Charos Sultonova – teacher

Uzbekistan State World Languages University (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)
E-mail: chsultonova@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009 0002 2332 9784

CODE-SWITCHING IN UZBEK STUDENTS' SPEECH: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

Abstract. The research adopts a qualitative approach, using classroom observation, audio recordings, and field notes to collect naturally occurring data. The analysis focuses on identifying types of code-switching and examining the social and communicative motivations behind this phenomenon. The findings indicate that code-switching is widely used among students, especially in academic contexts, and serves multiple functions such as expressing identity, facilitating communication, managing discourse, and demonstrating linguistic competence. Furthermore, the study reveals that code-switching is not random or indicative of language deficiency but rather a strategic and meaningful linguistic practice shaped by sociocultural and cognitive factors. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of bilingual communication and highlight the importance of recognizing code-switching as a valuable resource in language education.

Keywords: code-switching, sociolinguistics, bilingualism, pragmatics, discourse

Charos Sultonova – o‘qituvchi
O‘zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti o‘qituvchisi (Toshkent, O‘zbekiston)

O‘ZBEK TALABALARI NUTQIDA KOD ALMASHINUVI: SOTSIOLINGVISTIK VA PRAGMATIK TAHLIL

Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqot sifatli yondashuvga asoslangan bo‘lib, ma’lumotlar sinf kuzatuvi, audio yozuvlar va dala qaydlari orqali to‘plandi. Tahlil code-switching turlarini aniqlash hamda ushbu hodisaning ijtimoiy va kommunikativ sabablarini o‘rganishga qaratilgan. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatdiki, code-switching talabalar nutqida keng qo‘llaniladi, ayniqsa akademik muhitda, va u identitetni ifodalash, muloqotni yengillashtirish, diskursni boshqarish hamda lingvistik kompetensiyani namoyon etish kabi bir qator funksiyalarni bajaradi. Bundan tashqari, tadqiqot code-switching tasodifiy yoki til yetishmovchiligining belgisi emasligini, balki ijtimoiy-madaniy va kognitiv omillar bilan shakllangan strategik va mazmunli lingvistik amaliyot ekanligini ko‘rsatadi. Natijalar bilingual muloqotni chuqurroq tushunishga hissa qo‘shadi hamda code-switchingni til ta’limida muhim resurs sifatida tan olish zarurligini ta’kidlaydi.

Kalit so‘zlar: code-switching, sotsiolingvistika, bilingvizm, pragmatika, diskurs

Чарос Султонова – преподаватель
Узбекского государственного университета мировых языков (Ташкент, Узбекистан)

ПЕРЕКЛЮЧЕНИЕ КОДОВ В РЕЧИ УЗБЕКСКИХ СТУДЕНТОВ: СОЦИОЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ И ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ

Аннотация. Данное исследование основано на качественном подходе, при котором данные были собраны с помощью наблюдения в классе, аудиозаписей и полевых заметок. Анализ направлен на выявление типов code-switching и изучение социальных и коммуникативных факторов, влияющих на данное явление. Результаты показывают, что code-switching широко используется в речи студентов, особенно в академическом контексте, и выполняет различные функции, такие как выражение идентичности, облегчение коммуникации, управление дискурсом и демонстрация языковой компетенции. Кроме того, исследование показывает, что code-switching не является случайным явлением или признаком языковой недостаточности, а представляет собой стратегическую и осмысленную языковую практику, сформированную под влиянием социокультурных и когнитивных факторов. Полученные результаты способствуют более глубокому пониманию билингвального общения и подчеркивают важность признания code-switching как ценного ресурса в языковом образовании.

Ключевые слова: code-switching, социолингвистика, билингвизм, прагматика, дискурс.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the role of language in everyday communication has been changing quite noticeably, especially in societies that are becoming more interconnected. As globalization continues to influence education, technology, and social interaction, the use of more than one language within a single communicative environment has become increasingly common. In many parts of the world today, bilingualism and even multilingualism are no longer unusual phenomena but rather part of daily life. One of the most visible outcomes of this linguistic diversity is code-switching, which can be understood as the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a conversation, a sentence, or a broader discourse.

The sociolinguistic situation in Uzbekistan provides a particularly interesting context for studying this phenomenon. Over the past few decades, especially after the country gained independence, there have been significant changes in language use. The increasing importance of English as a global language of education, science, and professional communication has had a noticeable impact on younger generations. English is now widely taught in schools and universities, and for many students it is closely linked to academic achievement, career prospects, and participation in the international community.

As a result, Uzbek students particularly those studying at higher education institutions-often find themselves operating in a bilingual environment where both Uzbek and English play important roles. In such settings, code-switching becomes a natural part of communication rather than an exception. This is especially evident in academic contexts, where English terminology is frequently used across various disciplines. Students tend to incorporate English words and expressions into their Uzbek speech, particularly when discussing topics related to their studies, technology, or future careers.

For instance, it is quite common to hear students use words like “assignment,” “deadline,” “presentation,” or “feedback” in otherwise Uzbek sentences. These choices are not random. In many cases, English terms are perceived as more precise or more familiar, especially because they are regularly encountered in textbooks, lectures, and online resources. At times, equivalent expressions in Uzbek may exist, but they are either less commonly used or do not carry exactly the same meaning. Therefore, students often choose the term that feels more natural within a given context.

By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a clearer and more context-specific understanding of bilingual language use in Uzbekistan and to contribute to broader discussions within the field of sociolinguistics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-switching has attracted considerable attention in sociolinguistic research over the past few decades. It has been studied in a wide range of linguistic and cultural contexts, making it one of the central topics in the field. Early approaches to code-switching often viewed it as a problem, linking it to language interference or insufficient proficiency. However, this perspective has grad-

ually changed, and more recent studies emphasize its systematic and meaningful nature (Gumperz1982).

One of the key contributions to the study of code-switching comes from who highlighted its interactional functions. Gumperzl argued that code-switching is not sudden behavior but rather serves specific communicative purposes. According to his work, speakers use code-switching to signal group identity, structure discourse, and convey social meaning. His distinction between situational and metaphorical code-switching remains influential and continues to be widely applied in research.

Another important contribution was made by Poplack, who focused on the structural aspects of code-switching. She identified three main types: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. Her findings demonstrated that code-switching is governed by grammatical rules and that bilingual speakers are able to switch languages without violating these rules. This challenged the earlier assumption that code-switching was a sign of linguistic disorder (Poplack, 1998).

Myers-Scotton recommended the Markedness Model, which approaches language choice from a sociological perspective. According to this model, speakers make strategic decisions about which language to use based on the social meanings they want to express. Language choice is therefore not arbitrary but linked to expectations, relationships, and social norms within a given context (Myers-Scotton 1993).

Holmes further developed the social dimension of language use, emphasizing that code-switching can reflect identity, solidarity, and social positioning. She pointed out that factors such as the participants in a conversation, the setting, and the communicative goals all influence language choice. This perspective highlights the dynamic nature of language and its close connection to social interaction (Holmes 2013).

From a pragmatic standpoint, researchers have identified several key functions of code-switching. It can be used to emphasize important information, clarify meaning, express emotions, manage discourse, and even create humor. These functions show that code-switching is not simply a linguistic phenomenon but also a communicative tool that speakers actively use to achieve their goals in interaction.

In educational contexts, code-switching is often linked to learning strategies. Students may switch between languages when they encounter lexical gaps, when they need to recall previously learned information, or when they are trying to understand complex material. In this sense, code-switching can support comprehension and facilitate learning rather than hinder it.

Despite the substantial amount of research conducted globally, the use of code-switching in Uzbekistan has not been explored in sufficient depth. Considering the growing importance of English in the country's educational system, it becomes particularly relevant to examine how students use both languages in real-life communication. A closer analysis of this phenomenon can provide valuable insights into bilingual practices and help better understand the evolving linguistic landscape of Uzbek society.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design in order to explore naturally occurring instances of code-switching in the speech of Uzbek students. A qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate, as the aim of the research was not to measure frequency statistically, but rather to understand how and why students switch between languages in real communicative situations.

The study involved 15 undergraduate students aged between 18 and 23. All participants were studying English as a foreign language and demonstrated intermediate to advanced levels of proficiency. These students were selected because they regularly engage in bilingual communication, particularly in academic contexts where both Uzbek and English are actively used.

Data were collected over a period of two weeks using several methods, including classroom observation, audio recordings of informal conversations, and field notes. Classroom observation made it possible to examine language use in structured academic settings, such as group work and discussions, while audio recordings captured more spontaneous interactions among students. Field notes were used to document contextual details, including the topic of conversation and the interactional environment.

The recordings captured authentic communication in both academic and informal settings, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of students' language practices. After data collection, all recordings were transcribed and carefully analyzed.

The analysis was conducted using sociolinguistic and pragmatic frameworks. Instances of code-switching were identified and categorized according to their structural type (e.g., inter-sentential, intra-sentential, tag-switching) and communicative function. This approach made it possible to identify recurring patterns and better understand the role of code-switching in students' speech.

RESULTS

The findings of the study indicate that code-switching is a frequent and systematic feature of student communication rather than a random or occasional occurrence. It was observed across different contexts and appeared to be a natural part of how students interact with one another.

All three main types of code-switching were identified in the data. Among them, intra-sentential switching where elements of one language are embedded within a sentence in another language was the most common. This suggests that students are comfortable integrating English lexical items into Uzbek grammatical structures, which reflects a relatively high level of bilingual competence.

In terms of context, code-switching was most frequent in interactive and collaborative situations. These included group discussions, peer interactions, and academic conversations related to coursework. In such settings, students tended to switch languages more freely, especially when expressing complex ideas or discussing subject-specific topics.

The analysis also revealed several key functions of code-switching. One of the most prominent was lexical need, where students used English terms due to their familiarity or specificity in academic discourse. Another important function was emphasis, as switching to English often helped highlight key points or add clarity to an idea.

In addition, code-switching served as a means of identity expression. By incorporating English elements into their speech, students could position themselves as members of an educated and globally oriented community. Finally, code-switching played a role in discourse management, helping speakers organize their thoughts, maintain the flow of conversation, and signal transitions between ideas.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that code-switching is a multifunctional and systematic linguistic phenomenon shaped by linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic factors. Importantly, the examples collected from Uzbek learners demonstrate that code-switching reflects authentic communicative practices rather than artificial or constructed speech.

One of the most prominent motivations for code-switching is lexical necessity in academic contexts. Uzbek students frequently insert English academic terminology into Uzbek sentences, particularly when discussing coursework or university-related topics. For example:

*"*Bugun *assignment*ni topshirishim kerak, lekin hali tugatmadim*."*

*"*Kecha *teacher feedback* berdi, lekin ba'zi joylarini tushunmadim*""Presentation* uchun *slide* tayyorlayapman, lekin *desig*ni hali zo'r emas*"*

In these examples, English words such as *assignment*, *feedback*, and *presentation* are embedded within Uzbek grammatical structures. This pattern reflects intra-sentential code-switching and indicates that students rely on English terminology due to its dominance in academic discourse.

Another important factor is efficiency and communicative convenience. In many cases, students switch to English because it allows them to express ideas more quickly or precisely:

*"*Bugun *deadline* juda yaqin, shuning uchun tezroq tugatishim kerak."*"*Bu *topic* juda qiyin ekan, ayniqsa *explanation* qismi."

Here, words like *deadline* and *topic* are preferred because they are shorter, widely understood, and frequently used in educational settings.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, code-switching also serves as a marker of identity and social positioning. Uzbek learners often use Eng-

lish elements to signal that they are educated, modern, and globally oriented:

*"*Men *IELTS*ga tayyorlanyapman, shuning uchun har kuni *speaking practice* qilaman" "Bu semesterda ko'p challenge bo'ldi, lekin ko'p narsa o'rgandim."

These examples illustrate how English is associated with academic achievement and international standards, while Uzbek provides the grammatical framework of communication.

Furthermore, Uzbek remains the dominant language for expressing emotions and interpersonal meaning, while English is used for informational content. This can be seen in examples such as:

"Rostini aytsam, bu *exam* juda qiyin bo'ldi, *honestly*" "Bu fan menga yoqadi, *but sometimes* juda murakkab".

This type of switching demonstrates how speakers use both languages to convey nuanced meanings, combining emotional expression with emphasis.

From a pragmatic perspective, code-switching is frequently used for discourse management and emphasis. For instance:

"Men aytmoqchi edimki, bu juda muhim, *especially for our future career***"** "Bu idea yaxshi, *actually* juda foydali bo'lishi mumkin".

In such cases, English elements like *especially* and *actually* function as discourse markers that structure speech and highlight important information.

Tag-switching is also commonly observed:

"Shunday qilishimiz kerak, you know"."Bu oson emas, right?"

These short English tags help maintain interaction and create a sense of shared understanding between speakers.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that Uzbek learners use code-switching in a natural and systematic way, combining elements of both languages to achieve communicative effectiveness. The patterns observed in this study support the view that code-switching is an integral part of bilingual discourse rather than a sign of linguistic deficiency.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of authentic examples from Uzbek learners confirms that code-switching is a natural and meaningful communicative practice shaped by real-life language use. The integration of English lexical items into Uzbek speech reflects not only the influence of global academic discourse but also the adaptability of students in multilingual environments.

Importantly, the examples demonstrate that Uzbek learners do not switch languages randomly; rather, they follow systematic patterns that align with communicative goals. English is primarily used for academic terminology, discourse markers, and emphasis, while Uzbek remains the core language for grammatical structure and emotional expression.

This functional distribution highlights the emergence of a hybrid bilingual discourse, where both languages coexist and complement each other. Such a system reflects the evolving linguistic identity of Uzbek students in a globalized educational context.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that code-switching should not be discouraged in language classrooms. Instead, it should be recognized as a valuable resource that supports learning, enhances comprehension, and reflects authentic language use. Teachers can build on students' existing bilingual practices to develop more effective teaching strategies.

In conclusion, code-switching among Uzbek learners is not a linguistic problem but a communicative advantage. It demonstrates the flexibility, creativity, and competence of bilingual speakers and highlights the dynamic nature of language in modern society.

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