

The Medium and the Message: Codeswitching in written discourse

“I am always the other but I get to choose my identity depending on context”
(Guillermo Gomez-Pena, 1993)

“Are you an independent *chica* or a cling-on?” (Latina 2001)

A variety of reasons and explanations have been put forth for why bilinguals codeswitch. Nearly all the data considered has come from spoken, unscripted discourse, with very little attention paid to written texts. Using data from a variety of sources, I examine the motivations behind codeswitching in written texts. I employ Fairclough’s discourse model (1995) in which he proposes a three dimensional approach for critical discourse analysis. The model is based on the interrelationship between *text*, *discourse practice* and *sociocultural practice*. He claims that “social-identity struggles” are worked out through “new configurations of genres and discourse” (pg 8). An analysis of the “texture” (form, organization and content) of code mixing in written texts leads me to conclude that the use of mixed language is one *discourse practice* through which a ‘bicultural identity’ is defined and promoted (*sociocultural practice*). Specifically, the intentional use of mixed code in printed media serves as an identity marker for the bilingual speech community associated with this data (Mahootian 2005). The use of mixed code in the context of a national publication for example, such as *Latina*, is one way that the social-identity struggles of Latinos in the United States are expressed, and to a certain extent, resolved.