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LIVING IN TWO WORLDS
CODE-SWITCHING AMONGST BILINGUAL CHINESE-AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN

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This paper is based on an analysis of interviews, conducted at three primary schools in Melbourne, which sought to explore the determinants of code-switching between English and Chinese. Specifically, it examined school education and other specific possible determinants of code switching amongst Chinese-Australian bilingual children. The specific determinants of code-switching that emerge from this study include: the length of residence in an English speaking community; the exposure to languages in schools and family communication patterns. The nature of school education played a leading role in Chinese language maintenance for the bilingual children.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines switching between Mandarin Chinese and English among Chinese-Australian bilingual children in Melbourne who attended school language programs. They lived in Chinese-English bilingual families in a multilingual society, Australia, which meets the criteria for identifying bilinguals such as being immigrants or migrants, having close contact with other language groups or school education of LOTE, or growing up in bilingual families (Hoffmann, 1991, 16–17; Ng and Wigglesworth, 2007, p. 133). The term ‘code-switching’ (CS) describes a complex linguistic phenomenon. In this paper, I define CS as the alternating use of two or more languages within the same conversation, without prominent phonological or grammatical integration of one variety to the other.

CS, as an important consequence of bilingualism, had been sadly neglected in research (Clyne, 1967, p. 15; Weinreich, 1968, p. 111). Only since the 1980s has CS attracted sustained attention (Grosjean, 1982, p. 145; Heller, 1988, p. 1). Researchers such as Gumperz subsequently demonstrated that CS was not random but rather subject to pragmatic conditioning. They also suggested it was highly sensitive to the characteristics of the participants and could be used to support a variety of conversational functions.
(e.g. Gumperz, 1971, 1976 and 1982; Blom and Gumperz, 1972). Such research has
continued to grow (Clyne, 2003, p. 1). Linguists now realise that the study of CS can
contribute greatly to understanding the relationship between social processes and linguistic
forms: first, as a variable phenomenon, it forces grammatical models to be defined with
sufficient depth to capture such cross-language switching; and second, it prompts a search
for universal linguistic categories (Heller, 1988, p. 2). English responses to Chinese
questions are a subcategory of CS, in which participants spontaneously switch from the
language of the question to a different language in parts of the answer. In this paper I
outline some of the influences affecting CS. These include: issues like the length of time
the child has lived in an English setting; the exposure to languages in schools and parents’
language.

METHODOLOGY

To understand Chinese-Australian children’s use of CS at different ages, four interviews
were conducted with a set of visual stimuli. The interviews, of thirty native Mandarin
speakers, aged from six to eleven years at three different primary schools in Victoria over
a four-month period, took about thirty minutes per session, (see Table 1). In conducting
these tasks the researcher used only Mandarin Chinese, while the students switched
between Chinese and English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Session A</th>
<th>Session B</th>
<th>Session C</th>
<th>Session D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Short Narrative based on pictures entitled “Dreams” acted as “warm up”</td>
<td>Addition task with 12 stimulus cards to study the switching in using numeral classifiers and addition</td>
<td>Chinese Family Narrative with a set of five pictures</td>
<td>Language background questionnaire (22 questions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Descriptive Task One with a set of five pictures about daily life in China</td>
<td>A six minute video Narrative about students’ school life</td>
<td>Short Narrative about Zoo depicted on five pictures</td>
<td>Students’ daily life questionnaire (14 questions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Descriptive Task Two with a set of five pictures about wildlife, streets, houses and other Australian places</td>
<td>Short narrative about holidays using a set of four pictures entitled “Saturday Street”</td>
<td>Students’ family life questionnaire (14 questions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Interview Sessions
The thirty subjects were divided into six groups: two groups divided by sex for each of 10–11 year olds, 8–9 year olds and 6–7 year olds. There were five subjects in each of the six groups, identified in Table 2 (numbers in brackets later in the article refer to the subject and the interview section).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 1-5</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>2-1, 2-2, 2-3, 2-4, 2-5</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, 4-5</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4, 5-5</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>6-1, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4, 6-5</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Subjects Identifiers

SCHOOLS

Victorian second language programs may be categorized into three types: language-object programs, content-based programs and language/cultural awareness programs (Victorian DE&T, 2005, pp. 21 & 57). In language-object programs the language is taught as the main object of the instruction between 1 and 4 hours per week (Clyne et al., 1995, p. 25). Content-based programs employ immersion principles, but most of them are not immersion programs in the Canadian sense. Immersion programs are found in many countries in the world. However, the Canadian model is the best known. Its immersion programs have all or a large proportion of instruction through the medium of L2 and the students acquire the language through use. Gradually more of the curriculum content is taught in L1. In the programs of this type in Melbourne, subjects are required to be taught in L2 for a minimum of 7.5 hours per week (Victorian DE&T, 2005, pp. 21 & 57). The language/cultural awareness programs are “often defined negatively as not offering enough time on task for a language-object program” (Clyne, 2007).

The children in the study were from three different government primary schools. Table 3 provides basic information about the schools. School A was in a prestigious area with a high proportion of the population from a Chinese speaking background. School B was in an upper-working-class area. The enrolment at School B was 389. There were few Mandarin speaking children at the school or in its surrounding area. School C was located in a district with two university campuses. There was no LOTE program at the school. 18 of the 304 children were from a Mandarin speaking background.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Enrolment</th>
<th>Mandarin speaker</th>
<th>LOTE Program</th>
<th>Parents’ Occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Most of their parents (83%) were professionals or business-persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>All their parents were non-professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Most parents (92%) were in academia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3  School Profiles

SWITCHING AND ENGLISH RESPONSE

There were a total of 1,033 instances of switching between English and Chinese, and another 551 included only English responses to Chinese questions (a subcategory of CS). Switching not only “serves an expressive function”, but also “has pragmatic meaning” (Romaine, 1995, p. 161). In my corpus, the main functions performed by switching were (1) conversational and sociolinguistic (Grosjean, 1982; Gibbons, 1987; Appel and Muysken, 1987; Romaine, 1995); (2) discourse (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1982, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1997; Romaine, 1995); (3) stylistic (McClure and McClure, 1988); and (4) filling gaps in vocabulary (Haugen, 1966, 1972; McClure and McClure, 1988).

The sociolinguistic and conversational functions of switching include topic, setting, interlocutor and intent (Blom and Gumperz, 1972; Myers-Scotton, 1993, 1997; Milroy and Muysken, 1995; Romaine, 1995). Since I conducted all the interviews with an individual child in a room at the schools, the principal sociolinguistic and conversational function was topic. As I have shown in Table 1, the linguistic tasks were designed to allow the children to respond to the pictures about different settings. The settings determined in the pictures of photos, books and videos vary in the interviews. In my corpus, the familiarity of settings in the pictures also plays an important role in the switches by the children. The following illustrate two examples.

(1) hai you yi ge SWIMMING POOL
    also there be one-cl swimming pool
    ‘There is also a swimming pool.’
    (3-2, SC1)
    Stand. Chn.: hai you yi ge YOUYONG CHL.

In (1) the single switch indicated the influence of the school context.
(2) [Question in Chn (Lin): ni xihuan nide xuexiao ma? ‘Do you like your school?’]

xihuan, you henduo FRIENDS, xuedao xuduo yuyan he
like there be many friends have learnt many languages and
SPELLING AND MATHS
spelling and maths
'I do, I have many friends at school and have learnt many languages,
spelling and maths there.'

(2-2, SD1)

Stand, Chn.: xihuan, (yiwei) you henduo PENGYOU, xuedao henduo yuyan,
PINFIXIE HE SUANSHU.

(2) included a second switch to English. English was the instructional language at
school so that it was natural for them to handle the topics in school life in English.

Gumperz (1982, pp. 75–84) lists discourse functions in switching, such as quotations,
addressee specification (specifying an addressee as the recipient of the message), interjec-
tions, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization vs. objectivization. In my
corpus, switching performed most of the discourse functions as mentioned above except
the function of addressee specification because I was the only one present in the interviews
apart from the child. In addition, switches also functioned as compensating for deficient
language competence.

(3) laoshi shuo wo shi ge ‘VERY GOOD READER’
teacher say I be -ci ‘very good reader’
'My teacher said that I was a very good reader.'

(5-5, SD1)

Stand, Chn.: laoshi shuo wo shi ge ‘FEICHANG HAODE DUZHE’

In (3) the girl switched to a direct quotation ‘very good reader’ so as to draw the
listener’s attention to her teacher’s comment. The function of making interjections or
serving as sentence fillers plays a role in the children’s switches. An example follows.
It was very common among the children that switching functions to clarify or emphasize a message so that the same thing was said in both languages. Here are two examples.

(5) *shi bangwan EVENING.*
be evening evening
'It is in the evening'
(4-2, SC2)
Stand. Chn.: *shi bangwan.*

(6) *the shi yi ge COUNTRY NONGCUN*
this is one-cl country country
'This is in the country.'
(1-4, SA3)
Stand. Chn.: *the shi ZAI NONGCUN.*

In (6) the English switch *country* was used to identify the Australian setting of a picture. It has been found that some children switched from Chinese to English when they were not sure whether the Chinese words were the appropriate translation of the corresponding English items. Consider, for instance, the following example.

(7) *you henduo DIANXIAN ANTENNA.*
There be many wire antenna
'There are many antennas.'
(1-5, SA3)
Stand. Chn.: *you henduo TIANXIAN.*
The function of qualifying the message is to distinguish the notions, topic and comment of the discourse. (8) contains a switch to the English comment *maybe over hundreds* so as to be differentiated from the topic *you name duo yang* ‘There are so many sheep’.

(8) you name duo yang MAYBE OVER HUNDREDS.
    there be so many lamb maybe over hundreds
    ‘There are so many sheep, maybe over hundreds.’
    (4-5, SA1)
    Stand. Chn.: you name duo yang, CHABUDUO YOU JI BAI ZHI.

The function of marking personalization vs. objectivization concerns the division between talk and action, and talk as action; the degree of speaker’s involvement in, or distance from a message; whether a statement reflects personal opinion or knowledge; whether it refers to specific instances or has the authority of a generally known fact. In (9) the girl used a switch to show her impression that the children in the pictures were both *dreaming of zoo* because the set of pictures of “Dreams” without any explanation in words can make informants very aware of the two children dreaming of animals.

(9) tamen zai DREAMING OF ZOO.
    they dur-dreaming of zoo
    ‘They are dreaming of zoo,’
    (4-1, SA2)
    Stand. Chn.: tamen zai ZUO DONGWUYUAN DE MENG.

The stylistic functions of switching include quotation, parenthesis, reiteration, gaps and the use of a switched register to indicate education (McClure and McClure, 1988). They overlap in one part with the functions of topic and settings (see examples 1 and 2) and another part with Gumperz’s discourse cases, for instance, the functions of quotation and reiteration (See examples 3, 5 and 6).

(10) bei jing quan shi cao he shu, IT IS A BIRD
    background completely be grass and tree, it is a bird
    ‘It is a bird on the background completely with grass and trees’
    (3-4, SC2)
    Stand. Chn.: bei jing quan shi can he shu, ZHE SHI YI ZHI NIAO.
(10) was an instance of filling gaps in vocabulary, where the boy switched to the English pronoun it. The demonstrative pronouns, such as ZHE ‘this’, NA ‘that’, ZHEXIE ‘these’ and NAXIE ‘those’, are used more often in Chinese than in English instead of the personal pronouns, such as TA ‘it’ and TAMEN ‘they’. Note that while the boy was describing a picture of wild birds in the forest, he switched to the English it is a bird, which should be ZHE SHI YI ZHI NIAO ‘this is a bird’ in standard Chinese.

However, in my corpus 551 instances included only English responses to Chinese questions. They were mainly used to indicate the aspect of Australian life and environment, or to fill a gap of vocabulary. They contained entire English sentences (37%) and parts of a sentence (63%) such as a noun, noun phrase, verb, verb phrase, numeral, adjective, adverb and propositional phrase, as would be normal in colloquial English:

(11) [Question in Chn.(Lin): na ge ruhai zai zuo shenme? ‘What is the girl doing?’]
The girl is cooking breakfast.
(2-4, SB2)

(12) [Question in Chn.(Lin): ni neng gaosi wo ni xuexiao fasheng de zui youqu de shi ma?’
Could you please tell me the most interesting thing that happened at your school?’]
When we go to see the bees, we can eat some honey.
(5-3, SD1)

The above two examples were both complete sentences of English responses to Chinese questions, but the answer of The girl is cooking breakfast in (11) follows a Chinese pattern, in which the girl was repeated instead of using the pronoun “she”. There were a total of 204 such examples.

However, 212 instances were English responses of nouns or noun phrases to Chinese questions. 87 cases were numerals, 26 examples comprised English verbs or verb phrases while 17 of adverbs. But there were only 4 examples of propositional phrases and 1 of an adjective. Consider the following example.

(13) [Question in Chn.(Lin): zhe shi shenme? ‘What is this?’]
Toadstool.
(1-2, SB1)

(13) was a case of an English response with a noun, with an ellipsis of “this is a” in the sentence. (14) was an example where the child used an English response to a Chinese question in mathematical operations.
(14) Question in Chn.(Lin): *san jia yi dengyu ji?* ‘What does 3 plus 1 make?’
   Four.
   (1-2, SB1)

(15) was an English verb phrase, which demonstrated the child’s native-like command of English. There was an ellipsis of “they are” in the sentence.

(15) [Question in Chn.(Lin): *ni kan tamen zai zuo shenme?* ‘Look, what are they doing?’]
   Looking for something to eat.
   (4-2, SC2)

In (16), an instance of a prepositional phrase, there was an ellipsis of “I get to school”.

(16) [Question in Chn.(Lin): *ni zemne qu shangxue?* ‘How do you get to school?’]
   By Car.
   (5-3, SD2)

The data analysis suggests that the incidence of switching and English responses differed between children attending the three schools. The children from School A (the one offering a Chinese program of three hours per week) tended to switch to English less than the children from School C, which did not offer any LOTE program. Subject 5-3 at School C has been excluded from this figure because of the unusually large number of English responses to Chinese questions (253 English responses to Chinese questions, see examples 12 and 16). The pupils from School B, which offered a Spanish program of three hours per week, switched to English least. But they had lived in Australia for the shortest period (see Figure 1). This would indicate that school is an important factor, but we need to see it in relation to the period of residence.

Figure 1 indicates the average number of switches (every switch counted for one) in the four interviews totalling two hours for each child by school.

The rank ordering of the number of English responses to Chinese questions was similar to that of switching (every response counted for one switch). The average number of English responses at School B was lower than those at School A and C. Figure 2 shows the average number of English responses from students at the three schools (5-3 being an exception).
LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

The length of residence for the Chinese-Australian bilingual children in Australia or other English-speaking countries varied from half a year to 10 years. In the sample, 87 per cent of the children (26 out of 30) were born overseas, while only 13 percent of the children (4) were second generation immigrants.
Table 4 Length of Residence in Australia
* For identifiers see Table 2

Figure 3 indicates the children’s average period of residence in Australia in years by school. The data was collected in Interview Session D based on Language Background Questionnaire. The children from School A had lived in Australia for a longer period than those from the other schools. The children from School B had the shortest period of residence in Australia.

![Figure 3 Average Period of Residence in Australia in Years by School](image)

The amount of switching varied between the groups of children with different periods of residence in Australia. Figure 4 shows the average number of switches for the children of the first generation, who were born overseas, with different length of residence in Australia. This result shows a correlation of the number of switches with the period of residence in Australia. The frequency of switching usually grew with the length of resid-
ence. If we put aside differences among the children in age, LOTE education and family communication patterns, more or less five years' residence in Australia was the critical turning point for the children in switches, which was a particular stage in the process of the children's acquisition of the two languages. The children who had lived in Australia for six years switched the most. The second generation children in Australia switched less than the group of the first generation with at least five years of Australian residence.

![Figure 4 Average Number of Switches Per First Generation Child by Period of Residence in Australia](image)

However, there was no close relationship between the contextual functions and number of switches. Some children with a very short period of residence in Australia switched to English a few times, for the purpose of reiteration, especially in conjunction with the school context and Australian environment (e.g. 1–4, see Example 6). But among the group who switched often, some second generation children employed many more functions (e.g. 6–5, see Example 3) in switches such as quotation, reiteration, message qualification and personalization vs. objectivation (Gumperz, 1982, pp. 75–84) than the others.

As for switches, overall the number of English responses corresponded to the period of residence in Australia, and the highest average number was also from the group who had lived in Australia for six years. The children used English responses mainly to express aspects of Australian life and environment (see example 12). All the children responded to Chinese questions in English on fewer occasions than they switched to English (5–3 being an exception). Figure 5 shows these variations.
PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS AND LANGUAGE

Both previous and current occupations of the parents were likely to have affected the children's switching behaviour. Parents' careers of the informants could generally be divided into four categories: business people, professionals, research students and non-professional workers.

A number of parents, who used to be professionals in their native countries, could only find manual jobs in Australia because of low English proficiency. In order to help their children and themselves to learn English, some parents attempted to speak English on every possible occasion. However, the LOTE courses at schools helped the parents understand the importance of Chinese for their children.

In my study, there are four family communication patterns: "one parent, one language"; "one person, one language"; "two parents, one language"; and "switching approach" (see Table 5). Families who communicated according to the "one person, one language" approach normally had more than one child (the children communicated with their siblings in one language while parents another.)

The differences in family language use between children of the first and second generation migrants from the schools were noticeably great. The new migrants paid more attention to their children's acquisition of English, but the parents of second generation children tried to maintain a balanced English and Chinese development of their children. Some parents tried to use English as much as possible in their daily life. But of the four families of second generation children, two maintained a "one parent, one language" policy (2–1 and 6–5, see example 3), one communicated using the "one person, one language" approach (4–2, see example 5), and one only used Chinese at home (3–1, see example 4).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “One parent, one language”</td>
<td>1 informant (2-1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 informant (6-5)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “One person, one language”</td>
<td>4 informants (1-2, 4-1, 4-2 and 6-1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “Two parents, one language”</td>
<td>5 informants (1-1, 3-1, 3-2, 5-1 and 5-2)</td>
<td>5 informants (1-3, 2-2, 2-3, 4-3 and 4-4)</td>
<td>4 informants (4-5, 5-4, 6-3 and 9-4)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “Switching approach”</td>
<td>2 informants (3-3 and 3-4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 informants (1-4, 1-5, 2-4, 2-5, 3-5, 5-3, 5-5 and 8-2)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total informants</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Family Communication Patterns

At School A, in five out of twelve families, parents and children used only Chinese to communicate with one another (See examples 1 and 4). In another five families, the communication pattern was either “one parent, one language” or “one person, one language” (See examples 5 and 9). Only in two recently arrived families did the parents speak to their children in both Chinese and English (“switching approach” pattern) (See example 10). Here the children were encouraged to use English as much as possible.

At School B, all the five families communicated in Chinese (Mandarin and another Fangyan). But 2–2 indicated that she sometimes spoke English to her sister (See example 2). 1–3 explained he and his mother tried their best to speak English if they could express themselves, otherwise they were forced to switch to Mandarin or Shanghai Fangyan.

However, in eight of thirteen families at School C, the parents spoke both Chinese and English to their children, switching to Chinese only when they were unable to communicate in English. Subject 1–4 stated that he and his parents used many English proper nouns, such as the names of streets and suburbs in Melbourne, when they talked at home (See example 6). Subject 3–5, who had lived in Australia for two years, indicated that he and his parents used Chinese sentence structures filled with English nouns. He also mentioned that it was his responsibility to tutor his mother in English (See example 8).

Subject 5–3 said his mother spoke only English to him while his father switched frequently between Chinese and English (See example 12 and 16). Subject 2–5 indicated that her mother switched frequently between Chinese and English while her father spoke only Chinese. 6–2 stated that her parents normally spoke English to her, although her mother’s English proficiency was not high. In only four families did the parents and
children only use Chinese to communicate with one another, but 1–5 mentioned that he spoke English to his elder sister (see example 7). In only 6–5’s family, they communicated according to the “one parent, one language” principle (see example 3). The data indicated that in the families from School C, unlike those from the other schools, the majority of parents and children preferred to use English to Chinese at home. This fact supports Clyne’s (2005, pp. 20–21) argument that among the multilingual one-third of the population in Australia, some families “have experienced high shift to English”.

The parents’ current careers also showed correlations with the choice of family communication patterns. The parents who were professionals or business people could speak fluent English. That made it possible to apply the modes of “one parent, one language”, “one person, one language” or “switching approach” at home. Six (1–3, 2–2, 2–3, 3–1, 4–3 and 4–4) out of seven non-professional families practised the “two parents, one language” family communication pattern at home (See example 2).

The remaining family of (1–4), with one year’s residence in Australia, used a “one parent, two languages” policy (“switching approach”, see example 6), and two years later the father took the Diploma of Education course, and is now a teacher.

The children’s period of residence in Australia also affected their parents’ choice of family communication patterns. In the second-generation group, none of the parents chose the family communication pattern of “switching approach”. However, the parents of six informants from Category 1, one from Category 2 and three from Category 3, applied that family communication pattern because they thought English was the most important language in Australia and should be given first priority. Some parents used this method to help their children improve their English. Among the ten informants, eight were from School C, where LOTE was not offered, and two from School A, with one year or half a year of residence in Australia (i.e. Category One, see Table 4).

The Australian-born children switched less and responded less often in English to Chinese questions than the first generation with 5–6 years’ residence in Australia. The parents of 3 out of 5 informants from Category 3 adopted the “switching approach” at home. This fact could also be found in Categories 2 and 1. 5–3, with three years’ residence in Australia from Category 2, answered 253 Chinese questions in English during the two-hour interviews, consistent with his family communication pattern of the “switching approach”. The average number of switches of 4 out of 5 informants from Category 2 was much lower than those from Category 1 (with 0.5–2 years’ residence). The greater average numbers of switches and English responses in Category 1 correlates with the fact that 6 of 16 parents of Category 1 informants practised the “switching approach” at home.
ATTITUDES TOWARDS LOTE COURSES AND BILINGUALISM

The “switching approach” correlates closely with the language shift. However, as discussed in the Section on Parents’ Occupations and Language Spoken at Home, none of the four families of second generation children practised the “switching approach”, which turned out contrary to the 1996 census statistics that showed a large intergenerational shift from Chinese to English at home of the Chinese families The shift of the families originally from the P.R. China was from 4.6 per cent of the first generation to 37.4 per cent of the second while Taiwan from 3.4 per cent to 21 per cent (Clyne, 2005, pp. 71–72). It appeared that the Chinese language programs both at day school or weekend played an important role in the language maintenance within the families.

Yet, most of the children preferred English to Chinese. In particular, two boys from School C (without a LOTE program), admitted on the one hand that it was “great” to be able to speak both Chinese and English, but on the other hand they complained that “I have a headache when I speak Chinese, particularly in the afternoon. Can I speak English to you now?” (5-3, see examples 12 and 16) “There are many Chinese books in my home, but I don’t like to read them. English is easier, English best.” (3-5, see example 8). Several children (2-4, 1-5 and 4-1) expressed boredom about their weekend Chinese programs (see examples 7, 9 and 11).

VARIATION ACROSS THE SCHOOLS

The LOTE programs at schools influenced children’s attitudes towards Chinese and English. At both School A and B we could not find any informants with negative attitudes towards Chinese or English. But at School C (which did not offer any LOTE program) four children had rather negative attitudes towards Chinese (see the preceding Section).

My data also reveal a close relationship between the family environment and numbers of switches and English responses to Chinese questions at each school. Since the three schools were located in the distinct suburbs (see the Section of School Settings), the family environments of the children varied from school to school.

CONCLUSIONS

Family language policies of “one parent, one language”, “one person, one language” and “two parents, one language” appeared not to make much difference to the number of switches and English responses. In the families who applied the “one parent, two languages” policy (“switching approach”), the children switched massively to English.
But switching in both directions is affected by School education. The LOTE programs appeared to develop directly or indirectly positive attitudes towards Chinese, English and switching of the bilingual children. The Chinese programs and other types of Chinese language education helped children maintain their native language. Over time, the longer the bilingual children lived in Australia, the more they switched to English.

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