



Conclusion

This study highlights the subtle but significant role language plays in shaping courtroom experiences. Code-switching, often used unconsciously by bilingual and bidialectal speakers, can influence how someone is perceived by judges, attorneys, and jurors. Throughout the observations and interviews, a pattern emerged: when defendants or witnesses shifted between language varieties, those shifts were sometimes read as signs of dishonesty, lack of education, or emotional instability.

These interpretations reflect deeper biases tied to race, class, and language norms. Standard English tends to dominate legal spaces, which puts anyone speaking outside of that mold at a disadvantage, especially in high-stakes moments like testimony or cross-examination. Code-switching in these settings often becomes a risk rather than a resource, even though it's a common and natural part of communication for millions of speakers.

While language bias in courtrooms isn't always obvious, it still impacts real outcomes. Raising awareness among legal professionals, offering language training, and reconsidering how credibility is judged could help create more equitable environments. Future work should continue exploring how courtroom language interacts with justice, especially in cases involving marginalized voices. Without addressing these dynamics, the gap between how the law is written and how it is lived will remain wide.