marginalize the native language of the students. Teachers emphasize the use of traditional spoken English and marginalize the efforts of students to use alternative forms of language. The traditional policy that most school districts have employed has been the eradication of the original language or culture and assimilation into the majority language and culture (Salluzzo, 1994).

Relationship Between Two Languages

Bilingualism can be perceived as a subtractive or an additive language process. In the subtractive aspect, as fluency and vocabulary grow in one language, fluency and vocabulary decrease in the other, replacing the original language as the "primary" language. The emphasis is on the replacement of one language for another. In contrast, additive bilingualism is the process of acquiring the terms and fluency in a second language without losing the skills with the first (Lambert, 1975). Hakuta (1991) states that subtractive bilingualism is the goal educators often set for those whose native language is viewed as a barrier to academic and economic success—Hispanics, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and others. Additive bilingualism, whether in Latin, classical Greek, French, Italian, or other languages, is seen as an academic boon for nonminority, middle-class students. Thus, insertion of French phrases into spoken English is considered a sign of advanced education, adding a certain *je ne sais quoi* quality to communication, while insertion of Spanish phrases is often perceived as a *problemo*, adding a touch of lower class commonness.

With certain individuals, code switching can also serve as an indicator of subtractive development of language when students select words and phrases because of the inadequacy of their language abilities. When a student does not have the grasp of a second language firmly enough to communicate, they must reach for their pri-

Table 1
Continuum of Code Switching

Low Second Language Ability	High Second Language Ability
Mixes because of lack of vocabulary between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2).	Able to alternate between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) with ease.
Difficulty switching between L1 and L2. Long pauses indicate word searching and retrieval difficulties. Student displays false starts.	The student may freely choose between speaking in their L1, L2, or by a combination of the two.
A strong preference for and use of one language.	The student can freely alternate between the two languages.
The student is consciously aware of which language is being spoken.	No conscious awareness of speaking in either language is noted.

mary language to fill in the gaps. Code switching serves as a "filler" to continue the flow of the communication process, but it also is indicative of a weakness in the second language, a subtractive element (Freeman & Freeman, 2001).

With additive bilingualism, students have a solid base in their primary language and the second language adds to their linguistic repertoire. In the communication process, speakers have a range of language choices and select the language that most closely conceptualizes the meaning, the humor, or the social purpose that is needed. Code switching then becomes a social, cultural, and linguistic tool that allows them to integrate their experiences of two languages and two cultures into a cohesive whole. See Table 1 for a continuum of language and code switching abilities.

The concern that bilingualism is subtractive and the pervasive belief even among bilingual educators that code switching reflects "semilingualism" and lower academic proficiency has led to tacit tracking of students who code switch into lower academic tracks with a stronger emphasis on basic English language production and usage

(MacSwan, 1997). Students in such tracks and those students who exhibit linguistic behavior that is different from the mainstream culture are rarely considered for gifted identification and programming (Ford & Harris, 1990). Through an examination of code switching, it may be possible to determine the complexity and sophistication of language usage—usage that may be an indicator of high-level linguistic behavior. Such a determination of additive or subtractive bilingualism requires an examination of the types of and purposes for code switching and its relationship to intellectual ability.

Types of Code Switching

Although there are many different aspects of code switching, in this paper it is defined as a term that includes the use of complete sentences, phrases, and borrowed words from a language other than the primary language (Brice & Brice, 2000). The study of code switching requires a sophisticated examination of language usage that looks at types of code switching, as well as reasons for the switch within each type.

Several standard processes of code switching have been identified (Brice & Brice, 2000; Hammink, 2000; Poplack, 1980), including those listed below.

1. *Borrowing*—using a single word from a language different than the primary language, which is similar in grammatical usage, but is a term that is not available in the primary language. Such use of single words can elaborate on meanings that the second language does not have or capture humor to which the listener may respond. The French *adieu* is an example of this single word borrowing, because it implies a longer separation than is possible in the single English word *goodbye*. Similarly, in New Mexico, a phrase often used for humorous purposes is *bueno bye*, a literal translation of *goodbye*. The use of a Spanish word for the English word captures subtle humor that the use of a single language does not.

2. *Calque*—literally translating an expression from another language without use of appropriate syntax; for example, *el lote de parquear* (the parking lot). The standard Spanish for the term would be

campo de estacionamiento. It is the literal translation of each element of a phrase from one language into another without the use of the second language's grammar. Rather than borrowing the phrase from the first language, the second language translates the phrase. An English example would be *Superman*, which is a direct translation from Nietzsche's German *Ubermensch*. A reverse example would be French's *gratte-ciel* and German's *wolkenkratzer*, both of which are directly translated from English's *skyscraper*. Each compound element has been translated into the other language to form a similar concept.

3. *Intersentential*—interjecting an entire sentence or phrase from one language into the primary language. Language alternation can be divided into the two linguistic categories of intersentential code *switching* (i.e., alternating languages across sentence boundaries) and intersentential code *mixing* (i.e., alternating languages within a sentence; Kamwangamalu, 1992). In code switching, the teacher may say, "*Ya, se acabó* (it is over). *Siéntate* (Sit down). The time is up." Another example is where the child may say, "*Ahora es buena hora para dormer* (It is now a good time to sleep). Turn off the lights." An intersentential code mixed example is where the person may incorporate words or phrases into his or her English from the other language. The Spanish child may say, "*La voy a poner en* frying pan (I am going to put it in the frying pan)" or the Greek mother may say "Be careful when you do that—*siga, siga* (slowly, slowly)."

Intersentential code switching may serve to emphasize a point made in the other language; to signal a switch in the conversation participants; to indicate to whom the statement is addressed; or to provide a direct quote from or reference to another conversation. Such intersentential code switching is considered to be the most complex language alternation because it requires that the speaker control two linguistic systems simultaneously (Poplack, 1980). An example would be the Greek phrase *ooposlene* which means "as they say" in English and is used as a "spacer" in the conversational flow, similar to the function of the phrase *you know* in English. In intersentential code switching, speakers must manipulate the grammatical structure of two languages at the same time, in complete sentences, rather than simple word switches that might be more simplistic.

In addition to a developmental aspect of code switching that reflects an increasing sophistication of usage, Poplack (1980) identified points at which more able speakers would be most likely to code switch. Examples that Hammink (2000, ¶16) provided include:

1. before and after tags (*You're almost done with school, verdad?* [You're almost done with school, right?]);
2. before predicate adjectives (*Es muy cute.* [It's really cute.]); and
3. and between clauses (*That's the lady que tiene cuatro hijos.* [That's the lady who has four children.]).

None of these violate the grammatical structures of either language. Intersentential code switching and intersentential code mixing will be hereafter referred to as the generic term of code switching in this article.

However, there are several restrictions to code switching that more sophisticated bilingual speakers recognize. The first of these is the free morpheme constraint (Poplack, 1980; Skiba, 1997). This constraint suggests that a "speaker may not switch language between a word and its endings unless the word is pronounced as if it were in the language of the ending" (Cook, 1991, p. 65). In the example of nicknames, *Nicolaki* is an acceptable Greek nickname because Nicholas is also a common Greek name, while *Claireaki* would not be an acceptable nickname because the name Claire is not a Greek name and does not follow Greek pronunciation rules. However, the Spanish assimilation of *parking* has resulted in *parqueando* and *parqueo* (parking lot). Therefore, this rule does not seem to be fixed (Poplack).

The second constraint is referred to as the equivalence constraint (Skiba, 1997). In this code switching concept, "the switch can come at a point in the sentence where it does not violate the grammar of either language" (Cook, 1991, p. 65). The example Cook uses to illustrate the equivalence constraint is a French-English switch with the suggestion that switches such as a *car americaine* or *une American voiture* are unlikely, as they are incorrectly stated in both languages. *J'ai acheté an American car* (I bought an American car) is possible because both English and French share the construction in which

the verb is followed by the object. Similarly, in examples provided by Hammink (2000), speakers do not tend to switch languages between subject and verb, *El niño le hit* (The boy hit him), or between negative and verb, *El jefe no want to pay us* (The boss does not want to pay us), because these sentence constructions violate grammatical rules in Spanish and English. Poplack (1980), referring to first language (L1) and second language (L2) usage, stated that,

> Code switches will tend to occur at points in discourse where juxtapositions of L1 and L2 elements does not violate a syntactic rule of either language (i.e., points around which the surface structures of the two language map onto each other). According to this simple constraint, a switch is inhibited from occurring within a constituent generated by a rule from one language which is not shared by another. (p. 586)

Thus, able speakers were found to avoid sentence structures in which one rule from one language did not apply to the second language. An example of this equivalency constraint given by Poplack (1980) would be the sentence spoken by a poor code switcher, "*El MAN que CAME ayer WANTS John comprar A CAR nuevo*" (p. 587). Such a sentence violates the grammar rules of Spanish. Such a use of a "third grammar" (De Brabanter, 2004) that respects the grammatical structure of both languages is often flexible, depending upon the needs of the speaker.

Purposes for Code Switching

Code switching is a linguistic feature of stable bilingual communities. It is rarely a sign of confusion or inadequacy, even in very young children (Cook, 2003). When bilingual students or students from a culture other than the traditional school culture are present in a classroom, code switching will and does occur (Aguirre, 1988; Hammink, 2000).

There are several reasons for code switching. The first is simply because the speaker does not have the facility in the primary language to express himself effectively or is translating for someone else

with limited English proficiency. The speaker shifts to the second language in order to capture his or her thinking processes or to reflect the inadequate understanding of the other person (Cook, 2003). This generally occurs when the speaker is upset, tired, or distracted (Soho, 2000). When code switching is used to compensate for a language difficulty, it may be viewed as interference (Skiba, 1997). However, this type of code switching may be considered a strength when it is used as a sociolinguistic tool to aid the understanding of another person who is not facile in both languages.

The second purpose for code switching is that the individual may want to establish him- or herself as a member of a particular group. Gumperz (1982) and Miller (1984) noted that code switching is motivated by the listener and/or purpose of the conversational interaction. Code switching is typically situation motivated. A change in the social situation can motivate a change in code, such as the arrival of a new speaker, or the focus of the topic may facilitate a change to the other language. For example, a speaker may change upon the arrival of a new listener, "*Sabes qué Tomas viene a la session*? (Did you know that Thomas is coming to the session?) Oh, hi, Tom." Gumperz refers to this language solidarity as a "we code". In essence, "rapport is established between the speaker and the listener when the listener responds with a similar switch" (Skiba, 1997, ¶ 3). Code switching is perceived as a mode of speech that is reserved for group members only and a way in which speakers can demonstrate their bilingual and bicultural identity (Dobovsek-Sethna, 1996). Similarly, code switching can be used to exclude other members of a group who are not as familiar with the language.

Defining who is "in" and who is "out" of a particular group is an effective manner of establishing membership or loyalty to a particular social group (Labov, 1972). These uniting phrases and expressions are often called "shibboleths" because they serve to unite members of a cultural group and differentiate them from members of other groups. Such phrases and expressions are symbols of separation from the dominant cultural group and, as such, are subject to misinterpretation or stereotyping by outsiders, and yet, paradoxically, they act as symbols of pride in a shared cultural identity by insiders (Novak, 2000). An example would be the use of the "n-word," which is consid-

ered an epithet and an insult when used by non-African Americans but, among African Americans, indicates a relationship between the speakers.

Finally, code switching can be used as a sociolinguistic tool. Whereas some speakers can convey a certain effect or attitude by changing the formality of their speech, bilingual speakers can code switch (Skiba, 1997). Code switching allows the speaker to alert the listener that the upcoming phrase is to be interpreted differently with a shift in emphasis (Chan, 2004). Bilingual speakers also can avoid miscommunication by using a term more adequately expressed in the other language (Sert, 2005). Code switching is used for clarification, emphasis, to separate facts from feelings, and to achieve a certain dramatic effect. Different languages may have different concepts (Cook, 2003), and it is the contrasted use of these languages that may allow a multilingual speaker to more clearly make his or her point. For example, the subtle difference in connotation found between the French *adieu* (goodbye—don't know when I'll see you again) and *au revoir* (goodbye—see you soon) is not one that can be captured in the English *goodbye*. Humor is an effect often created by code switching (Cook, 2003) because plays on words can become even more rich or contrasting concepts of two languages can be highlighted.

Code Switching in Teaching and Learning

In the classroom, code switching may have very specific reasons or functions. Guthrie and Guthrie (1987) conducted a study of a bilingual (Chinese-English speaking) teacher's approach to language use with Chinese-English speaking students in California. The bilingual teacher employed five distinct purposes for code switching in reading lessons: (a) for translation; (b) as a "we code" (Gumperz, 1982) for establishing and maintaining solidarity and group membership; (c) for giving procedures and directions; (d) for clarification, especially with the introduction of new vocabulary words; and (e) as a check for understanding. Similarly, Pennington (1995) observed five Cantonese-English speaking secondary English classroom teachers during a writing lesson in Hong Kong. Her study focused on the

teachers' language alternation patterns. She found that the teachers' functional distribution of Cantonese use was as follows: individual talk, defining words, giving instructions, expediting lessons, explicating ideas, reading in the first language, tagging an utterance, discussion, expressing solidarity (we code), disciplining, and motivating.

Sánchez (1983) observed that there are specific contexts in which code switching is the predominant mode of expression, as well as perceived as the most appropriate style. Such manipulation of linguistic skills is one that can start very young. In a study of bilingual kindergartners' code switching behaviors, Genishi (1981) observed that young bilingual children choose their language structures by the language ability of their conversational partners. They were able to switch between the two languages, depending on the language spoken by the peers. McLaughlin (1995) reports that "[y]ounger children mix languages to resolve ambiguities and clarify statements, but older children and adults typically switch codes (or languages) to convey social meanings" (¶ 17), including the use of direct quotes or the addition of humor. Genesee (1980) noted the use of code switching to identify ingroup/outgroup and sociocultural status as early as adolescence, whereas younger children were more apt to respond to the language actually being spoken. In a study of adults and young children, Hammink (2000) found adults were more likely to be aware of grammatical nuances of code switching, and younger students were less aware of the social implications and social uses of code switching. Such results clearly provide a developmental view of code switching.

Reflecting this developmental component, there is evidence that middle school students, even from the majority culture, employ code switching as a means of identifying with their own peer group. They will shift their use of their primary language according to the audience to whom they are speaking. For example, the child may ask, "Do you feel sick?" to a teacher, but ask a peer, "Do you feel like barfing?" (Pattillo, 1999) or "R U OK?" through Instant Messenger (Associated Press, 2002). Such manipulation of words, while not directly involving the use of a second language, indicate a development aspect to sophisticated language usage.

Code Switching as Evidence of Intelligent Behavior

On any standardized test, there are numerous issues an evaluator must consider when testing a child who is a second-language learner or from a nonmajority culture. Cultural differences, background knowledge, and English competency may all negatively affect test scores (Ford & Harris, 1990; Gonzalez, 1974). Many test makers have responded by producing tests translated into other languages such as Spanish. However, such tests either have validity problems because of the challenge of translating standard English concepts into another language, capturing various cultural concepts, or because the numerous dialects of the other language have complicated efforts to test native speakers (Bernal, 1980).

Other test makers have responded by producing tests that do not depend upon language or upon a specific cultural background. Numerous authors recommend such measures to improve identification processes for gifted programs (Bernal, 1980; Ford & Harris, 1990; Frasier, 1993). However, some research has found that students from different cultural backgrounds do not fare any better on culture-fair tests than on more conventional tests and argue that efforts to create truly culture-free tests are exercises in futility (Kitano & Kirby, 1986).

Code switching, rather than reflecting the traditional view of a disadvantaged and semiliterate background, reflects an intellectual advantage to many students. Culturally different students who are trying to integrate two cultural systems may have greater cognitive and social flexibility. Such students can adapt to the discontinuities of home and school cultures because they can successfully accomplish situational problem-solving processes through language manipulations (Gonzalez, 2001). The tension that arises from the "school world" of English and the "home world" of the native language produces a need to navigate and integrate both worlds into a cohesive whole (Freeman & Freeman, 2001). Students use code switching as a manifestation of a strong integration of two or more cultures. In order to code switch for multiple purposes, students must possess a high level of understanding of the two cultures, as well as a deep understanding of the underlying structures and nuanced purposes of

two language systems. In order to accomplish these tasks, there are numerous cognitive abilities required of students.

The general education setting demands higher levels of auditory processing and short-term memory skills for students from varied language backgrounds (Brice & Brice, 2000). Listening in one language and simultaneously holding and accessing another language structure in the memory requires significant memory stores. Lambert and Fillenbaum (1969) state that there is "a definite cognitive advantage for bilingual children in the domain of cognitive flexibility" (p. 69) because students who are able to understand subtle semantic differences between the languages can select the phrase that captures the meaning that they wish to impart. Furthermore, according to Harris (2003), code switching is an example of learned behavior, rather than mere language use. Children who have learned social and context cues are quick to realize that different behaviors are appropriate. Thus, children who can operate smoothly between two languages seem to be especially good on subtests that require mental manipulation and reorganization of visual patterns (Pattillo, 1999). There is some evidence that bilingual speakers are able to think more flexibly, have increased and advanced language awareness, and speak and read more rapidly in their initial language (Cook, 2003). Such "methodological control of cultural and linguistic confounding factors" (Gonzalez, 2001, p. 5) is indicative of significant critical thinking skills and is a hallmark of advanced cognitive development.

Code Switching as a Factor in Gifted Identification

The trend of thought over the past 40 years has been that bilingual children enjoy either equal abilities with or cognitive advantages over their monolingual peers (Albert & Obler, 1979; Anisfield, 1964; Ben-Zeev, 1977; Bialystok, 1991; Vygotsky, 1962). Vygotsky stressed that being able to express the same thought in more than one language enables a bilingual child to compare and contrast his or her two language systems. This ability thus allows a greater cognitive-metalinguistic awareness. This notion was authenticated in that same year by Peal and Lambert (1962) in what is considered a clas-

sic study. They found that 10-year-old Canadian bilingual children (from Montreal-Canadian schools) performed better than their matched monolingual peers on all verbal IQ test scores. This seminal study overturned earlier notions that bilingual children were cognitively disadvantaged. However, although it is clear that bilingual children are not cognitively disadvantaged, it is not clear what role cognitive strengths play in the development and use of code switching.

A later study by Lambert and Tucker (1972) argued that as children gained proficiency in immersion programs that developed high levels of language proficiency, they learned to contrast the syntax and vocabulary of their two languages. What is of interest is the notion that bilingual children must reach a certain high level of proficiency before cognitive advantages may be noticeable. The finding by Lambert and Tucker was partially supported by Ben-Zeev (1977) and Doyle, Champagne, and Segalowitz (1978). Ben-Zeev and Doyle et al. found that bilingual children performed better on some aspects of language but not as well on measures of vocabulary. It is apparent that bilingual children have to learn two names for everything. A measure of vocabulary in one language is only a partial measure of that child's dual vocabulary. If the bilingual child is measured in only one language (English only) or separately in each language and not combined (Spanish vs. English), a true measure of his or her true vocabulary may not be obtained (Gutierrez-Clellen, 1999). A combined measure may be a better estimate of vocabulary because children may have some words for some objects in one language but not in the other.

Certainly, the use of vocabulary and code switching has been somewhat addressed in the field of special education, where psychologists, teachers, and administrators have been repeatedly cautioned that code switching should not be viewed as a characteristic of language problems (Brice & Rosemary-McKibbin, 2001; Dodd, Nelson, & Sprint, 1995; Ruiz, 1988). Distinguishing the bilingual child with language disabilities from the child who is struggling with a new language can be challenging. Teachers and evaluators are exhorted to be linguistically sensitive to the needs of their students by making every effort to diagnose a true language disability in both

languages and not simplify the difficulties found in normal second language acquisition.

One of the challenges that multicultural and linguistically diverse students face is being recommended for gifted programs in the first place. Kogan (2001) noted that teachers often do not recommend such students either because teachers are looking for high levels of academic performance, which minority or bilingual students may not exhibit because of language issues, or because of the teacher's negative attitudes towards students of diverse backgrounds and a resultant perception of students' lack of proficiency in English. Harris (1993) notes that teachers often are lacking an awareness of the process of code switching and increased training should be sought to increase linguistic awareness of the possibility of giftedness among new English speakers. If teachers were aware of the challenges and requirements of code switching as evidence of intellectual behaviors, then this perspective could change.

When bilingual students can alternate between their two languages with ease and can maintain grammaticality of both languages, then this appears to be evidence of advanced language and higher order thinking skills. Code switching thus appears to be evidence of intelligent behavior that requires significant manipulation of language, grammatical structure, nuances, and subtleties. The examination of a possible relationship between code switching and intellectual abilities bears further study.

Examination of such behavior warrants attention because it is not clear what characteristics a gifted child who is bilingual exhibits. Examination of code switching could be an alternative to testing measures that seek to identify culture-free norms. Code switching is an observable problem-solving behavior that is created because of differences between cultures, and it is this resulting tension that provides rich opportunities for research and identification of gifted students. An examination of code switching may be a viable means of identifying gifted students who come from underrepresented groups and whose home cultures are not the same as the school culture. The ease with which students negotiate these cultures, manipulate the intricacies of various languages and their meanings, and use language for social meanings may be indicative of their high potential.

It is clear that code switching is not a sign of inferior language development. When it is used due to a lack of linguistic expression, code switching provides continuity in speech rather than presenting interference in language (Skiba, 1997). Code switching should be perceived as providing a linguistic advantage rather than an obstruction to communication. Through code switching, speakers can convey attitudes, share membership within a cultural group, and exclude others from that insider status. The use of the second language allows speakers to more effectively communicate nuances of meaning that are restricted within one language. MacSwan (1997) affirms that code switching significantly enhances the expressive capacity of an individual, and McLaughlin (1995), and McLaughlin, Blanchard, and Osanai (1995) encourage teachers and parents to recognize that code switching is a strategy of "great semantic power." If teachers were to recognize the expressive power of code switching and understand the sophisticated linguistic knowledge required to effectively combine two languages for a social purpose, their prejudiced beliefs about the practice, the students, and students' possible need for gifted programming may improve. Students should not be kept out of the gifted identification process or programming because of their use of sophisticated linguistic abilities that teachers may not understand nor approve of. Rather, if there are differences in the use of code switching among students of different abilities, that information should be used a positive strength in the identification process.

Opportunities for Research

There are numerous research possibilities in a reconceptualized view of code switching as a sign of advanced development. The first, of course, is a determination of possible differences in types of code switching employed by bilingual speakers. Do gifted students use code switching for different purposes than nongifted students? Do gifted students use code switching in more sophisticated manners, applying the grammatical and semantic rules more consistently? Although types of code switching have been established, is the use of these categories developmental? Do gifted students move faster

along a continuum of language development that includes code switching, or do they employ more sophisticated language strategies as a factor of being gifted? It is not clear how a student's cognitive strengths impact the development and usage of code switching. A deeper examination of code switching behaviors as a developmental activity is warranted, because so many teacher decisions and perceptions are based upon student usage of language. Although code switching has been seen as a negative, it is a significant language and social strength. Research is needed to determine if and how this strength can be used as means of identifying gifted students from diverse backgrounds.

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