

## **English-Vietnamese Bilingual Code-Switching in Conversations: How And Why**

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### **Abstract**

The present study investigates the use of code-switching between Vietnamese and English in casual conversations and focuses on how and why conversational participants code-switch. The data include recordings of talk among a small Vietnamese-English bilingual female group and short interviews with the participants after the recordings. The paper will discuss how the bilinguals code-switched as a part of their communicative resources. I conclude with implications for ESL/EFL teaching.

### **Introduction**

Code-switching—the alternating between two or more languages or dialects within a conversation—has been an important field of research attracting the attention of numerous scholars. Code-switching is a natural phenomenon and a worth-noticing aspect of bilingualism (Cheng & Butler, 1989). Moreover, code-switching is employed differently in different communities, which can be determined by socio-political factors and attitudes found in the given community (Myers-Scotton, 1998, p. 91). Therefore, studying about code-switching is necessary and crucial in that it can help provide information about bilinguals' language behaviors, identities, and attitudes in a speech community. This paper aims to explore the phenomenon of code-switching between Vietnamese and English among a group of female Vietnamese students in Hawaii in order to explore when, how, and why they employ code-switching in their speech. An analysis of this type of code-switching may have useful implications for the teaching of English to Vietnamese students.

### **The Mechanism And Functions of Code-Switching**

The term code-switching is defined as the alternate use of two or more linguistic

varieties within the same utterance (Wardhaugh, 2010) or during the same conversation (Myers, 1990; Wardhaugh, 2010). Code-switching can be intra-sentential or inter-sentential. In intra-sentential code-switching, speakers alternate from one language to the other one within a sentence, whereas in inter-sentential code-switching, conversational participants code-switch between sentences (Myers, 1990; Wardhaugh, 2010).

With respect to the linguistic mechanism of code-switching, different theories and models have been proposed. Also in her Markedness Model, Myers-Scotton (1990) talked about the matrix language frame model in which the matrix language (defined as the dominant language) is more active and more frequently used and the embedded language (the weaker language) enters into the matrix language. According to her, the matrix language controls the form of the embedded language. Jacobson (2001) added one more type of code-switching strategy, language alternation, where there is equal distribution between the two languages in a code-switching discourse. It is worth noticing that Myers-Scotton's syntactic analysis unit is "the projection of complementizer CP" while Jacobson's (2001) unit of analysis is the sentence. A CP is defined as "a syntactic unit



headed by a Complementizer position” and “generally has a finite verb” (Jacobson, 2001, p. 63).

Regarding the grammar used in code-switching, Heredia and Brown (in press) asserted that the dominant language plays a crucial role in code-switching. An example of Spanish-English bilinguals was provided to illustrate in which context these bilinguals code-switched more when communicating in Spanish (L1) than in English (L2 as the dominant language). Heredia and Brown claimed that after a certain degree of fluency and frequent use of L2 as the dominant language in their communication, the bilinguals’ L2 was more readily accessible and more reliable for them. That is to say, when these bilinguals spoke Spanish, they tended to code-switch to the other language more than when they spoke English.

There are different ideas about why people code-switch. Myers-Scotton (1998) observed that many people still believe that “the main reason for code-switching is lack of sufficient proficiency to go on in the language in which speakers began the conversation” (p. 91). Along similar lines, Cheng and Butler (1989) contended that code-switching was a natural occurrence, and bilinguals were unaware of their code-switching. In fact, some authors believe that code-switching is a discourse mode, not a discourse strategy to obtain communicative purposes during the conversation (e.g., Parfenova, 2001).

A large number of researchers, however, maintain that code-switching is a purposeful action to achieve certain conversational goals. Myers-Scotton (1990) explained the code-switching phenomenon with her Markedness Model. She classified code-switching into unmarked code-switching and marked code-switching. Marked code-switching occurs when a conversation participant alternated to the unexpected code for a conversational purpose, and unmarked code-switching conforms to the expected code, often to maintain a desired situation or meaning. For example, in a conversation among young highly educated minority women who regularly use English and Swahili as ethnically neutral languages with Swahili being used to

encode their national identity and English to signal their high education, the code-switch from Swahili to English is unmarked (Myers-Scotton). In contrast, in a conversation among five people in a Luyia-English bilingual business group where the more common code is Luyia (their L1), a marked code-switch occurs when the leader switched to the official language English to reinforce his authority in the group and the second member also spoke in English to show his agreement with the leader (Myers-Scotton). In fact, according to Myers-Scotton, when a speaker chooses a code, he or she examines his/her potential choices’ markedness, the deterrents of which are social forces in the workplace or in their community, and decides either to follow or reject it. Therefore, marked code-switches are often conscious.

Myers-Scotton’s Markedness Model can be complemented by Wardhaugh’s (2010) distinction of situational versus metaphorical code-switching. Situational code-switching is a kind of code-switching triggered by a change in the situation while metaphorical code-switching is motivated by a change in the topic, activity, interactional frame, and interactional effects in the same situation. Speakers may code-switch to redefine the situation: “formal to informal, official to personal, serious to humorous, and politeness to solidarity” (Wardhaugh, 2010, p. 102). To give a clearer picture of these kinds of code-switching, Wardhaugh (2010) cited code-switching examples from Blom and Gumperz (1972). In a Ranamal- Bokmal bilingual community where Ranamal is spoken as a local dialect and Bokmal as one of the standard varieties, when a teacher formally lectures in Bokmal and then use Ramanal in the following discussion, the term situational code-switching applies. On the other hand, metaphorical code-switching is considered to occur when government officials and local people transact in Bokmal and occasionally use Ramanal for special effects.

Cheng and Butler (1989) also stated that code-switching served important social functions because there were pragmatic meanings under the code-switches. In agreement with the notion that code-

switching is a purposeful process, Ben-Rafael (2001) contended:

Code-switching structures the conversation through discursive markers; it signals ends of sequences, subordinate topics, or the boosting of new subjects. It allows reformulation and is a means of insistences. It also opens the way to instructions into a discussion and the interruption of its flow... Code-switching is often a form of subjective support. It may convey personal assertions and feelings and signify a turn toward the speaker him/herself or toward the other. (p. 306)

Indeed, Li Wei (1998), using Cantonese-English data, demonstrated that code-switching can be utilized as a device to acquire social meanings. For example, in a conversation among three English-Cantonese girls, A, B, and C, about buying a studying guide, C's accidental speech overlap to A (which also coincided with B's overlap of A) contained a code-switch to English, which contributed to attracting A's attention and claiming the floor effectively. Moreover, Li Wei (1998) drew attention to "extra-linguistic factors such as topic, setting, relationships between participants, community norms and values, and societal, political and ideological developments influencing speakers' choice of language in conversation" (p. 156) in explaining why bilinguals code-switch in discourse.

### **Code-Switching Among Vietnamese-English Bilinguals**

There has been little research on Vietnamese-English code-switching. In a rare study, Ho-Dac (2003) discussed the universal principles that constrained the distribution of intra- and inter-sentential code-switching with a particular focus on the social and linguistic aspects of Vietnamese language, including the linguistic and cultural features of Vietnamese personal reference system and Vietnamese tones. Indeed, the data revealed that in a Vietnamese-English linguistic environment, the Vietnamese tones' operation was quite

different from their usual distribution in a Vietnamese linguistic environment due to their phonological and cultural features (Ho-Dac, 2003). Specifically, the proportion of such tones as high rising pitch (sắc), mid pitch (ngang), and mid trailing pitch (huyền) was higher than that of the other tones at switch points (85.46 % and 14.54% of the total number of tones at switch points, respectively). This finding, in combination with the perceptually phonological compatibilities between the Vietnamese tones associated with high and mid-level pitch and English stressed/ unstressed syllables, as well as the cultural association of high tones with clarity and emphasis, enabled Ho-Dac to make the suggestion that "code switching is facilitated by the Vietnamese tones associated with the pitch ranging from mid- to high-level pitch" (p. 104). In regard to code-switching from a particular Vietnamese addressing term to an English personal pronoun, Ho-Dac stated that speakers who do this kind of code-switching seem to wish to signal a change in his/her attitude towards the addressee.

In Ho-Dac's research, he focused on people who were immigrants living in an English speaking country for a long time. This raises a question: Would these people's code-switching manners and purposes be the same as those of the Vietnamese-English bilinguals who are temporary residents in an English-speaking country?

### **Research Questions**

This paper aims to examine Vietnamese-English code-switching by Vietnamese international students in the US. Specifically, I address the following questions:

1. What are the linguistic contexts for Vietnamese-English bilinguals' code-switching?
2. For what interactional purposes do Vietnamese-English bilinguals employ code-switching?

### **Methodology**

For practical reasons, this study concentrates on seven female participants, age ranging from 28 to 36, who were living in a university

dorm in Honolulu. The participants were all bilingual speakers of Vietnamese and English. Each participant's length of English study was different, varying from 10 years to 19 years, but, in general, these participants had an advanced level of English. The data for this study came from the audio-recordings of these subjects' speech during their daily conversations in dormitory rooms and in the communal kitchen from February to April, 2012. During the time of the recording, most of the participants were not aware that they were being recorded. Two subjects knew about the recording process, but they did not know about the purpose of the research. Permission was obtained retrospectively in order to avoid possible self-consciousness by the participants. After the recording of the data, all the participants, when asked for permission, allowed my using of their recorded conversation for research.

Several conversations were recorded for the data presented in this paper. The length of the recording time and the number of participants were also varied in each conversation. However, for a representative sample, two recordings, each of which was more than one and a half hour in length, were chosen for analysis. In one of the two recordings, there sometimes was the involvement of a non-Vietnamese speaker. I excluded these segments from the data, as the purpose of the research was to study the code-switching of Vietnamese bilinguals. The recorded conversations between these subjects were transcribed, and code-switching utterances were identified. Code-switching was considered to occur when there was a

language shift in the conversation. In this study, the term code-switching includes both inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching levels. For confirmation of certain claims in the data analysis, some participants were briefly interviewed after the recording of the data.

## Findings

The findings from the data analysis mostly support the literature review above and add further details about the purposes of code-switching in Vietnamese-English bilingual conversations. In the next sections, I will first describe the linguistic environment where code-switching occurred. Then, I will show how the Vietnamese-English bilinguals' exploited code-switching for various conversational purposes.

### *The Linguistic Environment of Code-Switching*

Regarding the first research question about the linguistic environment of code-switching, the data showed that when the Vietnamese bilinguals use inter-sentential code-switching, most of the time (66.7 % of all code-switching instances, Table 1) the grammar structure of the two languages do not interact with each other. There is no language dominating the other in these cases. For example, in Excerpt 1 below, H1 and H2 employed inter-sentential code-switching from Vietnamese to English. H1 code-switched inter-sententially from line 1 to line 3, and H2 from line 2 to line 4. The grammatical structures of these code-switches did not influence each other.

#### Excerpt 1

- 1 H1: Quà này là vừa tặng vừa ăn được  
*gift this be both offer both eat PosM*  
*This gift is good both for presentation and for eating.*
- 2 H2: Cái kia mới quan trọng. Nó to nhất mập nhất, ha ha ha  
*Class. that EmM important it big most fat most*  
*That one is more important. It is the biggest and fattest*
- 3 H1 ((smiling)): You, you can use it tonight
- 4 H2: Keep it! ha ha ha
- 5 Everyone: ha ha ha...

However, the data show that there were also some instances of intra-sentential code-switching (33.3 % of all code-switching instances, Table 1), where the matrix language determined the structure of the code-switching as Myers-Scotton (1990) mentioned in her Matrix Model. This type of code-switching can be seen in Excerpt 2, where T code-switched in line 7. In this case, the matrix language was Vietnamese and the embedded language English. The dominant language Vietnamese's grammar formed and

shaped the grammar of the embedded language English. In English, the verb *celebrate* should be in present participle form *Verb-ing* because the sentence is in the past continuous tense. However, *celebrate* was not accompanied by an *-ing* in this code-switching as the Vietnamese grammar determines its form: In Vietnamese, there is no flecional morpheme and the marker *đang* is used to express the progressive aspect.

Excerpt 2

- 6 H1: Con N đâu?  
*Clas. N where*  
*Where is N?*
- 7 T: N cũng đang celebrate cái sinh nhật.  
*N also Prog. celebrate Class. birthday*  
*N is also celebrating a birthday.*
- 8 H1: Who?

The same pattern can be seen in Excerpt 3 below.

Excerpt 3

- 9 H3: Đừng có take em nghe!  
*not have take younger sibling* *AlignM*  
*Don't take (pictures of) me.*

In Excerpt 3, H1 was taking pictures of N with the birthday cake. H3 helped N hold the cake, but she did want to be included in the picture and code-switched to English. In her utterance, the matrix language is Vietnamese and the embedded language is English. In Vietnamese, her utterance should be *Đừng có chụp em nghe!* [Don't-take photos-me-alignment marker (Don't take my photos)]. The position where code-switching occurred is the slot of the verb *chụp* (*hình*) [take photos], and it can be seen that in her mixed speech, the English verb *take* was inserted in that slot. In English, the object of *take* would be *my photos* but in H3's utterance, *take* is followed by the Vietnamese object *em* [younger sibling]. That is to say, the English word fits in the Vietnamese sentence structure. In fact, these examples as well as the others listed in the table below showed that the morphosyntactic

integration of the embedded language elements was completely directed by the matrix language in the intra-sentential code-switching environment.

Table 1 shows that, of the 27 code-switches collected, 21 code-switches were created when the speakers were speaking in Vietnamese and then turned to English, which means that these participants had the tendency to code-switch from their L1 to their L2 rather than from L2 to L1 in the L2-dominant-language environment. Moreover, the data also showed that of the nine intra-sentential code-switches found in the data, the number of Vietnamese-English intra-sentential code-switches was more than three times as many as that of English-Vietnamese intra-sentential code-switches, which occurred only twice. In other words, when these Vietnamese-English bilinguals spoke in their



first language Vietnamese, they tended to have more intra-sentential code-switching into English than that number of intra-sentential code-switches into Vietnamese when they

spoke in their L2, English. It is possible that the L2 is more accessible in the code-switching speech than the L1, as Heredia and Brown (in press) mentioned.

Table 1  
*Frequency of Inter-Sentential And Intra-Sentential Code-Switches*

	Inter-sentential switch	Intra-sentential switch	Total
Vietnamese-English switch	51.85 % (n = 14)	25.93% (n = 7)	77.78% (n = 21)
English-Vietnamese switch	14.81 % (n = 4)	7.41 % (n = 2)	22.22% (n = 6)
Total	66.67% (n = 18)	33.33% (n = 9)	100% (N = 27)

### *Conversational Functions of Code-Switching*

#### Language Proficiency Compensation

The data supported the claim that people code-switch because they do not know the vocabulary in the other language.

#### Excerpt 4

- 10 H1: Y như rượu nếp. Yea, it looks like rice wine.  
*like wine sticky rice yea it looks like rice wine*  
*Like sticky-rice wine. Yea, it looks like rice wine.*
- 11 H2: Oh, look like my mom made the sắn, rượu sắn.  
*oh look like my mom made the cassava wine cassava.*  
*Oh, look like my mom made the cassava, cassava wine.*

In Excerpt 4, it can be seen that H2 code-switched at the noun phrase *rượu sắn* in line 11. A later interview with this speaker revealed that H2 code-switched because she did not know the word *cassava* in English. This finding suggests that sometimes people code-switched because of low vocabulary capacity in the current language. However, this kind of code-switching was not common in the data recorded.

#### Context Association

The data also indicate that code-switching was employed when certain terms are associated with one language context and not the other. In Excerpt 5, H1 used the phrase *winter break* in English because this term is associated with

English and American culture. Vietnamese has a translated expression of this term, *ngibi đông*, but the participants only experienced winter breaks in the United States, not in Vietnamese school system (Vietnamese, by the way, does have a native expression for summer vacation, *ngibi hè*, as Vietnamese students do experience summer breaks). When interviewed later about why she used that term in English, H1 said that the term *winter break* was used more frequently than the Vietnamese translation and she got used to that term. Although she knew how to translate *winter break* into Vietnamese, she never used the Vietnamese translation of the expression before, not even when she spoke with non-English speakers in Vietnam about

winter breaks, as she never experienced a winter break in her country.

Excerpt 5

- 12 H1: Từ lúc hết winter break đến giờ là hết bao nhiêu ngày hè?  
*from when end winter break to now be end how many day QuesM?*  
*How many days has it been since we had winter break?*
- 13 Hai tháng chưa? Two months? No?  
*two month yet two month no*  
*Two months yet? Two months? No?*

Similarly, Excerpt 6 shows that people code-switched to terms that exist in one language, but not the other. In Excerpt 6, T used the word *lounge* in the middle of her Vietnamese sentence because this term refers to a common kind of shared public space in dormitories in the United States, which does not exist in Vietnam. It would take her more

words to explain it in Vietnamese. In my later interview with T, she confirmed that she knew the meaning of this word and can describe it in Vietnamese, but to use an exact word or phrase to express it in Vietnamese was not easy because Vietnamese does not have a lexical item for this type of space.

Excerpt 6

- 14 T: Hay là mình mượn một cái lounge?  
*or Conn. we borrow one Class. lounge*  
*Or should we borrow a lounge?*

The English code-switch to *private* in Excerpt 7 is another example of code-switching due to context association. The use of the lounge for personal or group privacy is

common in this group of bilinguals in their location at the time of data collection, and therefore the use of the word *private* is attached to this situation.

Excerpt 7

- 15 H2: Vào đây cho nó private chị.  
*Enter that for it private older sister*  
*Sit there for privacy.*
- 16 ((someone knocks on the door))
- 17 H2: Come in.

These examples show that language expressions are strongly associated with and embedded in their social and cultural contexts (see also Young, 2009, on discursive practices).

Connotational Effects

The data also reveal that the conversation participants code-switched not only because they did not know how to use these phrases in English, but also because they wanted their speech to have different connotational effects. In the following setting, H1 was talking about the benefits of eating certain kinds of food that are good for health and beauty, such as carrots for better eye-sight and chicken skin for smoother complexion, and then she turned to joke to L about the eating of hair

for longer hair. In response to H1's joke, L jokingly told H not to trick her, and it is in this turn that she switched from English to Vietnamese. When I interviewed her later about this, L said that she code-switched to Vietnamese because she could not find the exact equivalent of *đụ dỗ*. In fact, while several words exist as the rough equivalent to this Vietnamese word, none really matches the connotations that it has. The word *đụ dỗ* means to allure someone naive into doing something according to the speaker's will (Phe, 1994). English has several words that are close in meaning to this Vietnamese word, but *seduce* would carry a slightly different meaning related to sexuality, *persuade* is too neutral, and *entice* misses the fact that the target person is

naive. In this case, for L to use the Vietnamese *dụ dỗ* was the best choice for joking and effect, with the implication along the lines of *Don't play a trick on me*. This example shows that language expressions in two languages are

- Excerpt 8
- 18 H1: Want your hair longer? Ha ha eat hair.
- 19 L (laughing)
- 20 H1: I don't know.
- 21 L: Don't dụ dỗ me.  
*don't seduce me*  
*Don't seduce me.*

#### Greeting or Addressing an Unknown Newcomer

The data suggest that the participants code-switched to greet a newcomer, a pattern also documented by Myers-Scotton (1990). In

#### Excerpt 9

- 22 H1: cái đó hả? Ngày mai chị T sẽ nấu canh  
*Class. that QuesM tomorrow older sister T will cook soup*  
*That one? Tomorrow T will cook soup*
- cho chị ăn.  
*for older sister eat.*  
*for me.*
- 23 L: Canh gì vậy?  
*soup what QuesM*  
*What soup is that?*
- 24 H2: Ông H ... Ông H ổng nhại tiếng..  
*Mr. H Mr. H he mimic dialect*  
*Mr. H...Mr. H mimicked my dialect..*

((N comes in))

- 25 H1: Hah, hey. Hello, welcome in.
- 26 H2: Hello. Happy birthday!
- 27 Everyone: Happy birthday to you!

Similarly, in line 17, Excerpt 7 above, H2 code-switched to English to greet S who was knocking at the door. However, it is necessary to take into account that because H2 did not identify who the newcomer was, the English code-switch would be the best choice in this situation to avoid misaddressing the newcomer, as greetings in Vietnamese require

almost never exactly the same, as one may convey meanings that the other does not. Code-switching allows bilinguals to select the connotation in the language that achieves their interactional purposes.

Excerpt 9, while people were conversing in Vietnamese, N came in, and then H1 greeted N in English, and everyone also spoke to her in English.

the appropriate terms of address based on the recipient's age, gender, and relationship to the speaker. In this situation, code-switching is used for general addressing purpose, which is not afforded by Vietnamese. This use is similar to the use of code-switching of personal pronouns for etiquette purpose, according to Ho-Dac's (1997) study.



### Topic Change Or Quick Response to an Immediate Action

In addition, the bilinguals in the data sometimes code-switched because they desired to change to another topic other than the topic they were talking about, as H1 did in Excerpt 10 below. In this excerpt, H1 and L were talking about their age and its effects on H1's health. H1 used the term U40, which is a Vietnamese term adapted from the English phrase *under forty* to refer to the age of a person almost forty years old, to express that she was old. H1 said she was weak because of

her age; however, L did not agree with H1's idea. They were discussing that topic, but then H1 switched to Vietnamese in line 36 to start another topic that was not related to what they had been talking about before. This alternation into the Vietnamese language supported Wardhaugh's (2010) claim about metaphorical code-switching's function and Li Wei's (1998) observation that speakers employed code-switching for a topic change.

#### Excerpt 10

- 28 H1: Yes, I'm U40 now. Right?  
29 L: I am thirty now.  
30 H1: Forty ...Thirty four ...thirty five.  
31 L: You are only about four five years older than me.  
32 H1: Yea. Only? Only?  
33 L: Only. Yea.  
34 H1: Oh my god!  
35 Th: Ooh  
36 H1: Hát hát hết cho nó đổ xuống luôn em!  
*shake shake all for it fall down then younger sister.*  
*Shake it, shake it all so it all fall out!*
- 37 Cái nắp đâu rồi chị Th?  
*Class. lid where already older sister Th?*  
*Where is the lid, Th?*

However, it is worth noticing that the code-switch in line 36 was done at the same time with an immediate change in an action of their cooking activities. Therefore, this code-

switch can be considered as a response being triggered by a sudden action, which is the same as the code-switch in Excerpt 11 below.

#### Excerpt 11

- 38 H1: Aaah! Sorry! Đứng yên đổ luôn  
*ah sorry stand still spill right there*  
*Ah! Sorry! (I) was standing in one place and then I*  
*spilled the egg right there.*

In the situation of Excerpt 11, H1 was about to crack and beat the eggs to cook fried-egg, and she was standing near a dustbin. Her intention was to put the egg's content into the bowl and the eggshell into the dustbin. Instead, she put the egg into the dustbin because she thought that the bowl was in the dustbin's position. After the egg's content fell into the dustbin, she realized her mistake and immediately produced an utterance with the mix of two codes as above. This example suggests that code-switching

can be utilized as a reaction to a sudden action by bilinguals.

#### Solidarity

It was also found that people code-switched for convergence and solidarity, which can be seen in the two conversations in Excerpts 2 above and 12 below. In line 7, Excerpt 2, H1 code-switched to English for a convergent purpose perhaps because of T's use of the English word *celebrate* in her speech, which is also another example of familiar context discussed before. Similarly, in Excerpt 12, L

code-switched to English most likely because she wanted to speak the language that her

partner, H1, had code-switched into, with a mannered delivery for emphatic purpose.

#### Excerpt 12

39 L: Ôi, đẹp quá hà.  
*wow beautiful very EmM*  
*Wow, so beautiful!*

40 H1 ((in a mannered style)):  
Do chị nghĩ tối nay thế nào cũng có take pictures.  
*because older sister think night this certainl have take pictures.*  
*Because I thought there would certainly be photo-taking tonight.*

41 L: Okay, good, good, good. I will be your photographer.

#### Disagreement or Non-alignment

The data also show that people code-switched as a way to indicate their disapproval or non-alignment, as seen in Excerpt 13. H1 alternated her speech to English to express her opinion that T was not poor. The fact that

T did not dare to spend money to buy clothes was unbelievable to H1. This code-switching assisted H1's utterance, which does not align with T.

#### Excerpt 13

42 H2: Đi Mỹ về mà không có tiền à?  
*go America return Conn. no have money QuesM*  
*Coming back from America, why don't you have money?*

43 T: Chừng đó về tiếc tiền lại không mua.  
*when return regret money EmM no buy*  
*When coming back (to Vietnam), I will not dare to spend*  
*(much) money buying (clothes).*

44 H1: I don't think so.

Non-alignment is also expressed by the code-switch in Excerpt 14. In the conversation of Excerpt 14, H1 code-switched to show her own displeasure and disagreement with the fact that Th had put some sugar as

seasoning in the eggs (adding a bit of sugar in one's cooking to enhance the taste is a common practice in some regions of Vietnam).

#### Excerpt 14

45 H1: Chị có bỏ đường vô đây không?  
*older sister have put sugar enter this no*  
*Did you put sugar in this?*

46 Th: Có  
yes  
Yes.

47 H1: Ohh, I don't like it. You know I never want to eat this one.

48 Th: Sorry.

#### Joking

Interestingly, the data show that these bilingual speakers exploited code-switching

for joking. For some jokes that Vietnamese speakers may consider rude to speak in their mother tongue, they switch to English to have the neutrality in meaning. In Excerpt 1

presented earlier, as they escalated with the sexual joke to make fun of N's presents, the bananas, H1 and H2 switched from Vietnamese in line 1 to line 3 to English in line 2 to line 4, respectively.

Also for a humorous purpose, in Excerpt 15, line 51, H1 code-switched to Vietnamese

Excerpt 15

49 H1: She wants to lose weight and she asked "Did you put any sugar?"

50 H3: Oh

51 H1: Nó bỏ cũng một kí trong đó.  
*it put also one kilo in that*  
*She put just a kilo (of sugar) in it.*

#### Formality Indication

In contrast to the employing of code-switching in informal jokes, the recorded bilinguals also utilize code-switching as a formality indicator of an event. The background of the excerpt below is that H1 wanted the whole group to sit in the other corner of the kitchen. However, for H3, it

to joke that H3 had put too much sugar in the cake. This excerpt clearly illustrates the metaphorical functions of code-switching for conversational purposes, in this case, changing the situation from serious to humorous (see Wardhaugh, 2010, mentioned earlier).

would be the same to sit in either of the places, and H3 persuaded the whole group to sit at the place where they were standing. After people had sat down, H1 shifted from Vietnamese to English, perhaps because she wanted to make the atmosphere more formal and to make N have the feeling of being an important person that day.

Excerpt 16

52 H1: Ồ há!  
*Ah ha*  
*Ah ha*

53 H3: Thôi ngồi đó không sao hết á.  
*DisM sit there no problem EmM*  
*OK, sit there; it's not a problem at all.*

54 H1: So, N will be the center of tonight. Right?

#### Message Reiteration for Emphasis Or for Power Assertion

The data also reveal that the Vietnamese-English bilinguals used code-switching to reiterate messages, i.e., repeating what was just said in the other language for the purpose of emphasizing or for power assertion. The phenomenon of code-switching to repeat one's own preceding utterance can be seen in line 10, Excerpt 4 above, line 13, Excerpt 5 above, and line 55, Excerpt 17 below.

In line 10, Excerpt 4, H1's Vietnamese utterance *Y như vợ nếp* was repeated in the

other language *Yea, it looks like rice wine* in her following utterance, and in the same way, in Excerpt 5, the code-switch *Two months?* was the reiteration of *Hai tháng chưa?* in H1 speech in line 13 to draw the other people's attention to it. Likewise, in line 55, Excerpt 17 below, H1, when talking about Th's daughter, switched to the English word *engage* but emphatically repeated what she had just uttered in Vietnamese, *Con chỉ nó đã đính hôn rồi*, perhaps because Th and L did not respond to this utterance the first time.

Excerpt 17

55 H1: Con chỉ nó đã đính hôn rồi, engage rồi mà.  
*Child she it Perf. engage already engage already StaM*  
*Her daughter has already been engaged, engaged already.*

In addition, code-switching is used to exert power on the listener or to replicate what the other conversation participant has just spoken in the other language for the purpose of exerting more power on the listener. In the following excerpt, Excerpt 18, H1 switched to Vietnamese to request L to take a photo. In Vietnamese, they can use a system of address terms that reflects and reconstitutes the hierarchy in people's relationships. Therefore, the code-switching

to Vietnamese here can invoke this power relationship among the participants. As can be seen from the data in this excerpt, H1 specially used the pronoun *chị* [older sister] to show L that H1 was older than L, and L should obey H1's request. In line 58, N recycled H1's Vietnamese turn word for word, and although N did not use any pronoun, this recycling implicitly continued to invoke that power relationship.

#### Excerpt 18

56 H1 ((pointing to L)): And now you.  
 57 L: No  
 58 H2: ((talking to L covering her face with the pillow)):  
 You try to hide. Your turn!  
 59 H1: Bỏ gối xuống cho chị chụp hình cái nè!  
*drop pillow down for older sister take photo AlignM EmM*  
*Drop the pillow so that I can take a photo of you!*  
 60 N: Nào bỏ gối xuống nào!  
*EmM drop pillow down EmM*  
*Drop the pillow!*  
 61 H1: Please. Yea, yea, that's OK.

#### Marked and Unmarked Code-switching

As mentioned above, according to Myers-Scotton (1990), unmarked code-switching is the type that is expected in the given situation while marked code choice is unexpected and believed to carry extra meaning. Since the women in the data used Vietnamese most of the time in their regular interaction, for them, switching from English to Vietnamese is unmarked and switching from Vietnamese to English is marked. Of the code-switches collected, there were six unmarked code-switches that were shown in Excerpts 4, 8, 10, 15, and 18. However, unlike what Meyers-Scotton proposed, the analysis above shows that these unmarked codeswitches still had conversational effects and help the speakers accomplish their goals in the interaction. In short, it seems that both types of code-switching, marked and unmarked, may carry interactional meanings.

#### Conclusion

Because of the limited time and the small pool of data, the results may not reflect all the features of Vietnamese-English bilinguals' behaviors in general. Moreover, the recording of the data was only carried out at kitchens and dorm rooms. Further, most of the code-switching occurred when these subjects spoke Vietnamese as an unmarked code and English a marked code. Therefore, the data may not represent all Vietnamese-English code-switching patterns. However, I hope the findings provide some useful examples of how Vietnamese speakers of English may code-switch in conversations.

In the preliminary analysis above, I have found that code switching occurred as marked and unmarked choices by Vietnamese-English bilinguals. The analysis also shows that both limited proficiency in one of the languages and familiarity with certain terms in one

language accounted for code-switching. More importantly, the findings suggest that code-switching was one of the effective communicative resources that the bilinguals employ to achieve interactional purposes. Specifically, the bilinguals in the data consciously employed code-switching for connotation effects, newcomer greeting, topic change, solidarity, alignment, joking, formality, emphasis, and power assertion. Code switching was further observed to be used for addressing a general group and as a quick response to a sudden action. They all once again confirm previous research findings that code-switching is not random but is a source of communicative strategies that bilinguals employ in their oral interaction. Regarding the linguistic mechanism of code-switching, this study confirms earlier studies on intra-sentential code-switching: the structure of the code-switched utterance is determined by the matrix language.

As Ho-Dac (2003) contended, a study of bilinguals' switching behavior may help give a better perspective about the phenomenon, the information from this exploratory research can help linguists who are interested in Vietnamese-English bilinguals as well as ESL/EFL teachers to Vietnamese students to have a glimpse into the linguistic behaviors of these students. Appropriate strategies and methods of teaching ESL/EFL to Vietnamese students can be implemented for better teaching and learning results. Following are some implications for the teaching of ESL/EFL to Vietnamese students.

In the ESL environment, the teacher should encourage or at least tolerate code-switching because employing code-switching is a skill in communication and it serves

unique purposes. Especially, code-switching has a place in the classroom. Teachers can switch to L1 to explain a grammatical point or structure. Sometimes when teaching difficult vocabulary, e.g., abstract vocabulary that pictures and actions and other visual aids are ineffective and explaining in the target language is complicated to students, code-switching to students' native language is necessary. The same goes for the teaching of grammatical structures; sometimes the teachers need to switch to the common language between the teachers and the students to help them understand the target language more clearly. In this case, code-switching is a strategy that the teacher can employ to suit the students' needs. This strategy benefits students in that they can learn and understand the new knowledge more clearly in their L1 to have a basis for the next performances in the target language. Importantly, code-switching can sometimes help teachers and students show solidarity toward each other, perhaps in ways similar to how the participants in this study used code-switching. For instance, the teacher can switch to the mother tongue to show his or her concerns to students and to joke with the students, which can help form stronger teacher-student rapport.

Future research may investigate when Vietnamese-English bilinguals tend to code-switch to the other language: when they are speaking English (L2) as an unmarked code or when they are speaking Vietnamese (L1) as an unmarked code. Another question worth exploring is what type of code-switching, inter-sentential or intra-sentential, is more common in code-switching speech.

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