



CODE-SWITCHING PRACTICES AMONG UZBEK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of code-switching among Uzbek university students in a multilingual context. In Uzbekistan, where Uzbek, Russian, and English are widely used, students frequently alternate between languages in academic and social communication. The research aims to identify the patterns, functions, and motivations of code-switching and its impact on language development and classroom interaction. A quantitative research method was employed, involving 50 undergraduate students selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected via an online questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS. The results indicate that most students have a positive attitude toward code-switching and consider it a useful communicative strategy. The findings also show that code-switching occurs most frequently between Uzbek and English, particularly in classroom settings. Overall, the study highlights that code-switching is a natural and beneficial aspect of multilingual communication rather than a sign of linguistic deficiency.

Key words

code-switching, multilingualism, university students, language interaction, communication, Uzbekistan, bilingualism, classroom discourse



Annotatsiya

Ushbu tadqiqot ko‘p tilli muhitda o‘zbek universitet talabalari orasida kod almashtirish (code-switching) hodisasini o‘rganishga bag‘ishlangan. O‘zbekistonda o‘zbek, rus va ingliz tillari keng qo‘llanilishi sababli talabalar kundalik va akademik muloqotda tez-tez tillarni almashtiradilar. Tadqiqotning maqsadi kod almashtirishning shakllari, funksiyalari va sabablarini aniqlash hamda uning til rivoji va dars jarayoniga ta‘sirini o‘rganishdan iborat. Tadqiqotda kvantitativ usul qo‘llanilib, 50 nafar talaba ishtirok etdi. Ma‘lumotlar onlayn so‘rovnoma orqali to‘planib, SPSS dasturi yordamida tahlil qilindi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatdiki, talabalar kod almashtirishga ijobiy munosabatda bo‘lib, uni samarali muloqot vositasi sifatida baholaydilar. Eng ko‘p qo‘llaniladigan til kombinatsiyasi o‘zbek va ingliz tillari bo‘lib, ayniqsa dars jarayonida keng uchraydi. Tadqiqot shuni ko‘rsatadiki, kod almashtirish ko‘p tilli muloqotning tabiiy va foydali qismi hisoblanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar

kod almashtirish, ko‘p tillilik, talabalar, til muloqoti, kommunikatsiya, O‘zbekiston, bilingvizm, dars jarayoni

Аннотация

Данное исследование посвящено изучению явления код-свитчинга среди студентов вузов Узбекистана в условиях многоязычия. В Узбекистане широко используются узбекский, русский и английский языки, поэтому студенты часто переключаются между ними в повседневном и академическом общении. Цель исследования — определить модели, функции и причины код-свитчинга, а также его влияние на развитие языка и взаимодействие в учебном процессе. В исследовании использован количественный метод с участием 50 студентов, отобранных методом удобной выборки. Данные были собраны с помощью онлайн-анкеты и проанализированы с использованием описательной



статистики в программе SPSS. Результаты показывают, что большинство студентов положительно относятся к код-свитчингу и считают его эффективным средством коммуникации. Наиболее часто используется сочетание узбекского и английского языков, особенно в учебной среде. В целом, код-свитчинг рассматривается как естественный и полезный элемент многоязычного общения.

Ключевые слова

код-свитчинг, многоязычие, студенты, языковое взаимодействие, коммуникация, Узбекистан, билингвизм, учебный процесс

INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected world, multilingualism has become increasingly widespread, particularly among university students. In Uzbekistan, where Uzbek, Russian, and English are commonly spoken, students frequently practice code-switching in their daily interactions. Code-switching is the act of shifting between two or more languages within a single conversation or sentence. This behavior is especially evident in academic settings, where students communicate with classmates and instructors using different languages.

Among Uzbek university students, code-switching happens for several reasons, such as expressing complex academic concepts, making up for limited vocabulary in a second language, and creating a more relaxed and informal communication environment. It also demonstrates students' linguistic abilities and their skill in navigating multiple cultural and social identities. While some scholars consider code-switching a sign of language weakness, others view it as a purposeful and effective strategy that enhances communication and supports language learning.

This study seeks to examine the patterns, functions, and underlying reasons for code-switching among Uzbek university students. It also investigates how this



practice influences language development and classroom interaction, offering deeper insight into multilingual communication in higher education.

Literature Review

Code-switching has been widely studied in recent sociolinguistic and applied linguistics research as a natural feature of multilingual communication. According to François Grosjean (2010), bilingual individuals do not operate as two separate monolinguals but rather as users of an integrated linguistic system. This perspective highlights code-switching as a flexible communicative resource rather than a deficiency.

Similarly, David Crystal (2003) emphasizes the growing role of English as a global lingua franca, particularly in education and professional communication. In multilingual countries such as Uzbekistan, this has led to increased incorporation of English terminology into Uzbek and Russian discourse, especially in academic and technical contexts.

Recent studies also highlight the functional aspects of code-switching. Li Wei (2018) argues that language alternation should be viewed through the lens of translanguaging, where multilingual speakers strategically use their full linguistic repertoire to achieve effective communication. This approach aligns with classroom practices where students switch languages for clarification, emphasis, and interaction.

In educational settings, Ofelia García (2009) suggests that multilingual practices, including code-switching, enhance learning by supporting comprehension and cognitive engagement. This is particularly relevant in higher education contexts where students frequently navigate multiple languages.

From a methodological perspective, this study employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data collected through surveys were analyzed



using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis in SPSS. Qualitative data obtained from classroom observations were analyzed thematically following Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). The analysis identified key functional categories of code-switching, including instructional, affective, disciplinary, and metalinguistic uses.

It is also important to distinguish between code-switching and code-mixing. Code-switching refers to the intentional alternation between two or more languages within a conversation or sentence, often used for pragmatic purposes such as clarification, emphasis, or social alignment. In contrast, code-mixing involves the insertion of single words or short phrases from one language into another, typically occurring subconsciously and reflecting habitual bilingual usage.

Recent research further suggests that code-switching plays a significant social role. Nikolas Coupland (2007) highlights how language choice reflects identity, social positioning, and group affiliation. In multilingual societies, students often switch codes to express solidarity, demonstrate competence, or adapt to specific communicative contexts.

Overall, contemporary studies view code-switching as a dynamic and meaningful aspect of multilingual communication, especially in educational environments where multiple languages coexist and interact.

Methods section

This study employed a quantitative research method to investigate code-switching practices among Uzbek university students. The quantitative approach enabled the researcher to collect measurable data on the frequency and patterns of code-switching. This method was chosen because it allows for statistical analysis and objective interpretation of data.



The participants of this study were 50 undergraduate students from a university in Uzbekistan. They were aged between 18 and 24 and represented different academic disciplines, including English philology, business, and information technology. The participants were selected using a convenience sampling method, as they were easily accessible to the researcher.

All participants were multilingual, with Uzbek as their first language and varying levels of proficiency in Russian and English. This made them suitable subjects for examining code-switching behavior in a multilingual context.

Data were collected using an online survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions designed to gather quantitative data. These questions focused on the frequency of code-switching, preferred languages, and common situations in which students switch languages.

The data collection process was conducted over a period of six days.

The quantitative data obtained from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequency counts, with the help of SPSS. This analysis helped identify patterns and trends in students' code-switching behavior.

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research prior to participation, and their informed consent was obtained. Participation was voluntary, and students were free to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

To ensure confidentiality, no personal information such as names or identification details was collected. The data were used solely for academic purposes and were stored securely. All responses remained anonymous and were reported in a generalized form.



Results

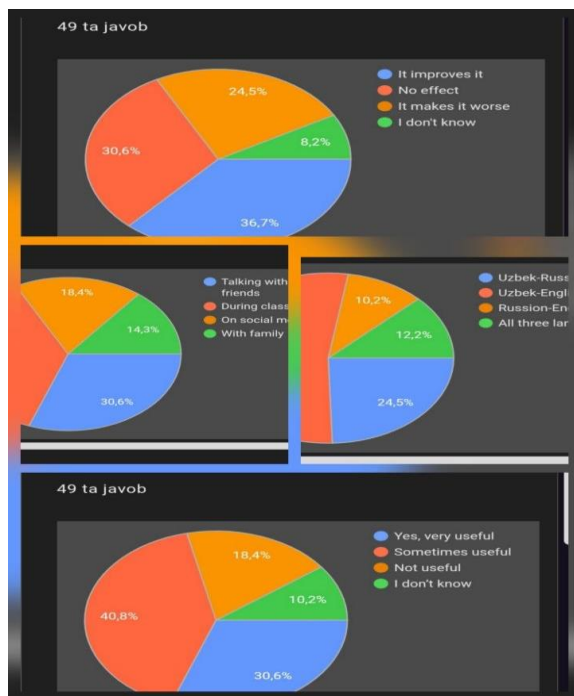
The survey results provide valuable insights into students' perceptions and practices of code-switching. A total of 49 respondents participated in the study.

Firstly, regarding the usefulness of code-switching, the majority of participants expressed a positive attitude. Specifically, 40.8% of respondents considered code-switching to be sometimes useful, while 30.6% believed it is very useful. In contrast, 18.4% viewed it as not useful, and a smaller proportion (10.2%) reported uncertainty. These findings indicate that most students recognize the practical value of code-switching in communication.

Secondly, the data reveals that students most frequently switch between Uzbek and

English. More than half of the respondents (53.1%) reported using this language combination. Meanwhile, 24.5% switch between Uzbek and Russian, 10.2% between Russian and English, and 12.2% reported using all three languages. This suggests that English plays a significant role in multilingual communication among students.

Finally, when examining the contexts in which code-switching occurs, the results show that it is most commonly used during classes (36.7%). Additionally, 30.6% of participants reported switching languages while talking with friends. Code-switching on social media accounts for 18.4%, while 14.3% use it primarily with family members. These findings demonstrate that code-switching is especially prevalent in academic and social environments.



Overall, the results suggest that code-switching is a widely accepted and frequently used linguistic practice among students, particularly in educational settings and informal communication.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that code-switching is widely practiced among Uzbek university students and serves as an important communicative strategy. The high frequency of code-switching reported by participants suggests that it is not a случайный phenomenon but rather a systematic and purposeful aspect of multilingual communication. This aligns with the view of François Grosjean (2010), who argues that bilingual speakers use their languages flexibly depending on context and communicative needs.

One of the key findings is that students perceive code-switching as useful for enhancing communication. This supports the argument made by Li Wei (2018), who emphasizes that multilingual speakers strategically draw on their full linguistic repertoire to achieve clarity and effectiveness. In this study, students reported



switching languages to better express ideas, especially when certain concepts were easier to convey in English or Russian than in Uzbek.

The dominance of Uzbek-English code-switching reflects the increasing influence of English in higher education and global communication. This finding is consistent with David Crystal (2003), who highlights the role of English as a global lingua franca, particularly in academic and professional domains. The frequent use of English terminology by students, especially in fields such as technology and business, indicates that English is becoming an essential component of academic discourse in Uzbekistan.

At the same time, the presence of Russian in students' language use demonstrates the continued impact of historical and sociolinguistic factors. Russian remains relevant in urban and academic contexts, contributing to a multilingual environment where students naturally alternate between three languages. This supports the idea proposed by Ofelia García (2009), who views multilingual practices as dynamic and context-dependent.

Another important finding is that code-switching occurs most frequently in classrooms and peer interactions. In academic settings, students use code-switching as a tool for better understanding complex material, which suggests its instructional value. In peer communication, it serves social functions such as building rapport and expressing identity. This aligns with Nikolas Coupland (2007), who emphasizes that language choice reflects social identity and group belonging.

Overall, the findings confirm that code-switching is a deliberate and functional linguistic practice. Rather than indicating a lack of proficiency, it reflects communicative competence and adaptability in multilingual environments.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small (50 participants), which may limit the generalizability of



the findings. Second, the use of convenience sampling means that the participants may not fully represent all university students in Uzbekistan. Third, the data were collected through self-reported surveys, which may be subject to bias, as participants might not always accurately reflect their actual language use. Additionally, the study relied only on quantitative data, which limits deeper exploration of students' motivations and attitudes toward code-switching.

The findings of this study have several important practical implications. First, educators should recognize code-switching as a valuable pedagogical tool rather than discouraging it in the classroom. Allowing students to use multiple languages may improve comprehension and facilitate learning, especially in complex subjects.

Second, curriculum designers can incorporate multilingual strategies into teaching practices, acknowledging the role of English and Russian alongside Uzbek. This can help create a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Third, the study highlights the importance of developing students' proficiency in multiple languages, as multilingual competence is increasingly essential in academic and professional contexts.

Finally, future research can build on these findings by using larger samples and combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of code-switching behavior.

Conclusion

This research explored how often Uzbek university students engage in code-switching and the purposes it serves, using a quantitative methodology. The findings revealed that code-switching is both common and intentional as a communication strategy. Students regularly shift between Uzbek, English, and, to a lesser degree, Russian in academic as well as social situations. In particular, switching between Uzbek and English illustrates the increasing role of English in higher education and



global communication, while the presence of Russian reflects Uzbekistan's multilingual and sociolinguistically diverse context.

The study shows that code-switching should not be viewed as a sign of linguistic weakness; instead, it is a functional practice that improves communication, supports understanding, and strengthens social connections. These results align with prior research highlighting the strategic use of multiple languages by bilingual and multilingual individuals (Grosjean, 2010; Li Wei, 2018; Crystal, 2003; García, 2009).

However, the study has certain limitations, such as a relatively small sample size and dependence on self-reported survey data. These constraints may affect the generalizability of the findings and limit deeper insight into the motivations behind code-switching. Future studies could overcome these issues by using larger and more diverse samples, as well as incorporating qualitative approaches like interviews or classroom observations.

From a practical standpoint, the findings indicate that educators should recognize code-switching as a valuable teaching tool, enabling students to utilize multiple languages to improve learning and comprehension. Moreover, curriculum developers and policymakers might consider adopting multilingual approaches in education to support students' language development.

In summary, code-switching among Uzbek university students is a purposeful, meaningful, and context-sensitive linguistic behavior. Understanding and acknowledging this practice can lead to more effective teaching, better communication, and a deeper appreciation of multilingual competence in higher education.



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