

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Bilingual Development of Two Thai Brothers During Their Sojourn in the U.S.

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This is a two-year-long investigation of the bilingual development of two Thai youths, aged 9 and 13 at the beginning of data collection, during their temporary stay in the United States. The two informants were the researcher's sons who arrived in the U.S. in spring, 2004 and have attended American public schools. Data sources included audio-taping of dyadic conversations between each boy with the researcher, as well as those between the boys, and triadic conversations involving the boys and the researcher. There were a total of 12 hours of recording over 11 months. Also included in the data were the two boys' personal written journals (83 entries by the older brother and 91 by the younger) maintained over a 22-month period. Using Auer's (1995) sequential conversational analytic framework, this study found that the two brothers used Thai-English codeswitching as a communicative resource for specific purposes and to negotiate meaning. Auer's distinction between participant-related and discourse-related codeswitching proved to be useful in revealing that the two youths employ codeswitching to negotiate the language for the interaction and accommodate each other's language competences and preferences, as well as to organize common conversational tasks. Thus, codeswitching was an additional communicative resource for the boys' bilingual

interactions. This finding was also supported by the boys' written journal entries, where multiple meaning systems (i.e., use of the first language, invented spelling, and drawing) were used to communicate various meanings and emotions. Living in the United States led to some changes in the two boys' bilingual development, especially more visible in the younger brother. Such changes included his greater number of codeswitches, his shift to English as the primary language of his written journal entries over time, and his use of English word and structures in place of their Thai equivalents. The data from both oral and written data revealed remarkable contrasts between the two brothers – the elder brother preferred Thai while the younger preferred English. The findings of this study support the concept that both local and global factors influence children's bilingual development.