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Code switching and the use of first language (L1) in the classroom has been a controversial topic in the field of linguistics and education. Past research has shown that bilingualism has benefits, and code switching in the classroom enhances student learning and achievement, as well as positive social consequences. However, research inclusive with Hmong middle school speakers is limited. This study seeks to answer the questions of when and why Hmong middle school students use L1 during group work. The findings come from classroom-based research using various methods to obtain information. A questionnaire, recorded speech samples, and interviews regarding the speech samples were analyzed to make conclusions about the use of L1 in the classroom and student perceptions of using L1. The results of the study suggest bilingual students use L1 for academic and social purposes, and that code switching serves a beneficial purpose for these students.

CODE SWITCHING IN AN ESL CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY WITH FOUR
HMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My interest with code switching began prior to being an ESL teacher. I grew up in a diverse Chicago suburb where bilingualism was a part of many friends' families. For the purposes of this research project, "bilingualism" is defined as "being able to speak more than one language" (Murshad, 2002, p. 106). I was intrigued by my friends' abilities to speak and learn in English while switching to a native language (Indian, Korean, and Chinese) with parents and community members. When I studied abroad in college, I met bilingual people from Europe who used English and their native language (German, French, Spanish) to communicate in various settings. Upon returning from Japan to the United States to teach ESL, code switching became a normal part of my personal life when I overheard friends and family code switching and my professional life when I overheard my students and colleagues code switching. I was unaware that code switching was an academic topic, a research focus or that a name existed for this phenomenon until I entered the ESL licensure program at Hamline University. Most recently, as a teacher, I noticed my students using L1 in numerous school contexts (i.e. the classroom, the hallways, field trips, parent conferences, etc.) I often wondered what the bilingual students were saying and why they might be using L1 instead of the L2; of particular interest were students who have higher proficiency in L2, possessing more vocabulary, grammatical proficiency, and an almost native-like dialect.

When I started teaching Hmong middle school students in the Midwest seven years ago, I became very sensitive to and curious about their switching between Hmong and English, particularly because these students are not “new” to this country. Many of these students were born in the United States or had come here by the time they were three years old. Furthermore, because language is a significant part of identity, I believe that middle school is a significant transitional period, since students are moving from childhood to adulthood. I am not only interested in finding out more about my Hmong students’ self-perceptions, and perceptions of language use, but I am also interested in the social interactions and cultural communicative generation gaps within the Hmong community. In addition, I sometimes overhear comments from educators and people in the community which have led me to believe they have negative perceptions about the use of L1 in various contexts. These interests in mind, I decided to study code switching among Hmong middle school students in an ESL classroom because I wanted to know in what contexts and why they used L1. This project may help educators make appropriate decisions about the role of their students’ L1 in the classroom and respond appropriately to the use of L1 in the classroom.

When I took courses on sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, and descriptive English grammar, the topic of code switching came up frequently. In my professional studies, we discussed the many facets of code switching and code mixing. I remember brainstorming about why people code switch; was it to keep conversation private, to explain or clarify directions, to translate, to make decisions or discuss in small groups? The most common reason that came up was the need to identify with a

cultural/language group. This has been confirmed by a variety of my students. For example, I have discovered East African students speak their native language in addition to English because of their strong cultural identity. My former Oromo adult students speak Oromiffa due to the oppression experienced in Ethiopia, where they were not allowed to speak their native language. Using Oromiffa helps individuals identify with their culture, traditions, and community. At the same time, the Hmong community has been fighting to maintain a strong identity since their migration from their homeland in China over 200 years ago.

Due to researchers' different viewpoints and definitions of code switching and code mixing, it is important to offer some definitions of these terms. The definition for code switching used in this research occurs when a person alternates languages simultaneously or interchangeably, crossing sentence boundaries (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Gumperz, 1977). Concurrently, this research utilizes Ncoko, Osman and Cockcroft's (2000) definition of code mixing which "involves the mixing of different affixes, words, phrases and clauses from more than one language within the same sentence and speech situation" (p. 225). Finally, when discussing students' perceptions about language use, "metalinguistic" awareness is defined as "the use of language to talk about or reflect on language" (Romaine, 1989, p. 114). This study examines how students code switch, using both L1 and L2 within a larger communicative act. I will investigate when and why students code switch while doing group work.

Research exists on code switching with a variety of language groups, but not with this particular community (Fortune, 2001; Broner, 2001; Tarone & Swain, 1995; Lin,

1996; Maher, 1997; Bain & Ya, 2000; Bauer, 2000; Nichols & Colon, 2000; Moore, 2002; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2005). Although Hmong communities are not widespread throughout the United States, there are large populations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and California. The school district used in this study has the highest Hmong population in the state and is the largest minority language group (only second to English) in the district. Data shows 26% of the K-12 population speaks Hmong at home. During the 2005-2006 school year, there were about 12,500 Hmong students in my school district. The school I taught at for five years had a 46% English Language Learners (ELLs) population with 77% of this ESL population being Hmong.

Finding out more information about the Hmong population, especially their academic achievement is important to me as a citizen and as an ESL teacher. Due to limited resources and funds, there is a general policy that students who “test out” (meet a score on standardized tests) do not receive ESL services. Because of this, there are Hmong students who do not receive ESL services and are completely mainstreamed. Sometimes I question whether or not mainstreaming ELLs based on test scores is appropriate. They still have language needs that English-speaking students do not have and that may cause them to have difficulty in content-area classes.

A majority of the Hmong middle school students are the first generation born in America and have been in the American education system since kindergarten. The medium of instruction in the district and school is almost entirely in English as a significant portion of teachers do not know how to speak Hmong. Standardized test results and personal observations suggest many students’ speaking and listening

proficiency is high, while the reading and writing skills are below grade level (skills range from second grade to sixth grade for many students at the middle school level).

The frequency of code switching among Hmong students was more prevalent than I anticipated; I have noticed a continuing need to use L1 in the classroom, for academic purposes and social functions. From informal observations, I have speculated that students code switch for a variety of reasons. These may include: having social interaction, maintaining private conversation, understanding academic instruction, clarifying directions, translating materials or discussion, and connecting to Hmong identity.

The link between language and identity leads to further reflection on the role of language and communication within adolescent development, and the degree of importance it plays in students' lives. Further understanding of this interface between academic and social needs in schools for bilingual students would allow educators to provide a learning environment that utilizes best practices for connecting with students and improving academic skill levels

Significance to Students and Families

This research project may be important to students and their families for a few reasons. First of all, the research project may provide students and their families with a little more information about how and why they may use their first language in school. Through the process of students becoming more aware of their L1 use, they may simultaneously gain insights their cultural identity. Secondly, the information will provide for a better understanding of how their first language fits into their academic

learning and the social setting of school. Finally, I hope it will demonstrate to students and their families how educators can better serve their academic and social needs in school. All of this information supports students and families being better advocates for themselves and for their community.

Significance to Colleagues and ESL/Bilingual Field

Often, mainstream teachers ask “*Should my students be talking in Hmong in my class? I have noticed that ‘Kia’ speaks Hmong to her friends whenever I give directions. Is this OK?*” As an ESL teacher, I have often wondered about the appropriate use of L1 in the classroom. Do students gain the necessary English skills needed if they are using L1 too often? What is ‘too often’? Many educators in general are not familiar with the benefits of code switching and the use of L1 in the classroom.

Research about code switching is significant in the field of linguistics and ESL education. Many researchers believe the availability and use of more than one language is a communicative resource and educators should embrace this resource in order to better meet the needs of our students. Murshad (2000) points out:

Children use language for negotiating their way through the formal arrangements of the classroom learning. To facilitate their negotiation they switch from one language to another. They also use languages for establishing communities. All languages are valuable and potentially powerful. No languages should be excluded... The success and effectiveness of a school often depends on the ways in which it uses children’s rich diet of languages to equip them for life. (p. 111)

This study will provide educators with a better understanding of why students code switch in the classroom to help in making appropriate decisions about the role and function of L1. Additionally, professional educators may gain a better understanding of how L1 fits into the classroom and enhances student learning and achievement.

Summary

Personal interest and the significance of code switching in the bilingual/ESL field has led to a strong interest in examining code switching of Hmong middle school students in an ESL classroom. In doing so, we may better understand when and why L1 is utilized, allowing educators to make appropriate decisions about the use of L1 in the classroom. Although there is extensive research on code switching, most of the research has been done with elementary-aged children as well as some high school students (Broner, 2001; Moore, 2002; Murshad, 2002; Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft, 2000; Nichols & Colon, 2000). Therefore, a need remains to find out how L1 plays a role in a middle school classroom. A majority of the code switching research has examined bilinguals whose native languages are Spanish, French, and various South African languages and dialects (Broner, 2001; Nichols & Colon, 2000; Moore, 2002; Setati, Adler, Reed & Bapoo, 2002). While some research has been done with the Hmong community (Swartz, Lee & Mortimer, 2003; Yang, 1992), it is limited, if not absent, in most of the linguistics literature. These past studies have often been done in classrooms where the teacher is bilingual (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Broner, 2001; Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft, 2000; Lin, 1996). This study focuses on a classroom where the medium of instruction is English only. Through analyzing data of the ESL classroom, I hope to gain

insights into the question of when and why Hmong middle school students code switch in the L2 classroom. I hope that my discoveries in this research project will help educators make appropriate decisions about the role of L1 in the classroom.

The literature review will explore past research dealing with when and why students code switch. These studies demonstrate that code switching performs a distinct function and is beneficial in certain contexts. Furthermore, the literature will explore the differences in when and why students switch, and that context plays a role in these differences. In chapter three the methods used in the data collection process and the rationale will be discussed. In chapter four the results of the data collected will be presented; conclusions, further discussion on what I gained, and suggestions for future research and educators will be shared in chapter five.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Extensive research has been done on code switching in second language acquisition. It is an especially significant topic for second language educators as research suggests that L1 has a function in the classroom. The project's focus is on when and why Hmong middle school students code switch in order to find out what role L1 has in the classroom. This research focus can clarify the role of L1 and help educators respond appropriately to students' use of L1 in the English-speaking classroom in hopes of bilingual students achieving to their full academic potential.

In this literature review, I will address: the history of Hmong population, the history of bilingual education, the benefits of bilingualism, when bilinguals code switch, why bilinguals code switch, the function of L1 in the classroom, language and identity, and adolescent development. Bilingual and code switching studies have been done with a variety of languages, with a considerable focus on several cultures/language groups, but none focusing on Hmong. A majority of the studies have been concentrated on Spanish-speaking students, French-speaking students, South African students, and a few Asian language groups (Setati, Adler, Reed, & Bapoo, 2002; Nichols & Colon, 2000; Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft, 2000; Hancock, 1997; Anderson & Brice, 1999; Poplack, 1980 & 1998; Anton & Camilla, 1998; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001; Lin, 1996; Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Moore, 2002; Clachar, 2000). In addition, the research tends to draw

on students who are learning French or Spanish as their L2 in immersion programs (Tarone & Swain, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Fortune, 2001; Broner, 2001). Finally, the majority of research has been done in classrooms where teachers are bilingual, and the method of instruction is often bilingual (Broner, 2001; Moore, 2002; Nichols & Colon, 2000; Lin, 1996; Setati et al., 1987). Researchers seem to be in agreement that there are many reasons for code switching, and that students and teachers code switch under various circumstances (Moore, 2002; Nichols & Colon, 2000; Poplack, 1988; Gumperz, 1977; Ncoko et al., 2000; Murshad, 2002; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001).

Hmong Population

The Hmong community has a long history of struggling to keep their cultural identity. Hmong roots trace back to northeastern China; but according to the 1990 Chinese census, only about 7.4 million remain scattered in southwestern China (Xiong, 1997). Forced to relocate due to oppression and warfare a majority of Hmong live outside of China now having fled to neighboring Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma), and Thailand (Xiong, 1997). In addition to geographical changes in the community, the years of warfare and assimilation resulted in the Hmong being divided into five branches, separated linguistically into three main dialects (Xiong, 1997).

The Hmong people who have migrated to the United States more recently are from the highlands of Laos and refugee camps in Thailand. During the Vietnam War, about 15,000 Hmong men were recruited as soldiers to serve American interests (United Hmong Foundation, 2000). The Hmong people who supported the Royal Laotian government and aided the United States CIA in fighting against the Pathet Lao forces in

the 1960s and 1970s fled for safety in refugee camps in Thailand. Starting in 1976, however, the United States began accepting Hmong refugees who assisted the CIA (Swartz, Lee & Mortimer, 1993). According to the 2000 Census, the United States' Hmong population grew dramatically from 94,439 in 1990 to 186,310 in 2000 (Carroll & Udalova, 2005). The larger Hmong communities are found in California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. In 1993, it was reported that my district had the largest urban Hmong population in the United States (Swartz, Lee & Mortimer, 2003).

It has been a difficult transition for these people, as they come from farming lives in the rural highlands of Laos and have moved to refugee camps in Thailand or other countries, such as the United States and France. According to Swartz, Lee, and Mortimer (2003), they are one of the poorest immigrant groups in the United States and have had a hard time settling into their new homes. Moreover, the linguistic barriers and cultural differences of the adult population add to their lack of formal education, leading to several obstacles working against them in terms of acculturation and educational achievement (Swartz, Lee & Mortimer, 2003).

History of Bilingual Education

The use of bilingualism to teach immigrant groups has been a controversial topic for many years (Eldridge, 1996; Portes & Hao, 1998; Reyes, 2001; Schechter, Sharken-Taboada & Bayley, 1996; Duran, 1994; Santos, 1983; Romaine, 2000; Lambert & Tucker, 1973; Setati, et al., 2002). The controversies about language are actually issues about race, class, or ethnicity, and about whose standards will exist. Some people believe that non-native speaking (NNS) students should only speak the language used in the

school (their L2), while others believe the use of L1 strengthens the home language and the acquisition of L2 (Romaine, 2000).

The use of L1 to instruct students in content areas has been controversial for decades, and the concept of language rights has sometimes been seen as encouraging ethnic differences that could lead to tension and hostility (Portes, 2002; Peal & Lambert, 1962). The concern over language differences could possibly be masking the fear many white middle-class people have of losing their “majority status.” One of the reasons why many people in the United States view bilingual education so negatively is the fear that it aims to maintain languages, and thus cultures, other than English. Furthermore, schools measure success in terms of mastery of Standard English (or whatever the accepted language of society is) non-standard speech is seen as illogical and bilingualism as a problem. Eldridge stated in 1996 that teachers and researchers in ESL have been focused on minimizing code switching in the classroom because they felt that switching indicated a failure to learn the target language or an unwillingness to do so.

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 appropriated \$7 million dollars to support educational programs for limited English-speaking students (Romaine, 2000). This funding increased dramatically over the last thirty years and reached a peak of \$191 million dollars in 1980 (Romaine, 2000). This act provided support and opportunities to bilingual students by giving school districts mandates and funding to be used for training teachers and teacher aides, resources for educational programs, development and dissemination of materials, and parent involvement projects (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). Although the Act did not explicitly require bilingual instruction or the use of the

students' native language for educational purposes, it encouraged ESL programs designed to teach the students English. It also placed priority on low-income families (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

As a result of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, several other court cases and legislative decisions have occurred (Romaine, 1995; Stewner-Manzanares, 1988; Cubillos, 1988). The most famous precedent-setting case was *Lau vs. Nichols* (1974), which found no special programs were available to meet the linguistic needs of bilingual students in San Francisco. Because of this, students were not benefiting from the instruction of content in English, and were not receiving an equal education. The plaintiffs used the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as a basis for their appeal, stating that “no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Romaine, 1995, p. 249). The Supreme Court concluded that the minority-language speakers received fewer benefits than the English-speaking majority, and that this denied the plaintiffs a meaningful opportunity to participate in educational programs. This landmark decision meant that, for the first time, language rights of non-English speakers were recognized as a civil right (Romaine, 1995).

The social and legal dialogues together have become major pieces of funding and conversations about the education of non-native speaking immigrants (Romaine, 1995; Stewner-Manzanares, 1988; Cubillos, 1988). In 1975, the United States Civil Rights’ Task Force examined a number of school districts around the country that were receiving

federal funding, and in some cases, found that non-native English speakers' constitutional rights were being violated by them (Romaine, 1995). As a result of this investigation, bilingual programs were mandated in some districts, such as Dade County, Florida; otherwise, the district would lose all federal funds (Romaine, 1995). Furthermore, the Bilingual Education Act was re-authorized in 1988 (Romaine, 1995; Cubillos, 1988). In 1979, the Latino Consent Decree (LCD) was created, due to a legally binding court order (1978) that required a school district in Minnesota to provide specific educational services for its Hispanic/Latino students. The LCD program in this district is designed for Spanish-speaking students who need additional academic support in the content areas of their native language. Furthermore, LCD students learn about Latino culture and history.

According to Portes (2002), several organizations, such as US English, have been established because of the fear that dominance and cultural unity may be undermined.

US English stated:

Where linguistic unity has broken down, our energies and resources flow into tensions, hostilities, prejudices, and resentments. These develop and persist.

Within a few years, if the breakdown persists, there will be no retreat...Society as we know it can fade into noisy Babel and then chaos. (Portes, 2002, p. 10).

In 1981, Former President Reagan condemned bilingual education stating in a New York Times article it is wrong and against American values and ideals to have bilingual education programs that openly admit they are dedicated to preserving native language. He felt and stated that bilingual programs limit bilingual students' abilities to learn

adequate English and thus, limit their access to the job market (Romaine, 1995). Then, in 1983, Reagan proposed to cut the federal budget for bilingual education and to relax restrictions on the methods used by local school districts to enhance limited English-speaking students' achievement (Romaine, 1995; Romaine, 2000).

In 1998, California voters, including support from bilingual minorities, overwhelmingly approved Proposition 227, headed primarily by Ronald Unz, which proposed the use of English only (Portes, 2002; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2005). Inspired by his mother, who was born in Los Angeles and spoke Yiddish in an immigrant home, Unz stated that she "had quickly and easily learned English as a young child, [and] never understood why children were being kept for years in native-language classes, or why such programs continued to exist" (Portes, 2002, p. 14). Based only on his personal experience and not on research, Unz concluded and organized a large campaign that declared ESL/Bilingual programs in public schools meant remedial and inferior education, and delayed the learning of English (Portes, 2002). According to Romaine (2000), the United States seems to accept bilingualism when it has been economically useful and rejects it when immigrants are seen as a threat.

Benefits of Bilingualism

These bilingual/ESL policies are a result of research that shows there are benefits in bilingualism. (Portes, 2002; Portes & Hao, 1998; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001; Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Reyes, 2001; Zelasko, 1998; Romaine, 1995; Lambert & Tucker, 1973). True bilingual education involves rigorous instruction in English, while maintaining the students' L1 (Romaine, 1995; Reyes, 2001; Brice & Roseberry-

McKibbin, 2001). Schools using bilingual education have remarkable results in a variety of contexts. Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin (2001) reported that findings in a UNESCO report that date back to 1953 state

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue.

Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs.

Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium (p. 10).

Research also shows that L1 maintenance is beneficial for cognitive development and metalinguistic abilities (Portes, 2002; Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Bauer, 2000; Zelasko, 1998; Cummins, 1984; Van Groenou, 1993; Vygotsky, 1962). Perceptions of bilingualism started to change in the 1960s. Bilingual children are said to have better developmental patterns than monolinguals, have higher cognitive abilities, use situational clues to understand what is happening, possess the ability to think flexibly and abstractly about language, and can transfer skills and knowledge about rules from one language to another (Broner, 2001; Reyes, 2001; Portes, 2002; Zelasko, 1998; Peal & Lambert, 1962). Bilingual children from various language backgrounds (French-English, Chinese-English, German-French, and English-Spanish) were found to function at a higher cognitive level than monolingual children (Portes & Hao, 1998). Linguists pointed out that bilinguals tend to have enhanced cognitive performance because they

have more than one conception for a concrete thing and that “bilinguals look at language, rather than through it, to the intended meaning” (Portes, 2002, p. 12). In a study done in 1980 in San Diego, fluent bilinguals outperformed limited bilinguals and English-only speakers in standardized tests and grade point averages (Portes, 2002).

In addition to high cognitive and metalinguistic abilities, bilingualism carries self-perception and social benefits, as well (Portes, 2002; Reyes, 2001; Schechter, Sharken-Taboada & Bayley, 1996). Cultural awareness is a crucial and inevitable part of our identity. Studies done in California and Florida showed that students who were fluent bilinguals by the time they entered high school had significantly higher educational aspirations and self-esteem three years later (Portes, 2002). Within the family structure, it is important for children to maintain their native language so they can understand their cultural backgrounds (Schechter et al., 1996; Cho, 2000; Portes & Hao, 1998). By being able to communicate with various generations within family, generational conflicts are reduced. As well, by communicating with others from the same cultural/language background, bilinguals gain a strong sense of self-worth. Family cohesion and strong community ties occur when students are proficient and fluent in both languages, that of their cultural background and that of the one spoken by the majority of the society they live in (Cho 2000; Cho & Tse, 1997). Portes and Hao’s 1998 survey showed that bilinguals have less conflict with their parents and greater solidarity, as well as higher self-esteem and ambition than monolingual English speakers who are similar to them in age, sex, national origin, and time in the United States (Portes, 2002).

Another benefit of bilingualism deals with economic globalization and the expansion of the immigrant population in the United States (Portes, 2002; Schechter et al., 1996). The increase in the United States' immigrant population has resulted in a growing number of jobs that require bilingual workers. Schechter, Sharken-Taboada, and Bayley's (1996) study found that Spanish-speaking parents in California said they preferred a multicultural society and want their children to be bilingual. According to the 1993 United States Census Report, one in seven residents spoke a language other than English at home (Schechter et al., 1996). Ultimately, this means diverse, multilinguistic communities, schools, and jobs.

Overall, bilingualism has several benefits, both cognitive, and socially. By maintaining L1 and learning L2, bilinguals have higher cognitive and metalinguistic abilities which can lead to higher academic achievement. L1 maintenance helps students be successful in school, especially when learning more content and high-level skills and strategies as language is removed as a barrier in the learning process. Maintaining L1 is important for the family social structure to remain connected and communication between generations is linked. Bilingualism also helps shape cultural identity and aids in meeting the social needs of students. Finally, bilingualism brings economic diversity and globalization to the community.

When Bilinguals Code Switch

It is accepted in the field of linguistics that code switching is a normal, common, and important aspect of bilingualism (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Brice, Mastin & Perkins, 1997; Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Poplack, 1980; Gumperz, 1977; Duran,

1994; McLaughlin, 1995; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001; Murshad, 2002). This aspect requires second language learners to use a rule-governed, cognitive and linguistically manipulated process. Brice, Mastin, and Perkins (1997) found that in all of the instances of code switching, none were grammatically incorrect, and the instances followed rules. They concluded that code switching is not a sign of language confusion. In an ESL classroom where only English was used in instruction, the same researchers found that 17.41% of all utterances involved code switching, code mixing, or the use of L1 (Brice, Mastin & Perkins, 1997).

Some researchers have found that bilingual students tend to use L1 in the classroom more in upper grade levels (fifth grade and beyond) than in their primary educational years (Tarone & Swain, 1995; Broner, 2001). Possibly this is due to vocabulary and academic tasks becoming gradually more difficult and it is easier and more natural to speak one's native language (Tarone & Swain, 1995). This occurs most often when conversing with each other socially in situations where L2 is the primary language of choice in formal contexts and L1 is used for informal conversations. According to Tarone & Swain (1995), immersion students seem to have a strong preference for using their native language in the classroom, particularly when they are conversing with one another. Furthermore, there tends to be more use of the native language in upper grade levels than lower grade levels (Tarone & Swain, 1995).

Brice and Roseberry-McKibbin (2001) point out educators need to maintain a flexible environment, which entails accepting answers in either L1 or L2 because students are acknowledged and rewarded for participation. Under many classroom

contexts it is important to prompt students to continue communicating, and sometimes this means using whatever language is meaningful at that time. When bilingual students feel comfortable in the classroom, they will code switch more often than when they are in a classroom where they perceive their language as being inadequate or not important.

Evidence shows that children code switch when they know that the other person or people involved in the conversation will be able to understand them (Murshad, 2002; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001). In a study done in London, 12 Bengali-speaking primary students were observed as the researcher carried out a group discussion about the use of language at home and in the classroom (Murshad, 2002). Another group of students in the same study included five primary school students coming from various first languages, including Chinese, Urdu, Bengali, and Bulgarian. The majority of students in this study were born in the United Kingdom, while some were born in Bangladesh, but came to the United Kingdom as babies and learned the language of their parents or families in the United Kingdom. Many of the students started school without knowing English. The researchers concluded that most children are aware of the language they are using and make conscious decisions about when to switch, based on their audience, to ensure effective conveyance of meaning. It was also concluded that the children stressed the importance of having effective communication using the most appropriate language, whether it is their first or second, and in most cases a combination of all languages within their ability (Murshad, 2002). What was interesting about this study was that it found that the children invented a third language that acted as “hooks” and allowed the children

to code switch in order to be effective communicators. This language might be compared to “Spanglish”. It was a cross between the children’s home language and English.

The setting of a communicative act seems to have an influence on when students code switch and how often. A study done in Johannesburg, South Africa found that context (formal classroom and informal playground situations) had a strong influence on the amount and type of code switching that took place (Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft, 2000). Forty multilingual primary school children from two schools, ages six to eleven, were “secretly” tape-recorded during informal and formal conversations during lunch breaks and lessons (Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft, 2000). The students tended to code switch more often in a social setting, rather than in the academic setting. In this situation, school policy demanded that multilingual learners sit far apart from each other in classrooms, so that it would be more difficult to use L1 in the classroom.

In an environment that supports bilingualism, results might have been different. Ncoko, Osman and Cockcroft (2000) found that code switching occurs when a speaker attempts to change the tone of the conversation. This can be either positive or negative, depending on whether it is an indicator of solidarity or if it serves to increase social distance. Conversely, the circumstances of this South African study are different from my research setting. Because our ESL classes are primarily Hmong, and because classroom policy is intended to promote solidarity among the students, there is no physical separation between language groups.

Why Bilinguals Code Switch

There are several reasons why bilinguals code switch, with some reasons being conscious and some being unconscious (Ncoko et al., 2000). Research has found that bilinguals code switch to convey or clarify meaning, learn new vocabulary, and help create a sense of ethnic identity and community (Bauer, 2000; Brice & Anderson, 1999; Gumperz, 1977; Kamwangamulu and Lee 1991; Ncoko et al., 2000). In this section, I will talk about current research findings for why people code switch. Researchers have found that bilinguals code switch because: speakers can make a stronger point or send a clearer message, an idea or concept may be better understood, students learn new vocabulary through code switching, the speaker is quoting someone directly, the speaker is gaining knowledge about language preferences within a group, and supporting ethnic identity and solidarity.

Switching between L1 and L2 can be used to reinforce, emphasize, or clarify a concept, message, or idea (Romaine, 1995; Ncoko et al., 2000; Gumperz, 1982; Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2000). In Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft's study (2000), this happened infrequently. However, Gumperz (1982) and Kamwangamulu and Lee (1991) say that reiteration of a statement in order to emphasize it is common. Brice and Roseberry-McKibbin (2000) mention an example of what may be seen initially as a spontaneous language use as a reason for code switching through the following example. A student volunteers to help another student by giving explanations of how to do a particular math problem. "*Student: 'No, mira te voy [sic] enseñar como hacer una.* (No, look, I am going to show you how to do one.) *Okay, mira, se tiene qué comensar de este*

lado. (Okay, look, you have to start from this side.)” (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2000, p.14). This is clearly not a “spontaneous” use of L1, and the purpose of it is to explain a process or directions in a language that is more comprehensible. This reason for code switching is frequent in a variety of contexts, especially in a classroom where the teacher instructs in English only and the students need clarification from their peers.

Furthermore, people code switch as a strategy in order to be better understood (Heredia & Altarriba, 2001; Romaine, 1995; Poplack, 1988; Setati, Adler, Reed & Bapoo, 2002). Sometimes translating a word does not necessarily get the speaker’s idea or concept across to the recipient. Poplack (1988) found that speakers perceived using English in order to provide what is socially indicated as being the best way of saying something. Heredia & Altarriba (2001) give an example of this. “The Spanish words ‘carino’ implies a combination of liking and affections. Neither of these English words alone truly conveys the meaning of the Spanish word” (p. 165). Two Spanish-English bilinguals who are speaking in English may switch and use this word if they wanted to refer to this concept. Setati et al. (2002) found that some bilingual teachers in South Africa preferred code switching, and said it was necessary to use code switching when they saw their students’ not understanding a concept.

As well, students and/or teachers frequently code switch when they do not know a word in L2, and are learning new vocabulary or can not remember a word they have learned before (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001). For example, a teacher might say “You have a different name for your *grandmother*, don’t you? *Abuelita?* (Grandmother?)” (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001, p. 14). This

may occur in an ESL classroom when students are learning new vocabulary from their peers, from a bilingual teacher or from a bilingual dictionary.

Code switching also takes place when directly quoting what someone had said in a language other than the one used by the speakers at the time (Ncoko et al., 2000; Gumperz, 1982; Romaine, 1995). In one example, a child began a conversation using L1, but switched to L2 when explaining what a teacher had said in the language used at school (the L2 for the student). After the quotation, the speakers switched back to the language of the group (Ncoko et al., 2000). In another case, a Papua New Guinean girl was narrating in her L1 the story of a cartoon she had just seen, but when quoting one of the characters, used English (her L2) because that was the language of the character (Romaine, 1995).

Another reason for code switching is to explore language preferences with strangers (Ncoko et al., 2000). Speakers may initially find themselves in an uncertain situation. Sometimes a speaker will start a conversation in one code but will switch to another code depending on the addressee's response (Ncoko et al., 2000). This may be the case where it is not obvious what a person's L1 is, nor their language preference, but in an ESL classroom, where it is obvious what L1s are used, this may not be a common reason for code switching.

According to Ncoko, Cockcroft & Osman (2000), code switching is used as an indication of ethnic identity and solidarity within group membership and identity. This is especially noticeable with older children. In a South African study, researchers found children used their L1 while strategizing and playing on the playground, and the students

were aware that this often caused misunderstanding between L1 speakers and L2 speakers (Ncoko et al., 2000). However, students used L1 with speakers of the same language in order to create solidarity. Gumperz (1977) refers to this code switching act as a “we-code”, in which bilinguals associate with people and informal activities using L1. This type of communication may have two phases. The first phase is exclusive and a boundary is created between the participants and the rest of society, which is anti-social and uncooperative. The second phase entails the establishment of mutual role relationships within a communicative act. This is the more social, cooperative phase, where the code is chosen so that it is acceptable to everyone involved. One tends to feel more positive about, and closer to a cultural/language group member than to those of another group. An example of this would be when strangers meet and they realize they speak the same native language. In many cases such as this, the strangers will use L1 in order to acknowledge they have the same background. Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin (2001) reflect this point, as well. The use of the student’s native language also suggests an unspoken appreciation of the student’s language and culture. This could be a frequent occurrence in an ESL classroom where the majority of students come from the same background, especially with certain cultures and there is a strong perception of culture and solidarity.

Conversely, code switching can be used to hide one’s identity (Ncoko et al., 2000). When there is a negative perception of a language by either society or an individual, the users of the language are affected. The aforementioned South African study found that when this occurred it was because the children were trying to hide their

home language. For example, a teacher asked a multilingual boy why he was not playing soccer with the other boys. The boy tried to speak in English (L2), but because he had an accent, it was apparent English was not his native language. When the teacher responded to him in the boy's L1, he replied in L1. However, when the boys playing soccer came over to him, he switched to English, which was the groups' L1, but the boy's L2.

Additionally, Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft's study (2000) and Romaine (1995) found that code switching can be used to act as a directive function, when the code switcher addresses a specific recipient of a message. An inclusive directive use of code switching occurs at a moderate frequency, when two bilingual speakers and a monolingual speaker are having a conversation on the playground. Exclusive directive use of code switching is more conscious and often contains negative comments about those excluded. This reason for code switching was more common at both of the schools in Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft's (2000) study, where bilingual students concealed information from the monolingual students. From my experience, this could be a common reason for code switching in a classroom where there are numerous first languages, especially in a middle school, where there seems to be a lot of exclusiveness between certain students.

The Function of L1 in the Classroom

In recent years, extensive research has been done on the use of L1 in the classroom. Some studies have focused specifically on bilingual content classes such as math and science, where the teacher could speak both L1 and L2 fluently (Setati et al., 2002; Zazkis, 2000; Nichols & Colon, 2000). These studies suggest that code switching

in the classroom has facilitated the teaching and learning of these content areas and that it provides the support needed for learners continue to develop their language skills in both L1 and L2 (Zazkis, 2000; Murshad, 2002; Moore, 2002; Setati et al., 2002; Nichols & Colon, 2000).

Some bilingual teachers use code switching to reformulate concepts, ideas, and instructions (Setati et al, 2002; Nichols & Colon, 2000). In a study done in rural and urban South Africa, it was found that some teachers code switched more often in the math and science classes, while the teachers of English rarely used code switching to explain or give directions (Setati et al., 2002). This difference was probably due to the fact that the goals of the classes varied. In English, the goal was to use English, and develop language skills. However, in the science and math classes, the primary goal was to teach concepts, mathematical and scientific structures. The power of language depends on its suitability with the context in which it is used. With this in mind, schools need to understand the arguments and agree upon how they will deal with bilingual issues.

The evidence from Murshad's (2000) study suggests the bilingual skills of children directly impact their accomplishments. These children need both L1 and L2 to achieve their objectives and to fulfill the requirements of the tasks set in their classroom. In earlier school years, the use of L1 in the classroom is necessary for the development of L2. Yet, in later school years, the use of L2 serves a different purpose. It was essential for gaining access to the curriculum and developing students' competence in English.

A study done in a Latino bilingual classroom with a Spanish and English speaking teacher determined that code switching was necessary for instruction and understanding (Nichols & Colon, 2000). Spanish was the dominant language used in instruction and it was found that the only time the teacher produced an extended English sequence was when he was talking on the phone to a person outside of the classroom, when a non-Spanish speaker came into his classroom, when he talked to students after class, or when he perceived a student did not comprehend a significant point in Spanish. Sometimes students responded in the L2, depending on their proficiency level in Spanish (L1), but the teacher often responded in Spanish, demonstrating that his expectation was that the students would comprehend spoken Spanish, even if English would have been easier at that time. The teacher employed code switching when clarifying directions and emphasizing a point. From this study, researchers determined using native language in class is a resource in an academic setting, and should be used to bridge academic gaps in second language learners (Nichols & Colon, 2000).

The use of code switching in the classroom can be effective for both language and content acquisition. The functions of L1 include clarification, checking comprehension, giving instructions and procedures, as well as giving a sense of cohesion. Overall, many researchers suggest using the native language of students may have the most beneficial effects on student learning.

Language and Identity

The issue of language has a considerable role in the classroom, when examining identity, development, and success with students. Sociolinguistic research has found a

significant link between one's language and identity from a social point of view (Norton Peirce, 1995; McKay & Hornberger, 2001; Toohey, 2000; Day, 2002). Language is a social practice, taking place within relationships, which help form identity and a sense of self. Many researchers believe that language choice involves identity acts that symbolize a kind of distinctiveness the speaker wants to communicate in an interaction (Torras & Gafaranga, 2002; Cho, 2000; Siegal, 1996). From personal experience in the classroom, when learners invest in a second language, they go into it with the understanding that they will acquire a greater range of resources. In addition, when language learners communicate with others, they constantly organize and reorganize a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. The choice of language in classroom activities, and school and community activities help define these three aspects of self-esteem identified by Schumann: *global* (overall assessment of self-worth); *specific* (self-evaluation in various life situations such as work and social interactions, as well as personality and intelligence); and *task* (self-evaluation in particular tasks) (1978, as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995).

Along with language and identity comes the value of power, and how language influences power and vice versa. Language is not only an instrument of an exchange of ideas or knowledge, but also an instrument of power. A person speaks to be understood and also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished, etc. This capability implies the power to impose a reaction (Bourdieu, 1977; Day, 2002). It seems that this value of power affects societal perceptions and relationships, which are significant in a school setting.

Research has shown that first generation adults tend to maintain and preserve their language and ethnic culture, while the second generation makes conscious decisions to successfully assimilate into the dominant culture (Cho, 2000). Kim (1980, as cited in Cho, 2000) believes that because of physical racial differences, Asian-Americans cannot be completely assimilated into American society like European immigrants, so they search out and use L1 as well as their lost identity. American society has cultural diversity apparent in physical features and one might think that assimilation is not dependent on appearance. However, cultural minority groups who do not possess the European-American appearance may stand out more, feel secluded, or detached from American society, and therefore, may not be able to assimilate as easily as people who possess European physical features. Because of this, some Asian-Americans may look towards the use of L1 and their cultural identity more often than European immigrants (Cho, 2000).

Studies show that teachers tend to have negative expectations of minority children. In one experiment, prospective elementary teachers' perceptions of standard communication among children were affected by the children's race. African-American and Mexican-American children were rated less standard than Caucasian students. In another study, kindergarten teachers in Toronto were asked to pick three students whom they felt were likely to fail by third grade, and three students whom they felt would be successful. The children who had English as a second language were viewed as likely to fail about twice as often as other students (Romaine, 2000).

Students' choice of language has many implications for the speaker as well as for the people who are communicating with the speaker. At the same time, teachers' decisions about the role of native language in the classroom are affected by this relationship between language, identity, and power. The education system has a role in defining power through policies and procedures. Language policies and procedures in the classroom, at school, and within districts impact these definitions of power and identity, which directly impact student learning and achievement.

Adolescent Development

This study focuses on a specific age group (i.e., middle school), and can not ignore the issues or role of adolescent development. Middle school is a significant transition period for adolescents as they are becoming more self-aware, self-conscious, and are developing new skills, including the ability to reason and form moral opinions (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000; Way & Pahl, 2001; Moore & Zaff, 2002; Potter et. al, 2001).

Most people would agree that middle school is a challenging time for learners. Research has found a decline in academic achievement for a majority of students during middle school (Mullins & Irvin, 2000). In addition, studies have documented declines in school satisfaction, attitudes towards academic and non-academic subjects, and reactions to teachers by adolescents (Haladyna & Thomas, 1979). This transition is a period filled with confusion, anxiety and anticipation. In my experiences working with students of various ages, it seems the social and individual needs of young adolescents are different between elementary school children and high school students. With this in mind,

educators need to realize and utilize strategies and methods to help students go through the transition, help them create a strong identity, and prepare them for their later years.

Adolescents yearn for intimacy, deep connections and quality relationships (Kessler, 2000). These relationships involve caring, a sense of belonging, and the drive to be seen and heard in a small group, as well as within the larger picture (Kessler, 2000; Potter et al., 2001). There is a strong need to be accepted by their peers and to gain approval from them, more so than to have approval from adults, and in this they seem to differ from elementary school children.

In the teen years, young people begin the search for meaning and purpose, and often ask themselves questions like *Why am I here? Does my life have a purpose? What does my future hold?* According to Moore and Zaff (2002), teenagers should be viewed as whole people, more than just students, patients, or delinquents. It seems that adults should be conscientious of validating adolescents' questions and should help them seek answers.

Another part of the transition is the stronger urge to nourish the creative drive and exceed adolescents' perceived limits (Potter et al., 2001; Moore & Zaff, 2002). Engaging students in activities that allow them to express themselves helps them feel "seen" and "heard", and promotes healthy risk-taking. Programs that engage teens also teach important social and life skills, encouraging and supporting teenagers develop a sense of community and self-worth.

Meeting the needs of middle school students involves nurturing student/adult relationships and helping students feel that someone is looking out for them (Way &

Pahl, 2001; Moore & Zaff, 2002). Additionally, adults need to make teenagers feel competent and independent. Students need to be validated and should be given ample opportunities to succeed on an individual level. Teenager's needs are met when their perceptions of the school are not associated with negative features such as discrimination, low expectations, stereotypes, repression, bullying and teasing, punishment, isolation (Way & Pahl, 2001).

What does this have to do with code switching in the ESL/English-speaking classroom? A simple answer is if English-speaking middle school students are allowed to communicate, develop relationships, search for purpose in their life, engage in activities that make them feel competent and independent through their native language, then middle school students from other language groups should be able to do the same thing in their native language. Middle school students who communicate, develop relationships, search for purpose in their life, and engage in activities feel competent and independent. In order to support this critical social development, educators may need to recognize that this happens best in the language that the students feel most comfortable with or with both languages. As middle school educators, a part of our job is to help facilitate the transitions our students are going through, both academic/cognitive, as well as social. Code switching plays a key role in these areas, and serves a direct function that cannot be dismissed.

The Gap in Research

In summary, code switching occurs in many forms and at various frequencies. Research also shows that it has multiple benefits in the classroom. However, studies

have rarely looked at students in ESL classes. Instead they often examine classrooms where both the teachers and the students are bilingual in the same languages. Finally, past studies have focused on elementary children and high school students, rather than with middle school students. The difference in age group is significant because of the cognitive and social factors that play into language use and communication.

It seems the need to code switch has academic implications, as well as social implications (Brice & Anderson, 1999; Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Nichols & Colon, 2000; Cho, 2000; Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997). Due to the unique high population of Hmong students in my district, there is a present need to determine how the L1 of these students plays a part in their interactions with others in the classroom. When are students using L1 in the ESL classroom? Why are they using it? Answering these questions may help educators make appropriate decisions about the function L1 plays in the classroom.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methods I used for the research in order to find out when and why Hmong middle school students use L1 in the classroom. I will share the process that I used and the rationale behind design decisions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I talked about how the Hmong population has changed, how the history of bilingual education has transitioned throughout history, how research has found benefits in bilingual education, when bilinguals code switch, why bilinguals code switch, how L1 has a role in the classroom, how language affects identity, and how educators can aid adolescent development in a positive manner. I want to explore how Hmong middle school students use code switching in an ESL classroom, an English-speaking environment, in order to find out how they use L1 so that educators can make appropriate decisions about the use of L1 in the classroom. In order to answer my question, I collected and analyzed language samples where students used more than one language. This chapter will review the methods used in this study.

Rationale for Case Study

For the purposes of this project, a case study was chosen for the elicitation methods to my research questions. The case study involved four students code switching in a sheltered ESL classroom. The beginning of this project began with general questions and became more focused as the research continued. Clues were retrieved from informal observations in the classroom and from the research activities. Changes to the direction and timing of the project occurred; work was to take place with students from a previous school year, but due to uncontrollable time constraints there were not sufficient speech

samples. Examination occurred with students in one classroom setting considered “typical” within the district. As the research progressed, methods were modified and the data collection and analysis became more specific.

Site and Subjects

The middle school used in this field experience is an urban school in the Midwest. Out of the 750 students that attend this school, 86% qualify for free/reduced lunch, and they are labeled as having low socioeconomic status. 49% of students are English language learners and 44% of students are Asian, primarily Hmong. Secondary schools in the district use a sheltered-English instructional method, in which ESL students receive content instruction with an ESL-licensed teacher who may be licensed in another content field or “highly-qualified” in a content field under the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act. Students are placed in an ESL level based on reading and writing scores on standardized tests and teacher evaluation. The ESL level determines how many ESL classes students are scheduled into. Beginning ELLs receive four to five ESL classes a day including content subjects such as science, math, and social studies; higher level ELLs receive one reading/writing class a day. Students are placed into mainstream classes as they move up ESL levels. Whereas the average mainstream class size is about 30 students, the average ESL classroom size is about 24 students.

Subjects of this study were four Hmong middle school students, ages twelve to fourteen. Three out of the four were born in the United States and one was born in Thailand, but moved to the United States before he was one year old. All students were in Level 5 ESL, the highest level of ESL before exiting to an all-mainstream schedule.

The students were selected based on who turned in their parental permission form and group dynamics observed by me, as the teacher. These students have advanced English-speaking and listening skills (almost native-like), but read at about a fifth grade level. All of the participants qualified for free/reduced lunch. Many of the class members were Hmong, with similar demographics. However, there were two Spanish-speaking students in the classroom.

In elementary school, all of the students had either inclusion or pull-out ESL services. Students in inclusion ESL classes received ESL services and support within their mainstream class. Students in pull-out ESL instruction were pulled-out of their mainstream classes for 30 to 60 minutes a day, and given ESL support through reading groups. In middle school, these students have had sheltered content-area ESL Reading and Writing. In addition, students took mainstream content area subjects English (and an additional reading class in some cases), social studies, science, and math, and an elective course (physical education, art, music, industrial arts, etc.)

Materials

Equipment needed for this study included digital recorders with lapel microphones. These materials allowed me to obtain the speaking samples I needed to collect the data I was looking for. I listened to the recorded data, looked at the transcribed discussion among the students, and analyzed the occurrences of code switching to find out the frequency of code switching, and when students chose to code switch. I transcribed the English speech samples, and a bilingual Hmong speaker translated and transcribed the Hmong speech samples. The translator/transcriber was

compensated for her time through a MinneTESOL grant. Additionally, the digital recorders and lapel microphones were purchased through another MinneTESOL grant.

Other materials used in this procedure included field notes, which I took prior to the recordings, during the recordings, and while I was looking at the transcriptions. Furthermore, I used a questionnaire (see Appendix A), which was given after the recordings. I did not want to influence students' group talk, nor did I want to influence their answers in the questionnaire, so I gave it to them after the recordings were finished. I did have some prior knowledge of the students as they had previously been in my classroom and I had worked with them for a few months prior to the groupings and recordings. By the time I started gathering data, I already had some knowledge of their family background, their educational background, and their L1 literacy proficiency. Furthermore, I interviewed the students after the recordings and after I coded the speech samples (see Appendix B for interview questions). The interviews were also recorded with the lapel microphones and digital recorders.

Procedure

The first step in the data-collection process was talking to the students about the project. Prior to collecting the data, I talked briefly with the whole class about the project and explained the process; I would be doing a project with a few students from this class in order to find out when they were using their native language during group work. Students were told that their participation was optional and permission was needed from their parents in order to participate. I also stated that the project included an interview and they would be compensated for their time. While students did ask questions about the

project, I did not want the students to be thinking about it too much so I briefly answered their questions. I wanted the data collection process to be as natural as possible for the student participants and did not want to influence the students or the process.

For this project, I chose four eighth grade Hmong students out of a class of 25 to work together several times on various in-class group assignments. The group was determined by personalities, dynamics, compatibility, gender, and who had received parental permission. The participants consisted of two girls and two boys, who self-selected to participate in the study after hearing again about the project and the process for obtaining the data. I used the following criteria to choose the students who would participate in this study: students who turned in their parental consent form and group dynamics based on informal teacher observation. Students who seemed able to work well with different learners were chosen to ensure enough speech samples could be gathered for analysis. Unsure if gender would play a role in the data, an equal number of female and male participants were chosen. It was also important that I use students who would converse naturally, as much as possible, and who would get along with each other and create and maintain positive group dynamics.

All students in the class were given various discovery tasks in an ESL language arts class, in which they had to collaborate in their groups, negotiate, come to consensus, and write group answers. These 30 to 45-minute tasks generated and promoted discussion among the group, allowed students a substantial amount of speaking time, and gave opportunities to code switch. After practicing with the microphones several times (so the students become familiar and comfortable with the devices), speech samples were

collected five times. The Hmong speech acts that took place were translated and transcribed by a bilingual Hmong speaker. This person listened to the audio recordings and wrote out the utterances in Hmong. Then, she translated and transcribed them into English, so I knew in what capacity they were using their L1.

The four students I collected data from wore lapel microphones connected to digital recorders for three weeks while doing various group work, to be comfortable with the microphones; when it was time to gather data, the environment felt comfortable and natural with their conversations and language use. As a warm-up, the students wore the recorders six times before I started recording their conversations for data collection. Subsequently, students were recorded an additional six times doing various group activities where they had to negotiate answers, make decisions together, and create and write pieces together. I had originally planned to videotape the students in addition to audio-recording them, but due to technical difficulties this did not happen. The background noise was too loud, and there was not a good place to set up the video recorder. I decided that if the lapel microphones picked up the speech acts, and the group discussion was audible, the videotaping was not necessary.

The first two activities the students worked together on focused on finding topic sentences and main ideas from a text *More Reading Power*. These first lessons coincided with reading comprehension exercises and writing practice. Students were not given many directions about the process. Students needed to negotiate the process themselves in order to meet the activities' goals. In the first activity, students had to read non-fiction short essays about inventions and then pandas, determine topics, topic sentences and

main ideas. They had to identify the topic of the short essay, topic sentences in each of the four paragraphs, and then create a main idea statement. Students were recorded for 30 minutes. In the second activity, students worked together again to determine the topics, topic sentences, and then negotiate a main idea statement written in their own words. The non-fiction text focused on food safety and then map-making and world perceptions that influence map-making. Students were recorded for 45 minutes.

The next three activities took place two weeks later when the class started working on opinion and persuasive writing. The first text was an article from a teen magazine about how teenagers get stressed out with busy schedules and too much to do and whether that is helping or hindering the students in their health and lifestyle. Students read the article together, answered some comprehension questions, and wrote a short opinion essay using arguments either from the text or their own ideas. Then, students got into their groups to read their opinion pieces and discuss what the strongest argument was, based on the students' writing. Students were recorded for 25 minutes. Due to technical difficulties, this recording was not used in my final collection of data.

The fourth group work activity that students worked on continued with persuasive/opinion lesson goals. The class read an article from an educational journal about the pros and cons of selling junk food in schools. Students had to identify three strong reasons for each side of the argument from the article, and then write a paragraph about their own opinion using reasons from the text or their own ideas. After the students completed their individual writing, they came together in their group, read the opinion pieces, and then debated until choosing one side of the argument to present to the class.

Students needed to negotiate together how they would present their argument and choose a speaker for their group. In this activity, students were recorded for 15 minutes.

The fifth recorded group activity focused on homework policies. Students read an article about whether or not middle school and high school students get too much homework. Students read both sides of the argument, and then wrote their own opinion, using at least three reasons to support their position. Instead of students writing individual short essays, students had to come to an agreement about which position their group would take, and collaborate together to write one piece. Students were recorded for 33 minutes.

The final recorded group activity took place two weeks later as the class began a novel unit. This was a pre-reading strategy that involved key vocabulary from the story in which students had to collaborate to write a prediction about what the story was about, using the vocabulary words. Students were recorded for 23 minutes; this recording was not used in my final collection of data due to technical difficulties.

Also included in this process was a questionnaire that was given to the students after the recordings. I wanted the speech samples to be as natural and neutral as possible. The more information students had about the study, the more likely it was that the students would be influenced, and consequently influence the group talk during the data collection process. This questionnaire focused on their language use at home and outside of school with various family members and peers. The following questions were asked of the students in the form of a written questionnaire (see Appendix A for full questionnaire):

- Where were you born? If you were born outside of the United States, how long have you lived in the U.S?
- Which language do you hear most at home?
- Your father speaks to you in Hmong **at home**... (circle) Always, Often, Sometimes, Never
- Your father speaks to you in Hmong **outside of the home**...(circle) Always, Often, Sometimes, Never
- Does your father ever speak English to you? How often? When (under what circumstances)?
- Which language do your parents consider most important for you?
- How often do you speak Hmong in the classroom? How often do you speak Hmong in the hallways at school?

After the conversations were translated and transcribed, I coded the speech samples, and took field notes from the transcriptions. I looked at the following questions: 1) How often did the students use English and how often did they use Hmong? 2) Under what circumstances were students code-switching? 3) Did some students use L1 more than others?

In addition to my observations of the audio recordings, I conducted a group interview with the students. Most of the questions were directed towards all of the participants, while a few questions were directed towards particular students. We listened to several recordings together, and I asked them particular questions about when they used Hmong instead of English (and vice versa) to accomplish a task. I wanted to

get the students' perspective. The following questions were asked to the group (see Appendix B for full list of interview questions):

- Why do you use Hmong to give directions sometimes and English to give directions sometimes?
- (Directed towards one student) Why do you use Hmong to get back on-task? Most students used English.
- Why do you use Hmong to goof around?
- Why do you use Hmong sometimes to tease and English sometimes to tease?

Moreover, I asked the all-important question of why they may have used L1 to communicate an idea and why they may have used L2 to communicate an idea? Is it easier and more natural? Is it because they have pride in their first language? Is it because they wanted to keep the conversation private? This group interview discussion was also monitored through audio recordings and field notes to return to for data analysis.

The data collected from the audio taped class task was used to determine when students code switched, and how frequently students code switched for different purposes. I then compared my findings with the insights of my subjects.

Conclusion

This chapter describes the materials used, the reasons for the materials, and the procedures for gaining answers to the research questions of when and why do Hmong middle school students use L1 during group work in an ESL classroom. In the following chapter, the research results and analysis will be presented to gain insights into: When and why Hmong middle school students code switch in a classroom where English is the

only instructional language used? I will show the following information: 1) How often did students code-switch during four 30 to 45-minute group activities? 2) When did they code-switch? 3) Under what conditions? 4) What are their perceptions of using L1 in the classroom?

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The focus of my project is to find out when and why code switching occurs during group work in an ESL classroom. The study took place over a four-month period and involved a variety of elicitation methods. I briefed the students about the project, and began practicing with the recorders and microphones with the chosen participants. When students were comfortable and group dialogue seemed natural, I began recording the students. The questionnaire was given to the students after recordings were complete, and then the speech samples were translated, transcribed, and coded. Following the coding and analyzing of the codes, I interviewed the students about their language choices and perceptions. Field notes were inconsequential and thus are not included. All of the elicitation techniques were used to gather information about the question of when and why Hmong middle school students use L1 during group work in the ESL classroom.

Questionnaire

From the questionnaire, insights were gained on how the students perceived their language use, how often they thought their family and friends used Hmong and English, and when they saw themselves using either language, at home or outside of school. It gave me perspective on the students' level of metalinguistic awareness. The questionnaire also helped determine their L1 literacy background.

The four student participants (all names have been changed) in this study were eighth graders, two male and two female, whose native language is Hmong. All

participants were either born in the United States or moved to the United States before they were one year old, so they are first-generation Hmong-Americans.

A few of the four students discussed their experience learning about reading and writing Hmong in an after-school program at a non-profit organization. At this program, bilingual Hmong speakers who have limited reading and writing skills in Hmong learn about Hmong culture, and practice reading and writing Hmong skills. This has become an important part of the Hmong community in recent years. My school district has even integrated Hmong language and culture classes in some schools, in which native Hmong speakers and native English speakers have the opportunity to learn reading and writing in Hmong. I believe that students' homes, school experience, and cultural surroundings influence student perceptions of language choice and use.

It is important to note that the students' answers are all of their own ideas, opinions, perceptions, and expressions. Even though further explanations of the questions were needed, answers came directly from the students, without prompting. Students were not persuaded to respond in any particular way.

While students were answering the questions (see Appendix A), they needed a little guidance with the questions. For example, they wanted to know the difference between *Always*, *Often*, and *Sometimes* in questions 6-10. The standard set for them and explained to them was to think about *Always* as being 100% of the time, *Often* as about 75% of the time, and *Sometimes* as about 25% - 50% of the time. Students also needed guidance with questions 11-14, when the questionnaire asked questions such as *How often [does a family member or friend] speak English to them and When (under what*

circumstances) [does a family member or friend] speak English to them. Students were given many example situations to think of in order to answer the question. Also, students needed some further information before they could answer question 16; for example, the types of programs they might consider such as Hmong television, Hmong music, and Hmong films.

As the students filled out the questionnaires, follow-up questions were asked and field notes taken. For example, when students were answering questions about language use in the home and outside of the home, questions were asked about when (under what circumstances) their parents would use Hmong vs. English and why they think they use the language they do. Three out of four students said that their mothers always speak Hmong at home, and one student stated that their mother often speaks Hmong at home. Students felt that the main reason why their mothers do not use English at home is because they “don’t know it.” Many students believed that if parents used English at home, it was because they were practicing with the students after coming home from work or because a word might not exist for what they were trying to communicate in Hmong. I also asked follow-up questions with the final question, asking students if they thought learning Hmong was difficult and whether they enjoyed the class and learning about it. The students who have been learning Hmong stated they enjoy learning to read and write in Hmong, and they think it is important and difficult.

The questionnaire verified a lot of information that I was assuming about the students. Overall, students stated that parents use Hmong at home either always or often, but either often or sometimes outside of the home. One student was the exception,

stating that her father sometimes speaks to her Hmong and sometimes in English. Students indicated that their mothers were not as fluent in English, compared to other members of their family and friends. Furthermore, three out of four students indicated that their peers sometimes use Hmong and sometimes use English at home and outside of home, believing that language use is equally used. This is not surprising as the use of English is quite common in this generation of Hmong speakers. As well, all four students stated they sometimes use Hmong in the classroom and often use Hmong in the hallway. Again, this information did not take me by surprise. Hmong people in this generation are highly fluent and proficient in English. They attend schools in which English is the language of focus, and is expected by peers and teachers that non-native speakers use English. I believe these bilingual students use Hmong more frequently in the hallways of school more than in the classroom because it is a safe environment, more “free” and spirited, and less formal. Expectations of language use in the hallway are not so formal.

Kou is thirteen years old, was born in California, lived there for a year, and consequently moved to Rhode Island for one year, North Carolina for three years, and then Minnesota. He has three siblings, and lives with both parents. He never had the opportunity to learn how to read or write in Hmong, and whatever small amount he has learned, he learned on his own. He self-reports watching Hmong movies about once a week, and sometimes listens to Hmong music. He says he uses English and Hmong equally at home, differing from the other students who claim they primarily use Hmong. Kou perceives that his father uses mostly Hmong in and outside of the home, but there are occasions when his father uses English in the home and outside of the home, when he

may be on the phone or at meetings where only English is spoken. According to Kou, his mother only uses Hmong, because she does not know English. He believes that his parents consider the Hmong language more important than English. Kou says that his siblings and cousins, however, use English and Hmong equally, in the home and outside of the home. He believes they use it naturally at home and outside of the home. He also mentions that his friends and peers at school use English and Hmong equally. He believes they mostly use English in the classroom, and Hmong is used more often in the hallways, on the bus, at lunchtime, etc. One reason for using English was because they “didn’t want [someone] to know” what they were saying.

Mai was born in California, and lived there for six years, before coming to Minnesota. She, also, has not been given the opportunity to learn how to read or write in Hmong, but has gained a little more knowledge of the written language over the past two years. She listens to Hmong music sometimes, and watches Hmong movies about twice a week. There are eight people that live in her home, and both of her parents know a little bit of English. She self-reports that her dad speaks to her in Hmong about 50 percent of the time in and outside of the home, while her mother speaks to her in Hmong about 80 percent of the time. According to Mai, her father speaks English when he comes home from work, and in public places, and her mother speaks English to her a little bit when Mai gets home from school. She believes her parents consider Hmong more important than English. She also believes that her siblings and peers use English about 50 percent of the time with each other, when they are studying or talking in school and outside of school. Furthermore, Mai self-reports that English is used in the classroom more often,

and that Hmong is used more often in other places at school, such as the hallway, bathroom, and cafeteria.

Boua was born in Thailand, but moved to Minnesota before he was one year old. He has learned how to read and write in Hmong, but I was not sure what proficiency level he was at. He has learned Hmong from his mother, cousin, and a structured program he has been in for five years. He watches Hmong movies and listens to Hmong music about twice a week. He lives with his mother, and five siblings. Boua's mother always uses Hmong in the home, but will occasionally use English outside of home, in "public places". He feels that his mother values Hmong more than English. He believes his siblings and peers use English and Hmong equally at home and outside of home, including school.

Sheng was born in California, and has moved between Minnesota and California several times. She lives with both of her parents and nine siblings. Sheng has been studying Hmong literacy for two years in a Hmong language and culture class at the school where this study took place, and her dad has taught her a little bit, as well. Sometimes, she listens to Hmong music, but rarely watches Hmong movies. Sheng self-reports that both of her parents always use Hmong at home, but use English once in awhile outside of the home, at work, at the bank and other public places, where they "have to speak English". She feels that her parents value Hmong and English at the same level. Furthermore, she believes her siblings, cousins, and friends use both Hmong and English equally, when they are doing homework, studying, on the phone, at school, and when they "don't want their parents to know" what they are saying. It is important to

point out that Sheng was absent for one of the recorded days that I used for the data collection.

I was not surprised by the students' answers on the questionnaire. They are in the first generation of Hmong speakers to grow up in an English-speaking country. I assumed that their parents had limited English proficiency, but that their similarly-aged cousins, and peers would use both languages fairly equally.

Transcriptions, Translations & Codes

After the recordings were complete, I transcribed the recordings, leaving the speech samples of Hmong out, but marking where the students used their native language. A bilingual, native Hmong-speaker and I then went through the transcriptions and recordings, and translated the Hmong into English. These were incorporated into the final transcription.

Upon completion of the transcriptions, I coded each utterance, English and Hmong. I analyzed what was going on with the language, and inductively created the categories to be coded. The codes were broken into two major categories: academic/process language and social language. The academic/process language was defined as language used in connection with the activity, the academic goal of the lesson. This group included the following codes: talking about the process, giving command/directions about the process, asking for clarification about the process, clarification of process with prompting/answering a question, clarification of process without prompting, and getting back on-task. The social language group is defined as language used when students were off-topic and not talking about the activity/academic

goal. This group included the following codes: clarification of social language/social interaction, goofing around, teasing, defensive response to teasing, giving social command/directions, asking a social question, making an off-task statement/answering a social question, figure of speech/slang, affirmation, talking about feelings.

There were two additional codes not categorized as academic/process or social language. An additional analysis to look at included metalinguistic talk, and code mixing; the latter defined as using one language and switching to another language within the same sentence. Metalinguistic talk is defined as speakers being aware and cognizant of the language they are using, talking about the language they are using in an analytical, methodical manner.

Academic/Process Language Use

The following academic/process language codes were deductively determined following the translation and transcription process: talking about process/academic goal (T), giving directions about the process (GD), asking for clarification (AC), clarifying with prompting (CP), clarifying without prompting (C w/o), getting back on-task (GT), and affirmation of statement (A).

Table 1, Table 2, Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 show that students used their L2 the large majority of the time, with 91% of academic/process language speech acts being done in English. Most academic language occurred when students talked about the process (negotiating answers, thinking out loud about the academic goals, and creating answers together). This accounted for 60% of the total academic/process language speech acts. Students mostly used English (81%), but some Hmong for these speech acts.

The second largest number of speech acts occurred when students asked for clarification (16% of the academic/process language). Again, English was used the majority of the time, but Hmong was also used in some of these speech acts. The following speech acts occurred at about the same amount: when giving directions about the process and clarifying with prompting. While these speech acts occurred mostly in English, students did use Hmong for these situations, as well. Students also used oral communication to get back on-task and to affirm one another's answers or work. As I noted previously, Sheng was absent for one day. This will be reflected in data presented later.

Table 1

Number of Academic/Process Language Speech Acts using English (L2)

Codes for Academic Speech Acts using English	Kou	Mai	Boua	Sheng	Total for each code
Talking about process	86	94	133	91	404
Giving directions	5	3	13	10	31
Asking for clarification	17	35	39	21	82
Clarifying with prompting	10	8	13	11	42
Clarifying without prompting	6	7	11	9	33
Getting back on-task	4	4	1	3	12
Affirmation of an academic statement	1	4	4	1	10
Total for each student	129	155	214	146	644

Table 2

Number of Academic/Process Language Speech Acts using Hmong (L1)

Codes for Academic Speech Acts using Hmong	Kou	Mai	Boua	Sheng	Total for each code
Talking about process	4	5	7	4	20
Giving directions	2	1	6	10	19
Asking for clarification	1	4	2	6	13
Clarifying with prompting	0	3	3	5	11
Clarifying without prompting	0	0	0	0	0
Getting back on-task	1	0	0	0	1
Affirmation of an academic statement	0	0	0	0	0
Total for each student	8	13	18	25	64

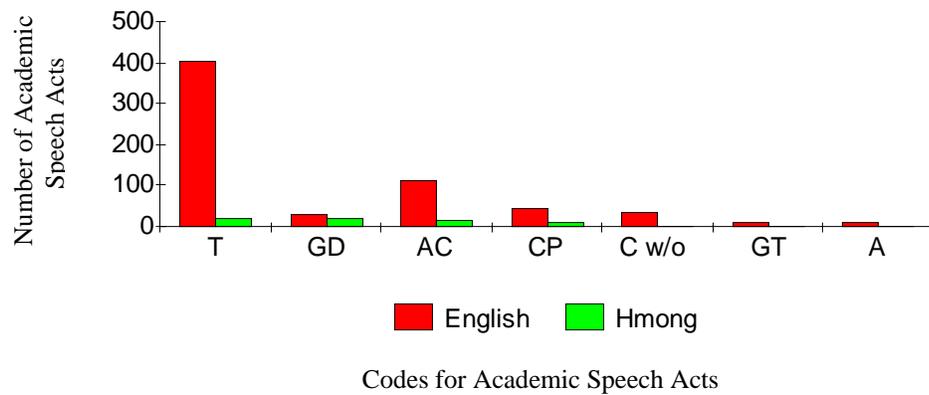


Figure 1.1. Number of Total Academic/Process Language Speech Acts

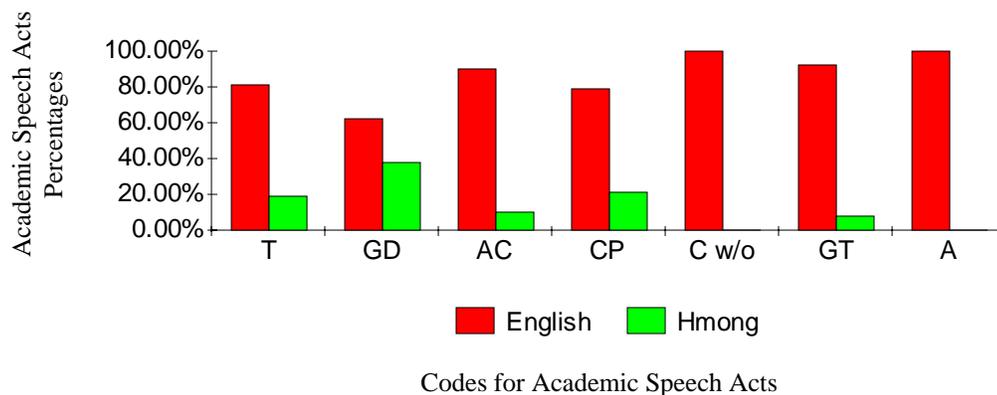


Figure 1.2. Total Academic/Process Language Speech Acts Percentages

The use of English dramatically outweighs the use of Hmong in academic/process activities with this group of students. Figure 1.2 reflects that the largest amounts of Hmong were spoken while giving directions (38%) and clarifying with prompting (21%). In addition, students used Hmong while talking about the process (19%), asking for clarification (10%), and getting back on-task (8%). I was a little surprised at how little

Hmong was spoken thinking the percentage of Hmong would be higher. Even though these students have high oral proficiency in English, I expected students to use Hmong a little more because of the academic content and vocabulary within the texts. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

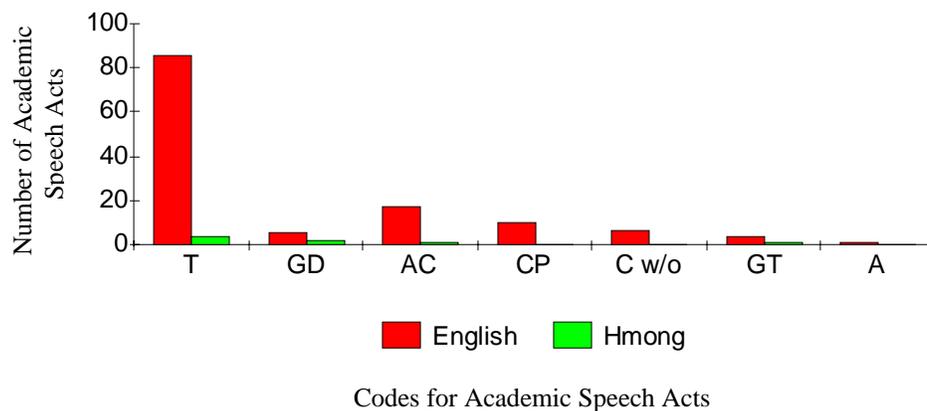


Figure 1.3. Kou's Individual Academic/Process Speech Acts

Overall, Kou did not have as many speech acts, as the other students. This surprised me a bit, as he is a natural leader in the class, and quite talkative. Figure 1.3 reflects the number of his academic speech acts. Academically, he spoke more about the process while creating and negotiating answers. He used English for the large majority of the group work. Figure 1.4 shows Kou's percentages of L1 and L2 used. When he did use Hmong, it was when he was talking about the process, when he gave directions about the process, asked for clarification, and got back on-task. Kou is a focused student, well-behaved, and motivated. Based on informal observations and in his work, he seems to have a large English vocabulary, speaks native-like English and is successful in school. Giving directions to the students in the group and trying to get his peers back on track would fit with his profile.

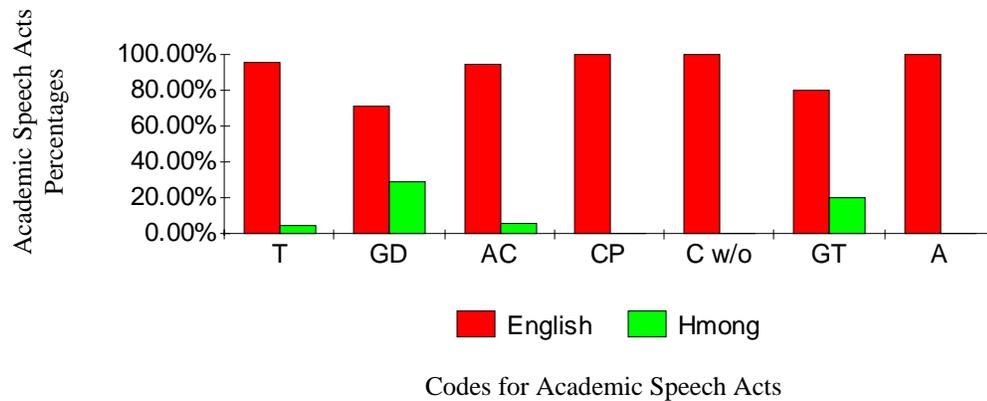


Figure 1.4. Kou's Academic/Process Language Percentages

Table 1 and Table 2 show that the number of Mai's academic/process language speech acts was the second lowest in the group overall. She is a quiet, shy student in the larger class, so I was pleasantly surprised by her activity in the group. Figure 1.5 shows that she, like Kou, talked the most about the process, while creating answers and negotiating with her peers. Mai did seem to ask for clarification a little more than the other students, in English and in Hmong.

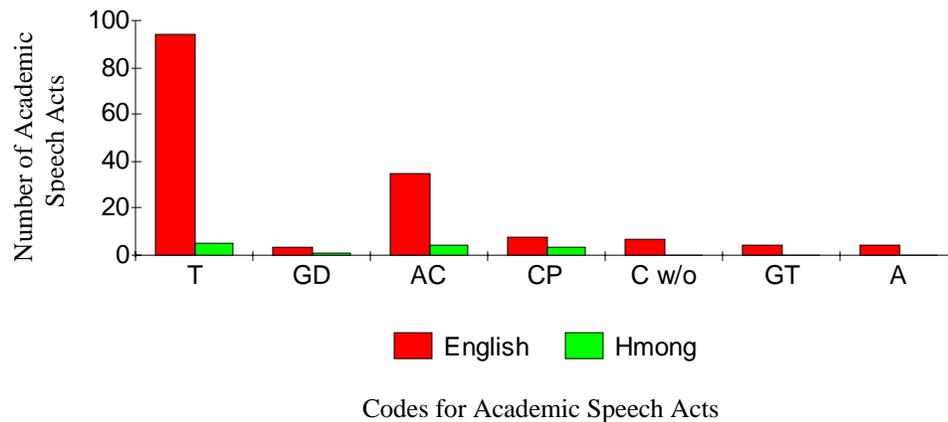


Figure 1.5. Mai's Individual Academic/Process Speech Acts

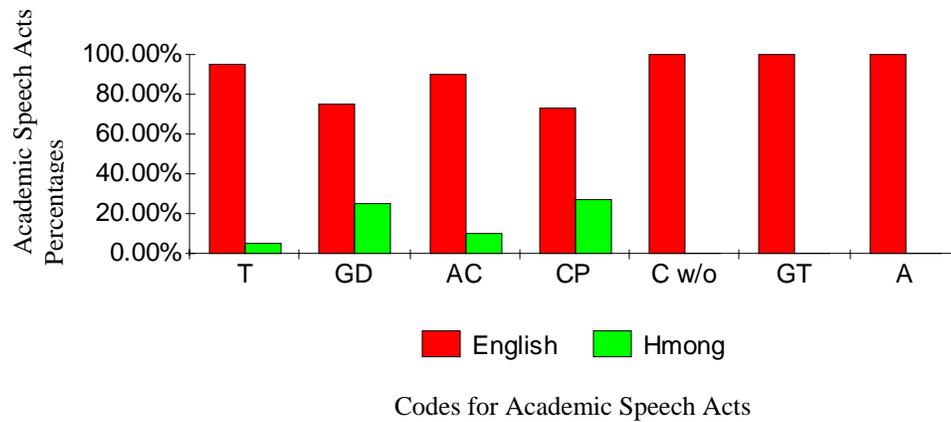


Figure 1.6. Mai's Academic/Process Language Percentages

Figure 1.6 shows that, like the other students, Mai used English for the majority of her speech acts. When she did use Hmong, it was when she was clarifying with prompting (27%), giving directions about the process (25%), and asking for clarification (10%). As well, she used a small percentage of Hmong when talking about the process.

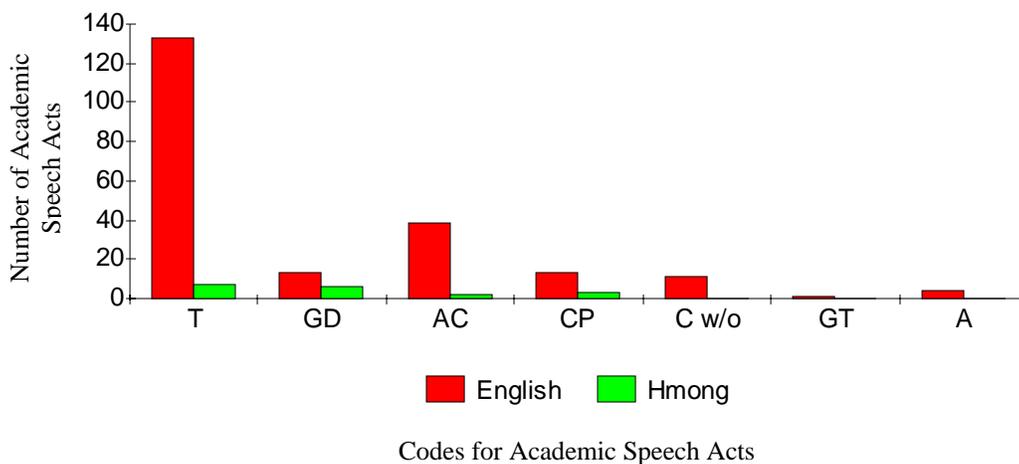


Figure 1.7. Boua's Individual Academic/Process Language Speech Acts

Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 1.7 show that Boua had the highest number of academic speech acts overall. He had the most speech acts while talking about the process and while asking for clarification. This did not entirely surprise me, as Boua has high participation in class and has high motivation.

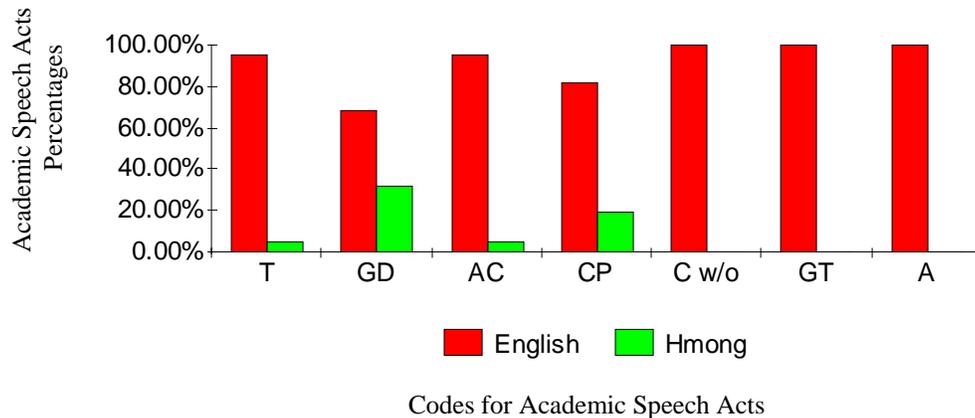


Figure 1.8. Boua's Academic/Process Language Percentages

Boua used English for the large majority of his speech acts. When he did use Hmong, he did so the most when giving directions about the process (34%), and clarifying while prompted (18%). As well, he used Hmong a little bit while asking for clarification and while talking about the process.

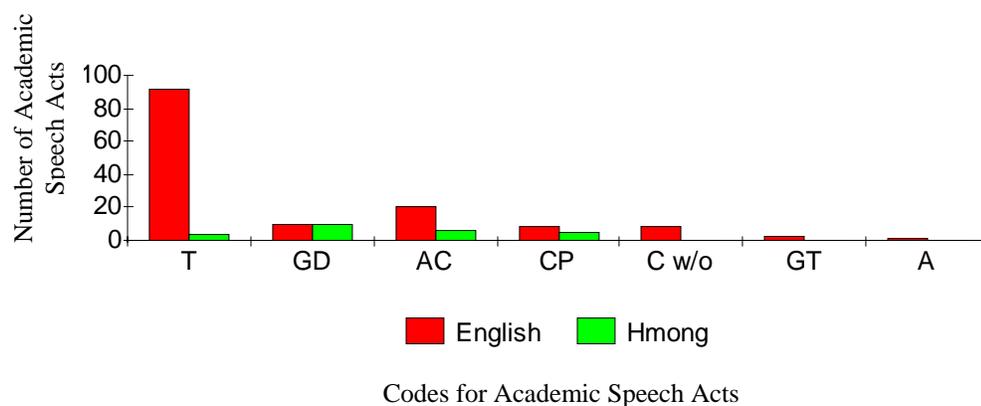


Figure 1.9. Sheng's Individual Academic/Process Language Speech Acts

Sheng's academic language is similar to the other students' language. Table 1 and Figure 1.9 show that she had a high number of speech acts, with the majority taking place when talking about the process. She also had a higher number of speech acts while asking for clarification, giving directions, and clarifying with prompting.

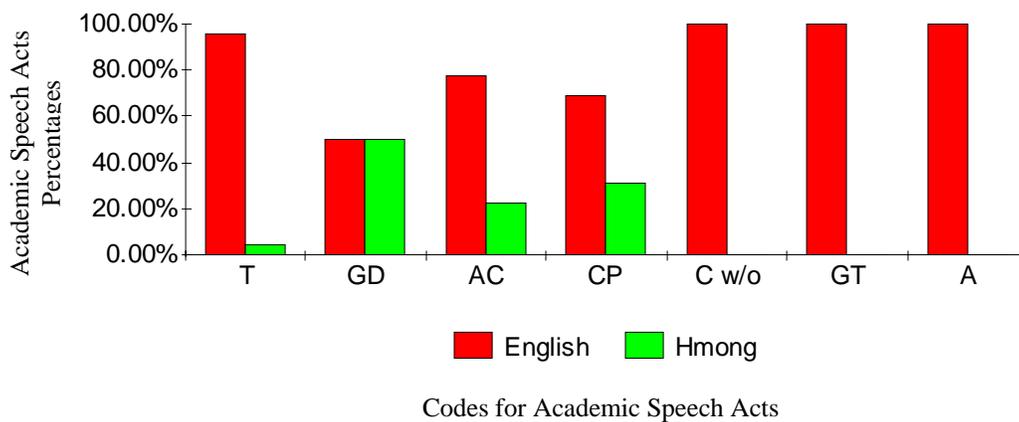


Figure 1.10. Sheng's Academic/Process Language Percentages

Sheng's use of English is more prevalent, like the other students, but she used Hmong while giving directions (50%), clarifying with prompting (31%), and asking for clarification (22%). She also used Hmong while talking about the process a bit. What separates Sheng from the other students was that she used Hmong and English equally. I asked her about this in the interview, and will provide more details later.

Social Language Use

The following social language codes were deductively determined after translating and transcribing the speech samples: making a social, off-task statement (MS), giving directions about a social/off-task activity (G), goofing around (GA), slang/figure of speech (S), teasing, asking a social/off-task question (T), answering a

social/off-task question (Ans), asking for clarification about social/off-task activity (ACS), clarifying a social/off-task activity with prompting (CPS), clarifying a social/off-task activity without prompting (CS w), affirmation of social/off-task statement (AF) talking about feelings (F), defensive response to teasing (D).

Table 3

Number of Social Language Speech Acts using English (L2)

Codes for Social Speech Acts	Kou	Mai	Boua	Sheng	Total for each code
Making a social/off-task statement	16	21	34	40	111
Giving social/off-task directions	0	1	2	5	8
Goofing around	4	2	23	6	35
Slang	0	0	2	0	2
Teasing	7	7	11	4	29
Asking a social/off-task question	2	11	7	4	24
Answering a social/ off-task question	1	0	6	2	9
Asking for clarification (social/off-task)	1	3	3	5	12
Clarifying a social activity with prompting	1	0	2	0	3
Clarifying a social activity without prompting	2	0	2	0	4
Affirmation of off-task/social statement	0	1	3	1	5
Talking about feelings	0	0	0	0	0
Defensive response to teasing	0	0	0	0	0
Total for each student	34	46	95	67	242

Table 3 shows the number of English social speech acts (off-task speech acts) by each student. The largest kind of social speech act occurred when students were making an off-task statement, as in talking about shopping or something outside of the group work. As the data shows, there were fewer social/off-task speech acts than there were academic/process language speech acts. English was used for the large majority of making off-task statements, but there was a small percentage of Hmong used. The second highest type of social speech act occurred when students were teasing each other.

Students used English the majority of the time, but Hmong was used for approximately 25% of the time. The next highest number of social speech acts occurred when students were goofing around (making noises, making jokes, etc.) and when they were asking off-task questions, as in “Where did you go shopping?”, “Where do you live?”, “What class do you have next?” These were done in English, for the most part, but there were also times when students used Hmong.

Table 3 and Table 4 demonstrate that once again Boua had the highest number of social speech acts in English and overall. Table 4 shows Sheng had the highest number of social speech acts in Hmong and second highest number of speech acts overall, in the social category. Boua and Sheng are very social students, in class and outside of class, so this did not surprise me. I was surprised, however, by the number of speech acts by Mai. She is shy and not as social in class, so I was surprised that she had the third highest number of speech acts, and how much she did talk while doing group work, whether it was academic or social language. Kou had the lowest number of social speech acts, which did not surprise me. He tends to be on-task most of class, and has high participation in academic work.

Table 4

Number of Social Language Speech Acts using Hmong (L1)

Codes for Social Speech Acts	Kou	Mai	Boua	Sheng	Total for each code
Making a social/off-task statement	0	2	2	9	13
Giving social/off-task directions	0	0	0	0	0
Goofing around	0	0	3	0	3
Slang	1	1	0	0	2
Teasing	1	1	5	7	14
Asking a social/off-task question	0	2	1	5	9
Answering a social/ off-task question	0	0	0	0	0
Asking for clarification (social/off-task)	0	0	0	0	0
Clarifying a social activity with prompting	0	1	0	0	1
Clarifying a social activity without prompting	0	0	0	0	0
Affirmation of off-task/social statement	0	0	1	0	1
Talking about feelings	0	1	1	2	4
Defensive response to teasing	0	0	1	0	1
Total for each student	2	8	14	23	47

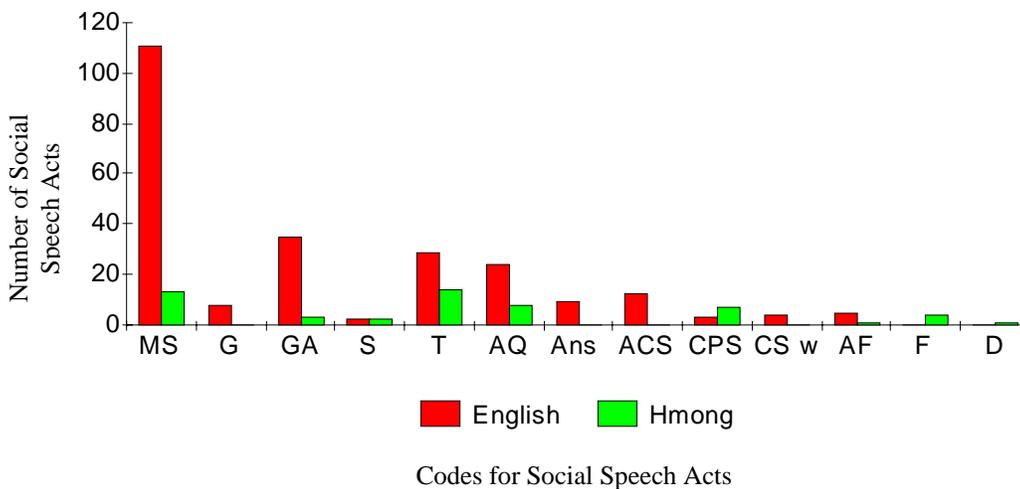
*Figure 2.1.* Number of Total Social Language Speech Acts

Figure 2.2 shows that while talking socially and off-task, students used Hmong the most when talking about feelings and making a defensive response to teasing (100%), using slang or figures of speech (50%), teasing (33%), asking a social/off-task question

(25%). In addition, students used Hmong while affirming an off-task statement (17%), goofing around (11%), and making an off-task statement (10%).

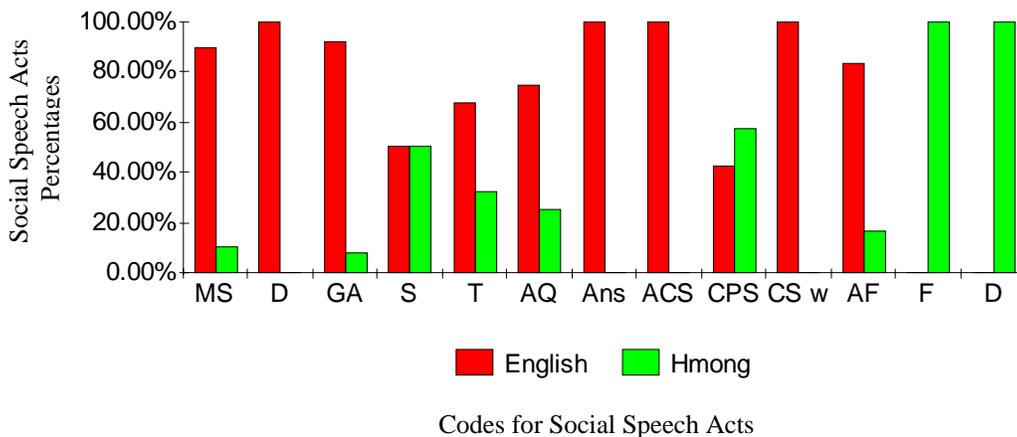


Figure 2.2. Total Social Language Speech Acts Percentages

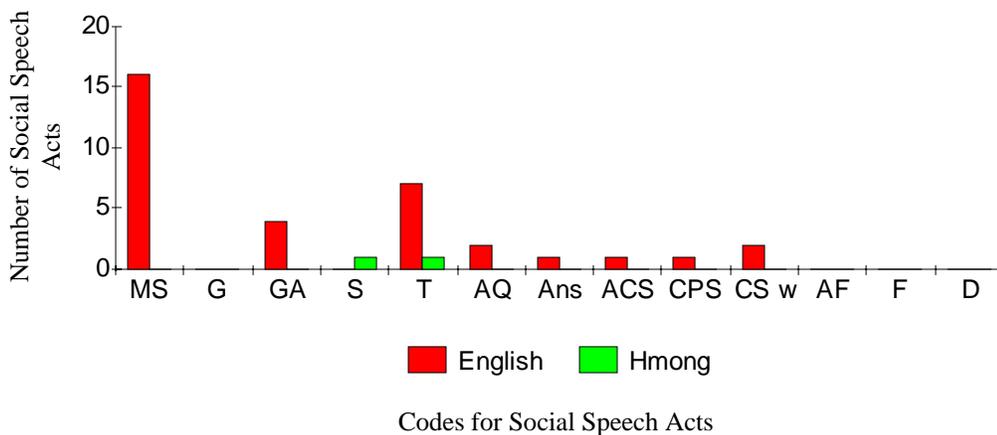


Figure 2.3. Kou's Individual Social Language Speech Acts

Kou's social language was significantly lower than other students. As seen in Figure 2.3, when he did speak, it was mostly when making an off-task statement, teasing, or when he was goofing around. Although Kou's social language was limited, he spoke

Hmong only when using slang and a small percentage of Hmong when teasing other students.

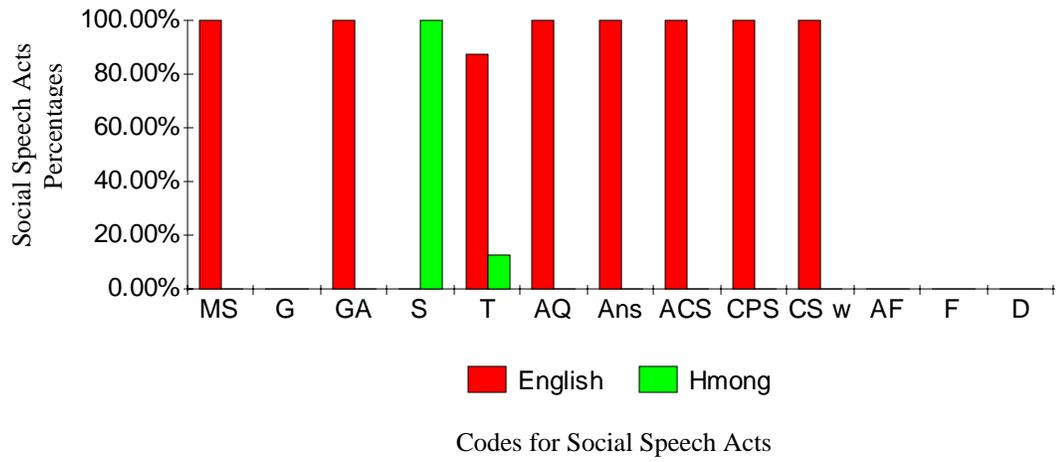


Figure 2.4. Kou’s Social Language Percentages

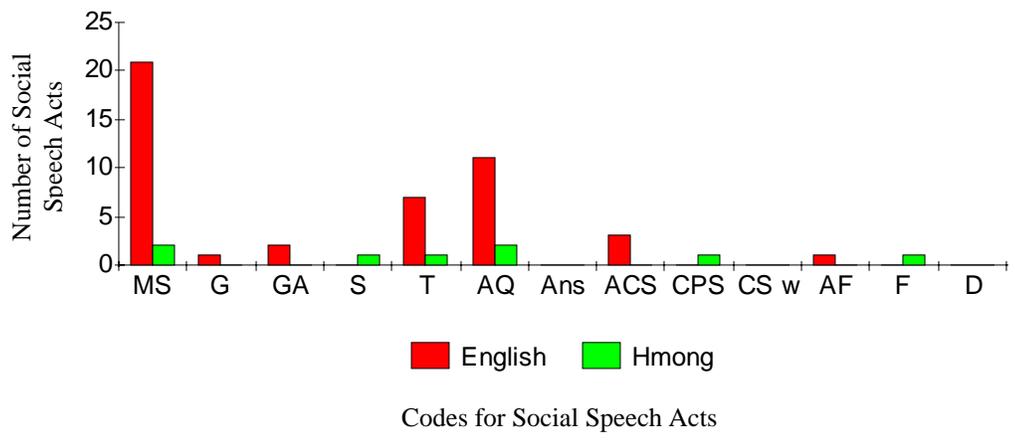


Figure 2.5. Mai’s Individual Social Language Speech Acts

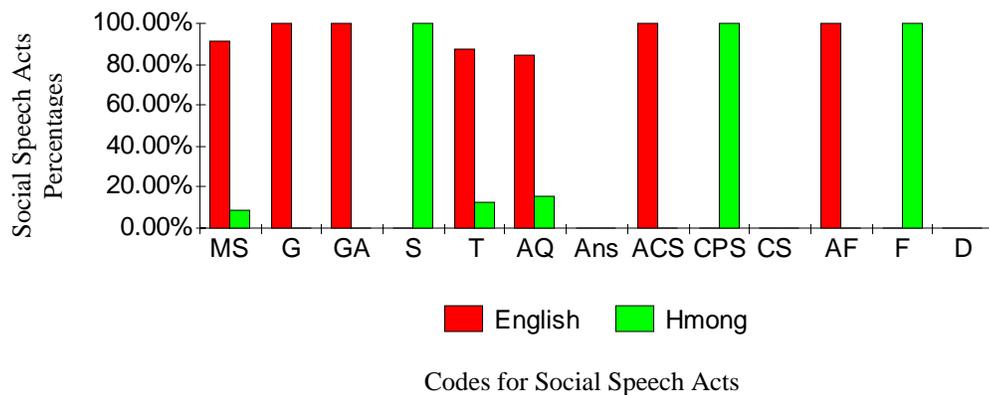


Figure 2.6. Mai's Social Language Percentages

Mai's social language was also limited compared to other students. However, Mai used Hmong in a larger variety of speech acts than the other students. The majority of speech acts took place when she was making an off-task statement and asking a question. Mai's use of Hmong in social speech acts was the second lowest in the group. While she used English for the majority of speech acts, she did use Hmong only when using slang, clarifying with prompting, and talking about how she was feeling. She also used Hmong when asking a social question, teasing, and making an off-task statement.

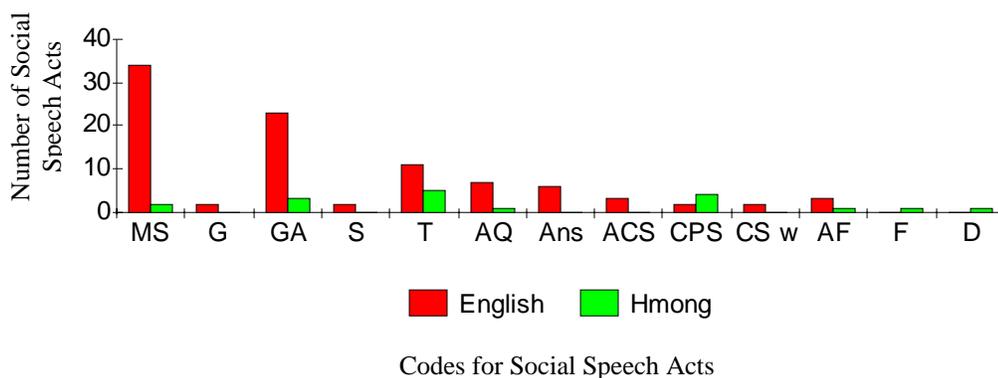


Figure 2.7. Boua's Individual Social Language Speech Acts

Boua had the most speech acts out of all of the students. He had a high number of off-task statements and a high number of goofing around and teasing statements. As seen in Figures 2.7 and 2.8, Boua used only Hmong under certain circumstances, like talking about feelings, making a defensive response to teasing, and he used more Hmong when he was clarifying with prompting. As well, Boua used Hmong to tease other students, to affirm a statement, ask a question, goof around, and make an off-task statement.

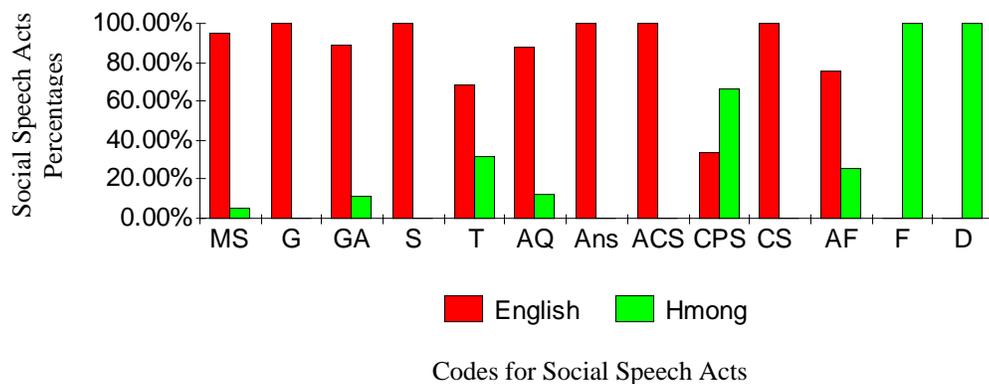


Figure 2.8. Boua's Social Language Percentages

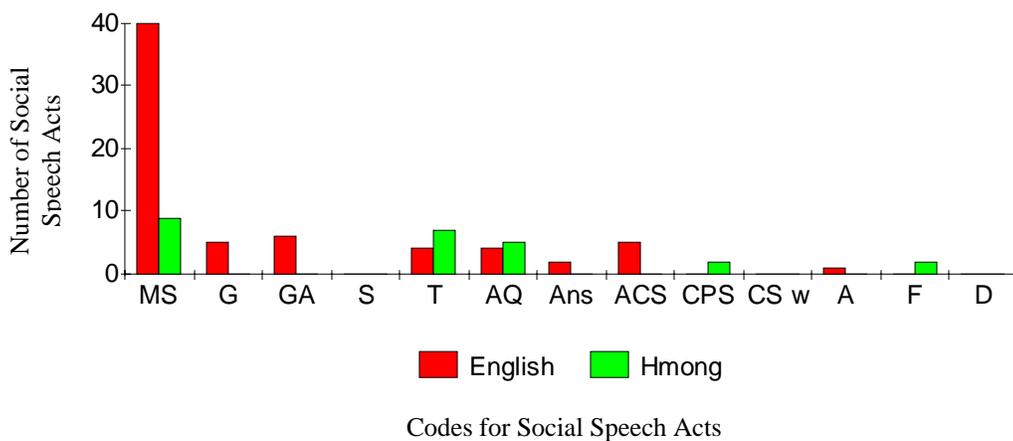


Figure 2.9. Sheng's Individual Social Language Speech Acts

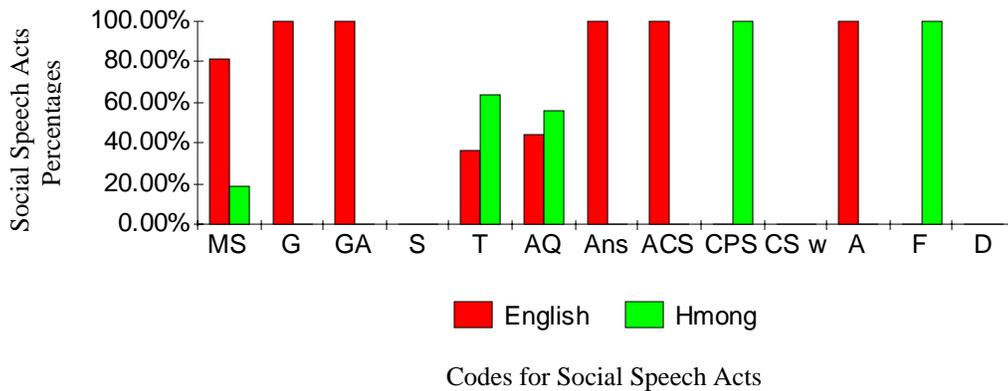


Figure 2.10. Sheng’s Social Language Percentages

Sheng also had a high number of speech acts, especially considering she was absent during one of the recordings used for this project. She had a high number of off-task statements and several other types of speech acts. As seen in Figure 2.9 and Figure 2.10, Sheng used only L1 while clarifying with prompting and talking about her feelings. Furthermore, she used more Hmong than English when teasing and when asking an off-task question, and then used a small portion of Hmong when making an off-task statement.

Figure 3 demonstrates the amount of metalinguistic talk students had during the group work. Sometimes students talked about how they were using language, or made statements about language. Example statements included “Speak English”, “English makes you smart”, “Hmong makes you smart”. Students used Hmong for the majority of their metalinguistic talk, but did use English once in awhile.

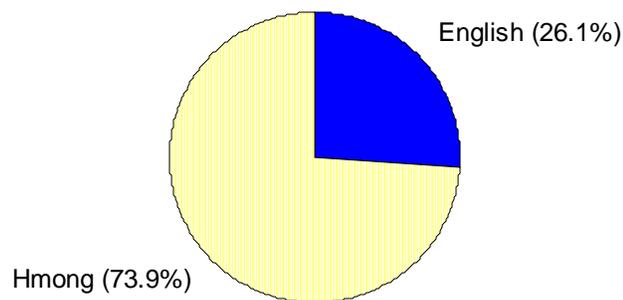


Figure 3. Metalinguistic Talk Percentages

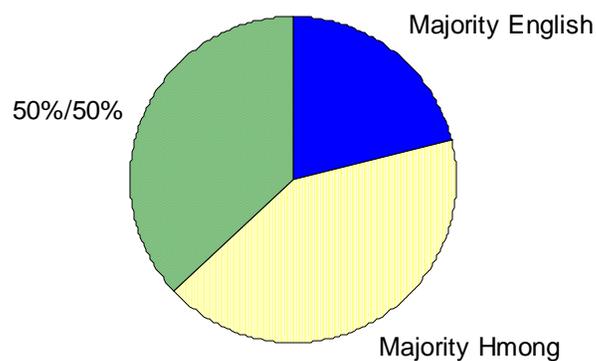


Figure 4. Code-mixing Percentages

Figure 4 shows the amount of code mixing that took place during the recorded group work. The majority of code mixing took place when the dominant language of the speech act was Hmong. Also, almost 37% of code mixing took place with Hmong and English being used equally. The smallest portion of code mixing took place when English was the dominant language of the speech act.

Interview

After the data were collected, translated, coded, and documented, I interviewed the students as a group and asked specific questions about their language use and perceptions. At the beginning of the interview, I explained to the students what I had done with the information thus far; and that in listening to the recordings and looking at the transcripts, I noticed some interesting things about their language use. As well, I explained they were not going to be judged on their answers and their honesty would be appreciated. They understood whatever information they provided would be confidential, and the answers would help ELL teachers and students in the future. I thanked them for their time, and informed them of the compensation for their time and participation. While interviewing the students, I prefaced each question was prefaced with statements such as “I noticed that sometimes you...” or “It seems that sometimes you...and sometimes you...” or “When I was listening to the recordings, I heard you....” The recordings were played back to the students to refresh their memory and give a context for discussion. Due to technical difficulties, not all recordings could be played back. In such cases, transcripts of the recordings were shown to the students. We would then talk about the conversation that was going on. The following questions were asked of the students in the follow-up interview. See Appendix B for a complete list of the interview questions asked.

- (To whole group) Do you have any idea why you use Hmong sometimes and English sometimes when you are in a group?

- (To Kou only) Why do you use English sometimes and Hmong sometimes to get students back on-task? The other students only used English in those situations.
- (To Kou and Mai) Why do you use Hmong for slang or figures of speech? I noticed that the other students used English, but you both used Hmong.
- (To whole group) Why do you use only Hmong to express how you are feeling?
- (To Sheng) When you were talking to another group, why did you use Hmong?
- (To whole group) Do you feel “special” or “unique” when you use Hmong?

Initially, the students were hesitant to answer and unsure of the meaning behind the questions; after repeating and rephrasing the questions, the students gave interesting feedback. At first, Kou stated that the purpose for using Hmong sometimes and English sometimes is to communicate. I asked for some elaboration, and wanted to know what he meant by that, so Mai and Boua added to the answer stating “Sometimes it’s hard to explain in English, sometimes we don’t know a word.” This became a common theme within some of their answers.

When I asked about using the languages for giving directions, Sheng said that “Because if we don’t know a word in English, we say Hmong.” Boua added his own ideas saying “Sometimes we don’t know. Sometimes people don’t understand what we are saying.” Students insinuated that there are times when the directions in English are easier to comprehend when given in Hmong. It aids their learning and understanding of the task at hand.

Next, I asked Kou about his language use for getting the group back on-task. The other students used only English under that circumstance, but Kou used English and

Hmong. At first, he said he was not sure, but after thinking about it, responded it was “more natural” and “more strong”. In my opinion, Kou is the student who is rarely off-task, and is usually engaged. He seemed bothered at times by the group’s goofing around and teasing. Throughout the recordings, I heard instances of him being frustrated by that. Kou is the student in the group who takes the work more seriously.

After listening to some speech samples of the students being off-task and goofing around, I asked the students why they primarily used Hmong. Mai responded with “Because we don’t want teachers to know.” Many educators and even non-educators who are native English speakers often assume people using another language besides English are talking about something exclusive, making fun of somebody who would not understand them, or saying something that would not be appropriate. I have often heard educators stating they are skeptical about the use of L1 in the classroom because of these reasons.

I then played recordings of students teasing each other, where they used Hmong sometimes and English sometimes. Mai answered my questions by explaining that they can not find the right word in Hmong so they speak English. Sheng agreed, and then added “Yeah, but sometimes there isn’t the right word in English, so we use Hmong.”

I also asked Kou and Mai about using slang and figures of speech. They were not clear what was meant by this, so I gave them random, hypothetical examples and played a few examples from the recordings. This did not help them give a reason for why they used Hmong sometimes and English at other times. They did not have any ideas about why they code switched when using slang or figures of speech.

There were a few examples of student talking about being tired or not feeling well on a few occasions, on different days. I coded these speech samples as talking about feelings. When asked about why they used Hmong only for expressing how they were feeling, Sheng was not sure, and Mai responded with “We just use it. It’s natural.” Other students then agreed with Mai and added “It just happens that we use Hmong.” It seems the students believe they do not necessarily make conscious language use choices, it just happens naturally.

I then asked the students about code mixing when they started off a sentence in one language and then switched to another language within the same sentence. Sheng said that when it comes to directions, it is hard to understand sometimes in English or to explain them in English. “Speaking Hmong is easier.” Mai agreed saying that it is easier to explain in Hmong. I tried prompting them about other situations where they code-mixed, because not all of the code mixing was used while giving directions. All of the students agreed with Sheng that “It’s natural. If you don’t know, it just pops out.” Kou added, “It’s random speech. We don’t think about it. It’s natural to use both languages.”

The next question was directed towards Sheng. In a few situations, she turned to another group and was talking to them in Hmong about another student in their group. I played the recordings for her, and she remembered the situations. She said that she was using Hmong because it was “faster and easier,” but that also she “didn’t want [that student] to know what she was saying” even though it was not anything negative or inappropriate. In my opinion, it was more respectful that she used Hmong because she

was somewhat scolding the other group for speaking Hmong when there was a non-Hmong speaker in the group.

Towards the end of the interview, I asked the students about any differences they notice between speaking Hmong or English with relatives versus using language in school. All of the students responded that their parents “do not know English much.” As well, there was a lot of talk about how it is a “part of the culture” to use Hmong. They added that their siblings and friends know English and want to use it because it is important for their future. However, they did include that “when [they] don’t want their parents to know something” they’ll use English.

With the final question of “do you feel special or important when you use Hmong?” I wanted to elaborate on what students said about using Hmong being “natural” and being a “part of their culture”. Unsure how to phrase the question, I wanted to get at the theme of language as part of identity. I received responses that indicated that using Hmong is a part of their Hmong-American identity. “Yeah, it makes us feel cool.” “It’s a part of our culture.” “It’s a special language.” There was a clear pride in using L1 for these students.

During the group interview, students were asked about their language use in other classes, besides ESL. Did they use Hmong in other classes and how often? All of the students said they do use Hmong in other classes, but there were a few teachers who did not like the students using Hmong. At one point in the recordings and transcriptions, the students talked about one particular teacher who says “Speak English only. Only English in this classroom!” Ironically, this teacher is in the English Language Learner (ELL)

Department. Students feel many of the teachers do not want to hear any L1, and that if they are using L1, they are not learning. According to the students, this message seems to come across in mainstream classes more often than in ELL classes, and occurs in a variety of content areas.

Although I have often heard educators and administrators make statements about using English only in school and that students are in school to learn English and learn content, we cannot ignore the fact that school is a social setting. Students spend six hours a day in school, five days a week, for thirteen or more years. School is where identities are formed, social networks are made, people learn about themselves and others, and about the communities they live in. While the focus of school is academics and preparation for life, a tremendous part of learning is social. Second language learners in school should not have those identity forming and social opportunities taken away from them, just because they are a language minority.

In the next chapter, I will present my conclusions, what was learned from this study, why this was important, and what suggestions I have for educators working with bilingual students.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In the last chapter, I presented the data gathered from the research. In this chapter, I will discuss what I learned about my initial questions, what other insights I gained that I was not expecting, why this was important, what suggestions I have for future research and what suggestions I have for educators and administrators who have second language learners in their classrooms and schools.

In this research project, I wanted to find out whether students were using it for academic or social reasons or possibly both. Additionally, I wanted to find out in what contexts they used L1 academically and socially. Moreover, I wanted to talk with students to find out what their own perceptions were of language use within this context.

Although L2 was the dominant language during these recordings, L1 was used under some circumstances. The three main academic circumstances in which students used L1 were (1) talking about the process/negotiating, (2) giving directions, and (3) asking for clarification. This comprised about 88% of the Hmong academic speech samples. While students used L2 for the large majority of their work, the two main social circumstances for using L1 were for answering an off-task/social question and making a social/off-task statement. This supports Tarone and Swain's (1995) hypothesis that in upper grades, diglossic situations develop and students use more L2 academically, while using L1 more in social contexts. Furthermore, Broner's (2001) results in a study in a

Spanish-immersion classroom showed students using more L2 in the academic areas and more L1 in social settings.

From the data collected, it appears that some bilingual students use L2 the majority of the time during group work. This is not surprising because of the L2 proficiency level and because they do use L2 outside of the classroom with friends and family. Broner (2001) points out that when bilingual speakers use L2 outside of the classroom, they will use L2 inside the classroom more than children who tend to use L1 more outside of the classroom. In Broner's study (2001), L1 was reserved for certain circumstances in both academic and social contexts. Students stated on the questionnaires and in the interview that they view English as important because that is the majority language used in America, in their educational settings, and in public places. Because of this, they want to become proficient in L2. The students also said they see using L2 as a language that will help them be successful, while they also see the benefit of maintaining their L1 for reasons which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Academically, some of the vocabulary in the readings was difficult and the concepts that were being practiced are difficult for English language learners, even at the high proficiency level that these students were at. Talking with the students verified for me that speaking L1 in the classroom is important for learning to take place, not only when asking for clarification and explaining directions, but when thinking through the task and negotiating with one another. These reasons for code switching have been observed in other studies, as well as discussed in the literature review (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001; Nichols & Colon, 2000).

Researchers have explained that children use language for negotiating their way through classroom learning and having academic exploratory talk and in order to facilitate their negotiations, they switch from one language to another (Murshad, 2002; Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Setati et al., 1987).

Overall, I learned that these students stayed on-task for a majority of the time. Data show that out of 994 total speech acts, 70% were academically-focused. Students spent the majority of their time working on the class objectives and educational goals. This did not surprise me entirely as this particular mix of students are focused, motivated, and interested in school.

However, there were times when the group did get off-task. About 30% of the student interactions were social/off-task. These data verified for me that students sometimes use L1 when they get off-task, for various reasons, such as teasing and making a statement to get another individual or the group off-task, but most of the off-task interactions were done in English. Of the 289 total social/off-task speech acts, students used L1 17% of the time. Even though there was some off-task behavior and discussion, after talking with the students and looking at other research, it became apparent to me that these types of interactions are important for students to have. I thought about how native speakers of English get off-task, tease each other, goof around, and do things that are non-task related. Is that any different from non-native English speakers doing the same thing? Is it fair that we reprimand English language learners for using L1 in the classroom when native speakers get off-task and use their L1? Students get off-task. This is not a new phenomenon. Yes, students need to be redirected and at times they

need a consequence for inappropriate behavior. However, personal observation has implied this is a behavior/motivation management issue, and not a language use issue.

Another aspect of the off-task issue is socialization. We can assume that school is a large part of socialization for students at this age. Adolescents are in school 30 hours a week for many years and a big part of their world is the peers they meet in classes, in the hallways, in sports and in clubs. At a school where almost 50% of the population is Hmong (although not all Hmong students are ELLs) and almost 50% of the population are second language learners (and not all second language learners are Hmong), we can assume it is a necessary part of the acquisition of social skills and identity formation for students talk about other things besides class work. As an educator, I feel it is very important for students to have social opportunities where they can share ideas and feelings with one another, ask questions of one another, and learn from each other. At the same time, I support the fact that students need to be learning in class; if the socialization goes beyond the boundary of appropriate use of time, students need to refocus on the work. I do not feel that this group of students took advantage of social time. They worked together well and completed their academic classroom goals, and although they knew each other somewhat in the beginning, I could see their relationships and friendship grow throughout the group work process. In my opinion, this was beneficial to the process.

Moreover, it seems that the students' perceptions of language choice are not necessarily a conscious choice; it is just easier and natural for them to speak L1 with others who speak L1. This is not unfamiliar to researchers Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz

(2005). Students in their study stated “what we are doing is just speaking our own language” (p. 20). In addition, Tarone and Swain (1995) state that this is common amongst older bilingual students, especially in a diglossic situation where L2 is the primary language used, and L1 is reserved to use in informal social interactions.

Furthermore, this study reinforces the idea that bilingual students take pride in their native language and that it plays a significant role in their social identity. When I asked the students in the interview if they felt special using Hmong, they all agreed that Hmong is important to use because it is a part of their culture, traditions, and ultimately a part of who they are. This reinforces research that has shown that home language development “can be an important part of identity formation and can help one retain a strong sense of identity to one’s own ethnic group” (Cho, 2000, p. 369). There are many social benefits for using L1, such as having a greater understanding and knowledge of cultural values, ethics, and manners. Having this knowledge further enhances interactions with first language speakers. Furthermore, first language development has been shown to contribute positively to society (Cho, 2000).

As first-generation Hmong-Americans, these students have the potential to go through cultural struggles, which in turn can create identity struggles. These students seem to have a good cultural/language identity balance, but it is inevitable that they have felt those struggles before or presently, on occasion. On several occasions, I have had discussions with my classes and individual students about cultural differences, challenges and problems they have faced being a Hmong-American teenager. Through these informal discussions and from talking to other teachers who work with the same

population, it appears that a major challenge is finding a balance between the cultures. It seems that these students want to please their parents and others in their Hmong community while at the same time they want to be accepted by their peers at school and in other public, community situations. Because of a need and want for cultural identity and because these students are first-generation Hmong-Americans, they are going to be drawn to their roots.

There were a few pieces of the unexpected data gathered. For example, Mai is quite shy when it comes to whole class participation. However, when it came time to do small group work, she participated a lot more than what I expected from her, in both English and Hmong; in fact, she had the second largest number of speech acts academically and the third largest number of social speech acts. At the same time, Kou participated less than I had anticipated. He is not shy, can be talkative, and often answers questions or offers ideas in whole class discussions. When he was involved in small group work, he had the least amount of speech acts both academically and socially. Being the only adult educator in the class, it is sometimes difficult to monitor and gauge participation from students when they are doing group work, and there are six different groups working in the class. I only noticed the number of speech acts after recording the data in a table. Clearly educators' perceptions are not always correct about who is participating and who is not participating much, during small group work.

Moreover, I did not realize how much metalinguistic talk occurs during group work or within the classroom. In this study, students verbalized this understanding more than expected. Bilingual speakers tend to have more recognition and are more aware

about language rules than monolingual speakers. This is supported by research that says bilingual speakers have greater metalinguistic awareness, (Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Broner, 2001). The image of students having more metalinguistic talk outside of the classroom than inside the classroom has been changed.

Another unexpected aspect of the data collecting was the technical difficulties and unexpected time conflicts that came along with this project. Flexibility in research is important. Sometimes the recorders did not work because the batteries were low or it was accidentally not turned on. At one point, the microphones were not connected tight enough. As well, group work did not always fit into the goal of the lesson and standardized testing was held for several weeks, during the recording collection. Furthermore, students were not as talkative or participatory on some days, and sometimes the group work was not set up with chunks of talk time. Absent students also hindered the data gathering on a few occasions. At one point, my digital recorder and microphones were stolen and needed to be replaced. All of these unanticipated conflicts came into the picture during the data collection process, which is something that I would caution other researchers about.

Why was this study important? There are several reasons why this study was significant. I think the most significant reason is in relation to the field and the rights of the students. Educators and administrators often believe that native language use (L1) is not relevant in school or the classroom. I think this study demonstrates that using native language during group work, in the classroom, and in school can be beneficial to ELLs. Students need to be allowed to use their native language for comprehension,

participation, cultural identity, and integrating into a social community. Native English speakers have advantages in all of these circumstances. Non-native speakers deserve the equal opportunities that native speakers already have. This study lends credence to the fact that students do not always use L1 in a negative manner. They use it to help themselves academically and socially in the learning community. As well, they use L1 to connect with their cultural identity and with members of the same cultural/language group. Educators and administrators who make rules or policies that imply or demand the use of English only because they believe it is better for the students are not necessarily making the best academic choice for non-native speakers of English.

Language rights are a common topic of discussion in the linguistics field. There are two kinds of rights: (1) the right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of language(s) and (2) the right to use one's language in community activities (McKay & Hornberger, 1996). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 stated that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (Romaine, 1995, p. 249). It is a basic human right to use L1 in all settings. When we tell our bilingual students they are not allowed to use L1, we are taking away a basic human right. It is important for students to be in a comfortable, positive environment for learning to take place. If we take away basic rights, students will not be learning in an environment that allows them to reach their highest potential.

This study also highlights the lack of research in this field, particularly with this language and age group; there is limited information about speech acts and code switching within a middle school setting. In addition, it is difficult to find information about on-task/off task group discourse in general, but more specifically with middle school students. In a field where group work is common, the limited research about on-task/off-task behavior thwarts our work in schools. Furthermore, limited research exists investigating bilinguals doing group work. This study adds information and illuminates possible further study in the ESL field for this particular for community and for other communities that serve a similar population.

Limitations of the Study

Because this case study involved a small group of students and a small number of speech samples, it is not generalizable in all classrooms where code switching occurs. Suggestions for future research include: How do newcomers use code switching in the classroom? What are the differences between newcomers' use of L1 and the use of L1 by students who have lived in the United States for an extended amount of time? Furthermore, these questions and this study could be duplicated with other language groups.

Suggestions for Educators

Some suggestions I have for educators and administrators include: allowing students to use L1 in the classroom, in small group work, in the hallways, and at school given the benefits people in the education field acknowledge L1 with students and set up some boundaries with students. I would suggest allowing students to use L1 but not

make it a practice to use L1 100% of the time. Students should have opportunities to enhance their knowledge and form a confident, cultural and social identity. At the same time, students should have opportunities to practice using L2. It seems that creating an environment that is not punitive for using L1 but would encourage the use of L2, is beneficial to ELLs.

Furthermore, I believe it is important for teachers to monitor group work. This study emphasized the importance of monitoring group work. Teachers should walk around the room, listen to what is being done within the group, take part in the group work while allowing the students to be in charge, and take note of student participation. This type of observation and management will provide teachers a better understanding of individual needs and group dynamics.

This being said, it is important for students to have some off-task time. Although students should be focused on the tasks at hand and working towards their academic goals, getting off-task and talking about other things is beneficial to students. They need the time to form relationships and have time to identify with their cultural peers.

I hope to have opportunities to present these findings to a larger audience of ESL professionals. I think it is important to convey to teachers that bilingual students do use L1 for academic purposes and that the use of L1 does not necessarily mean students are off-task. Often times, educators who do not speak the students' L1 instinctively believe their students' are off-task or talking about something inappropriate when they use L1. This study shows that students do stay on-task while using L1. Furthermore, I hope that educators see the benefits of using L1 in students' social contexts. The group interview

in this study shows that using L1 is a significant piece of students' identity and cultural community.

Summary

Overall, this study was a fantastic experience in terms of personal and professional growth. It was a process that was exciting, frustrating and overwhelming, but provided a framework for future action research in the classroom. I hope that the data and conclusions provide support to teachers who recognize the importance of L1. It is a starting place for others in the field for future research.

APPENDIX A

Home Language Questionnaire

Taken from Assessment and ESL (Law & Eckes, 1995)

Student's Name _____ **Age** _____ **Date** _____

1. Where were you born?
2. If you were born outside of the United States, how long have you lived in the U.S.?
3. Have you always lived in Minnesota? If not, where else have you lived?
4. Which language do you hear most at home?
5. How many people live in your house? How many brothers? Sisters? Others?
6. Your father speaks to you in _____
 Circle: Always Often Sometimes Never
7. Your mother speaks to you in _____
 Circle: Always Often Sometimes Never
8. Your brothers and sisters speak to you in _____
 Circle: Always Often Sometimes Never
9. Your aunts/uncles speak to you in _____ at home outside of home
 Circle: Always Often Sometimes Never
10. Your cousins speak to you in _____ at home outside of home
 Circle: Always Often Sometimes Never
11. Does your father ever speak English to you?
 How often? When?
12. Does your mother ever speak English to you?
 How often? When?

13. Do your brothers and sisters ever speak to you in English?

How often?

When?

14. Which language does your parents consider most important for you?

15. How often do you listen to/watch programs in your native language?

16. What language do you use outside of the home? (weddings, birthday parties, funerals, etc.)

17. Have you ever been taught to read and/or write in Hmong? If so, who taught you? How long have you been learning Hmong?

18. How often do you speak Hmong in the classroom?

Circle: Always Often Sometimes Never

19. How often do you speak Hmong in the hallways at school?

Circle: Always Often Sometimes Never

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. Why do you use Hmong to give directions sometimes and English to give directions sometimes?
2. Why do you use Hmong to get back on-task? Most students used English.
3. Why do you use Hmong to goof around?
4. Why do you use Hmong sometimes to tease and English sometimes to tease?
5. Why do you use Hmong to use slang/figure of speech? Other students used English.
6. Why do you use Hmong only to talk about how you are feeling?
7. Why might you start a sentence in English and then switch to Hmong?
8. Why might you start a sentence in Hmong and switch to English?
9. When you were talking to another group, why did you use Hmong?
10. Why did you start off a sentence in Hmong and then use English? Or start off a sentence in English and then switch to Hmong?

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