

## Code-Switching

Code-Switching, is the practice of alternating between discourses (the different ways we communicate) or varieties of languages in conversation. Individuals may switch “codes” or discourses depending on the environment they’re in. For example, one’s discourse (or code) is different when informally talking to friends (yo wassup) VS. the way we communicate during the interview process for a high-end job.

Some people believe this practice is oppressive because it requires multilingual speakers to “tame mother tongues” (eliminate their accent in order to excel in our society), especially when in a “professional” environment. There is a hierarchy of language where English is dominant and all else is lesser. This then leads to social and cultural tension that is often approached with racially motivated attitudes (which we’ll see in the documentary).

With Gloria Anzaldua, we begin to see code-switching in a different, more inclusive and culturally insightful light. “Upon closer examination, it can be argued that the phenomenon we are considering is not code-switching at all but **a literary device that actively engages the reader** and to a certain point ensures partial transparency of languages other than English. **This device both complicates and simplifies the text, repulsing and attracting the monolingual readers and inevitably engaging them with a previously unknown culture... Understanding the code-switching practice as inclusive and accommodating rather than exclusive and alienating has major implications for what literary texts we may consider as accessible for our monolingual English-speaking students.**” [Code-Switching in Anzaldua's Borderlands/La Frontera and Walcott's Omeros: A Literary Device for “New Readability”](#)

The latter half of this quote reminds us how monolingual speakers may find Anzaldua’s approach to be an exclusive practice that limits or excludes them because they don’t understand the other language; but this reaction in itself reveals something about how “English-Only” attitudes exclude other languages and their respective speakers, as well as eliminating culturally specific ideas that can only be expressed in their “mother tongue.”

With the Interactive Poetry Exercise, the act of combining two or more languages within a space is a technique that is implemented to aid in the expression of particular ideas whose meaning, authenticity and/or significance is lost in English. It touches upon Anzaldua’s interactive approach that introduces readers to social and cultural tensions taking place all around us. It introduces us to conceptions of linguistic and cultural relativism while also deconstructing dangerous elements of Eurocentrism.

## **Code-Meshing**

Gloria Anzaldua and many of the student we'll see in the documentary practice code-meshing.

Code Meshing is the act of combining local, vernacular, colloquial, world dialects of English with SWE (Second-World English) on formal assignments and in everyday conversation, in an attempt to embrace the globalized and diverse world we live in. It allows for the infusion of an individual's native or "mother tongue" which inherently has the potential to aid or enhance our understanding of specific and meaningful ideas.

Additional Resources:

[5 Reasons Why People Code-Switch - NPR](#)

[Code Switching - Wikipedia](#)

[Difference Between Code-Mehing & Code-Switching](#) \*Not entirely credible source