

## SAMPLE PROJECT 2

*Use this to help you understand this assignment but do not copy any portion of it.*

**Documenting 24 Hours of Language Use:**

**How Even Monolingual Individuals Use Code-switching**

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ENG 101: College Writing I

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October 25, 2020

**Introduction:**

As people become more mobile and seamlessly move about the globe, “worlds collide,” so to speak, and individuals of different linguistic backgrounds are forced interact. Ofelia García puts it best when she says, “Multilingualism and multiculturalism are the defining characteristics of society, for movement of people from very early times has brought different ethnolinguistic groups in contact with each other” (García, 1992, p. 1). Naturally, as these peoples interact, languages are exchanged, and they may begin to become multilingual. Certainly, one cannot exactly speak two languages at once, and the language being spoken by an individual will alternate depending on the context of the situation. This is an example of code-switching. As Rosamina Lowi explains, “Codeswitching is also viewed as a bilingual/multilingual practice that is used not only as a conversational tool, but also as a way to establish, maintain and delineate ethnic boundaries and identities” (Lowi, 2005, p. 1392). In other words, code-switching is used to firmly establish one’s own identity, and advance one’s best interests.

Despite the fact that Lowi describes code-switching as a “bilingual/multilingual practice,” the act of code-switching is not an activity that is limited to only multilingual individuals. As one moves from discourse community to the next, one actively, even if unconsciously, changes the type of language or speech that they use so as to be received most favorably by the other participant(s) in the conversation and to clearly express who their identity. This change in speech does not necessarily mean a change in the language spoken (i.e. Spanish or English), but the tone, grammar, lexicon, etc. that is used. Even monolingual individuals employ a form of code-switching both as a way to delineate and maintain one’s own identity, as well as to further one’s best interests, and this claim is backed up by firsthand observation and documentation of my own language use.

Swales (1990) discusses the concept of discourse communities and outlines six key characteristics that define a discourse community. In doing so, he explains that “A discourse community has developed and continues to develop discursial expectations (Swales, 1990, p. 472). In other words, it matters what kind of speech one uses when interacting with a particular discourse community. To use the wrong, or unexpected, level of speaking would be a major faux pas within the discourse community.

Similarly, Gee (1989) discusses the difference between dominant discourses and non-dominant Discourses. He explains that the mastery of a dominant discourse helps bring professional, financial, etc., success. While the mastery of a non-dominant discourse brings solidarity within a particular group (Gee, 1989, p. 485). While in Gee’s example, a Discourse (note the capital D) goes beyond just what is said, and includes other behaviors (p.484), one can draw from this concept that the type of language one uses is important when participating in a particular Discourse, or communicating in a particular discourse community. One must actively choose which type of language to use in order to express who they are and work towards their own goals.

### **Methods:**

To back up this claim, I observed and documented my own use and exposure to language over a 24-hour period. The study took place on Thursday, October 8, 2020. I selected an average workday, as I thought this would help me to gather data that was the most representative of a typical day in my life. I manage a small team of logistics coordinators for a large wholesaler of footwear and frequently interact with others who work in the sales, supply chain, and warehousing industries. Despite my best efforts to gather data that is representative of any other day, I will admit that the recent restrictions brought about by the COVID-19

pandemic have greatly curtailed my use and exposure to language. I leave the home much less frequently now, and even work from home. The majority of my data is derived from work calls and emails, as well as conversations with my significant other.

While my data may be admittedly limited, I did not find myself unable to support my claim. After documenting my language use, I categorized it into types of discourse – formal English, informal English, professional English, slang, profanity, etc. In documenting, I also noted with whom I was speaking. In comparing the type of discourse and the participants of the exchange, I was able to determine where these “monolingual code-switches” occurred.

### Results:

After conducting the aforementioned study and documenting all use/exposure of language over the course of the day, the data was then analyzed for patterns. The following charts categorize the types of discourses that took place and note the number of instances that were observed.

Type of Discourse:	Formal	Informal
Number of Instances:	11	23

*Figure 1 – Occurrences of informal and formal speech during my day*

Figure one is the most basic classification of results from the study. It shows that throughout the course of my day, I used informal speech slightly more than double the amount of times I used formal speech.

Type of Discourse:	Formal at work	Informal at work
Number of Instances:	7	5

*Figure 2 – Occurrence of formal and informal speech in the “workplace”*

Figure two dives a bit deeper into the data and focuses on the type of speech that was used in the “workplace.” Although I am currently working from home due to the ongoing

pandemic, I am still interacting with my coworkers via email, conference calls, and video chat. The data shows that I used both formal and informal language at work, though I did lean more towards using formal speech.

<b>Type of Discourse:</b>	<b>Formal with partner</b>	<b>Informal with Partner</b>
<b>Number of Instances:</b>	0	14

*Figure 3 – Occurrence of formal and informal speech with my significant other*

As mentioned previously, nearly all of my data takes place with either my coworkers or my partner. In contrasting with figure two, figure three shows the number of instances of formal discourse and informal discourse with my partner. Not surprisingly, there were no instances of formal speech with my life partner.

<b>Type of Discourse:</b>	<b>Formal with Superiors</b>	<b>Informal with Superiors</b>
<b>Number of Instances:</b>	4	0

*Figure 4 – Occurrences of formal and informal speech with work superiors*

Figure four presents the instances of formal and informal discourse with my superiors at work. There were no instances of informal speech with my superiors; all interactions were used formal language.

<b>Type of Discourse:</b>	<b>Formal with peers</b>	<b>Informal with Peers</b>
<b>Number of Instances:</b>	2	3

*Figure 5 – Occurrences of formal and informal speech with work peers*

Figure five shows the instances of formal and informal interactions with my peers at work. It appears that I tend to use both formal and informal speech with my peers. Generally, the context of the interaction, and the level of familiarity with the coworker will determine which type of speech I used

<b>Type of Discourse:</b>	<b>Formal with subordinates</b>	<b>Informal with subordinates</b>
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<b>Number of Instances:</b>	1	2
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*Figure 6 – Occurrences of formal and informal speech with subordinates at work*

As I manage a small team at my job, I do have a few people who work under me in the workplace hierarchy. It appears that I use both informal and formal language with my subordinates, slightly favoring informal speech.

Finally, one last data point collected from this study relates to the number of times that I switched immediately (less than five minutes between interactions) from informal to formal speech or vice versa. This points to the code-switching focus of this study. There were 10 documented switches between formal and informal language that occurred in less than five minutes. It is also worth noting that all work-related entries, even if coded as informal, were noted as being “professional.”

### **Discussion:**

Gee (1989) explains that one’s primary Discourse is the one that they first fall into naturally and use to make sense of the world. He goes on to say that “Our primary Discourse constitutes our original and home-based sense of identity, and, I believe, it can be seen whenever we are interacting with “intimates” in totally casual (unmonitored) social interaction” (Gee, 1989, p. 485). Referring back to *Figures One and Three* above, my tendency to favor informal discourse is not surprising if we consider Gee’s observation. Though I am working remotely, I am physically with my partner throughout the duration of the day. We live together, and given current circumstances regarding COVID-19, we often spend nearly 24 hours a day together in a one-bedroom apartment. How bizarre, indeed, it would be to my partner if I insisted in speaking with her in only very formal English, hence my tendency to deal more in informal discourse rather than formal discourse.

Among his descriptions of the six characteristics that define a discourse community, Swales (1990) notes that “a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis,” which may include “highly technical terminology” (Swales, 1990, p. 473). Given this, it is without doubt that my coworkers and I constitute a discourse community. We certainly have our own logistics-related terminology. One particular sentence that is quite common in my day-to-day workplace interactions is “The 945 came in with multiple BOL numbers, so we have to split the manifest.” While the meaning in this sentence is crystal clear to me and my coworkers, it would have little to no meaning whatsoever to an outsider. Furthermore, in a business environment, it is expected that one maintain a more professional demeanor and use more formal speech. With this in mind, it is not surprising that *Figure Two* illustrates a tendency to favor more formal speech in the (temporarily virtual) workplace.

The data outlined in *Figures Four, Five and Six* can best be explained in the context of Gee’s concept of dominant and nondominant Discourses. “Dominant Discourses are secondary Discourses the mastery of which, at a particular place and time, brings with it the (potential) acquisition of social “goods,” (money, prestige, status, etc.). Non-dominant Discourse are secondary Discourses the mastery of which often brings solidarity with a particular social network, but not wider status and social goods in society at large” (Gee, 1989, p. 485). In instances where I interacted with my superiors, I found myself only using a formal, business-oriented, and confident tone in hopes of advancing my professional career, or at least staying in their good graces. This would be an example my me engaging in a dominant Discourse. In contrast with that, I frequently found myself engaging in a non-dominant Discourse, when I interacted with my subordinates at work. *Figure Six* shows that I did use both formal and informal language with my team members, but slightly favored informal language. This is due to my desire to maintain a professional reputation with my junior-ranking employees, while still

eliciting a sense of camaraderie. It is important to me to stay professional with my team but still be affable and approachable.

As I progressed through my day and moved from one discourse community to another, from my partner to my peers at work, for example, or from a dominant Discourse to a non-dominant Discourse, I found myself alternating rather rapidly from formal language to informal language depending on the context of the situation, the identity that I wanted to establish, and the goals that I wanted to achieve. During the study, I documented 10 switches between formal and informal language that occurred in less than five minutes. This is consistent with Lowi's idea that code-switching is a tool to "establish, maintain and delineate ethnic boundaries and identities" (Lowi, 2005, p. 1393). Though the boundaries and identities that I portrayed were not ethnic, they were identities, nonetheless. I was a romantic partner, a boss, a humble employee, even just a "nice guy." Despite my identity as a monolingual English speaker, I took control of my own language and utilized a form of code-switching to maintain the identity I wanted to portray and accomplish the goal I wanted to accomplish.



## References

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- Gee, J.P. (1989). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: introduction. *Journal of Education*, 171(1), 5-17.
- Lowi, R. (2004). Codeswitching: an examination of naturally occurring conversation. *ISB4: Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism*. 1394-1406.
- Swales, J. (1990). The concept of discourse community. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge University Press.

### Addendum

Time	Context	Kind of Discourse	Total Time
8:00am	Waking up; saying good morning to significant other (Ariel)	Informal English	<1 minute
8:15am-8:30am	Watching New York 1	Formal English	15 minutes
8:35am-8:40am	Talking with Ariel	Informal English	5 minutes
8:55am	Ordering coffee/bagel from the deli	Informal, but polite, English	1 minute
8:58am	Overhear two men arguing in Spanish in passing	Informal (angry) Spanish	1 minute
9:00am	Making small talk with neighbor	Informal, but polite, English	1 minute
9:05am-9:30am	Reading and replying to work emails (working from home)	Formal English	25 minutes
9:30am-9:55am	My boss calls me (He's my superior, but we're quite close)	Relatively Formal English	25 minutes
9:58am	Talking with Ariel	Informal English	1 minute
10:00am-11:05am	Morning conference call with my team (I am team manager)	Relatively Formal, Professional English	65 minutes
11:05am-11:10am	Complaining to Ariel about how long that call took	Informal English; profanity	5 minutes
11:15am-11:30am	I call management company to set up intercom in new apartment (unsuccessfully)	Formal, polite, English	15 minutes
11:31am-11:35am	Complaining to Ariel about management company	Informal English; more profanity	4 minutes
11:45-12:00am	A colleague from the warehouse (Blanca) calls me	Casual, but professional, English	15 minutes
12:05am-12:15am	Talking with Ariel about lunch	Informal English	10 minutes
12:20am-12:45am	One of my team members calls me to ask for help	Somewhat informal, Professional English	25 minutes
1:00pm-2:15pm	Bi-weekly conference calls for managers	Formal, professional English	75 minutes

2:15pm-2:20pm	Complaining to Ariel about how long that call took	Informal English; profanity	5 minutes
2:30pm-2:55pm	Write Email to several company executives to give status update on major account	Formal, professional English	25 minutes
3:00pm-3:30pm	Afternoon conference call with my team	Relatively Formal, Professional English	30 minutes
3:35pm	The dog growls at me; I ask what she wants; we determine she needs to go outside	Informal English ("baby talk")	1 minute
3:40pm	Small talk with neighbor in elevator	Informal, but polite, English	<1 minute
3:50pm-4:00pm	Replying to an email from a client	Formal, professional English	1 minute
4:00pm-4:05pm	Talking with Ariel	Informal English	5 minutes
4:10pm-4:50pm	A coworker (we're peers) calls me to ask for help on a project	Informal, somewhat professional English	40 minutes
4:50pm-5:00pm	One of my team members calls to ask for help	Somewhat formal, professional English	10 minutes
5:05pm-5:10pm	Talking with Ariel	Informal English	5 minutes
5:15pm-5:35pm	My mom calls me to chat	Informal, but a bit more polished, English	20 minutes
5:45pm-6:00pm	Blanca (colleague from warehouse) calls me	Casual, but professional, English	15 minutes
6:10pm-6:15pm	Talking to Ariel about what to have for dinner (we're indecisive)	Informal, noncommittal, English	5 minutes
6:30pm-8:00pm	Reading "required readings" for class	Formal, academic, English	90 minutes
6:30pm-8:00pm	Several short (1-10 minutes) conversations with Ariel while I'm in the process of reading	Informal English	1-10 minutes each
8:00pm-8:56pm	Formulating/crafting a response for this week's discussion post	Formal, academic English	56 minutes
9:00pm-10:05pm	Watching TV (Hey Arnold) with some short conversations with Ariel throughout	Mostly informal English	65 minutes

10:05pm	The dog growls at me; I ask what she wants; we determine she needs to go outside	Informal English ("baby talk")	1 minute
10:30pm-11:00pm	Talking with Ariel	Informal English	30 minutes
11:05pm-11:30pm	Talking with an old friend over Facebook Messenger (text)	Informal English (slang/abbreviations)	25 minutes
11:45pm-12:00am	Talking with Ariel before bed	Informal English	15 minutes