

## CODE-SWITCHING AMONG BILINGUAL ENGLISH SPEAKERS

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### ABSTRACT

This essay explores the phenomenon of code-switching among English bilingual speakers, focusing on the reasons and methods by which individuals shift between languages during conversations. Code-switching occurs when bilingual speakers transition from one language to another within a single dialogue or even within a single sentence. This paper reviews the social, psychological, and contextual bases for code-switching and what role it plays in communication. Through reading earlier studies and literature, this paper asserts that code-switching is not any longer a sign of language deficiency as previously thought, but rather more intricate communication strategies whereby bilingual speakers communicate their identity and negotiate social situations. The research validates that code-switching is essential bilingual communication and it must receive more acknowledgment in language instruction and policy.

**KEY WORDS:** code-switching, bilingualism, language mixing, identity, communication strategies.

### INTRODUCTION

Code-switching—the employment of a switch among two or more languages or varieties of language during one conversation or discourse—represents one of the most characteristic and complex characteristics of bilingual speech. Despite earlier misconceptions defining code-switching as random or indicative of language deficiency, more recent sociolinguistic work has rendered it a rule-governed, deliberate act that requires sophisticated linguistic competence (Poplack, 1980; Myers-Scotton, 1993). This article is specifically interested in code-switching between bilingual speakers whose language features English among the languages, examining the patterns, functions, and social meaning of this ubiquitous linguistic practice.

#### **Main body**

The global diffusion of English as an international language has created numerous contact situations in which English is in contact with local languages, giving rise to diverse patterns of bilingualism and code-switching (Crystal, 2003). As English continues to grow as a language of international communication, business, education, and technology, it becomes increasingly important to sociolinguistic theory, language

teaching, and intercultural communication to know how bilingual speakers negotiate the switch between English and another language.

Various typologies and definitions of code-switching have been suggested by researchers, who have also distinguished it from related phenomena like linguistic mixture, interference, and borrowing. Gumperz (1982:59) has defined code-switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems." This definition includes intrasentential switching (switching within a phrase) and intersentential switching (switching between languages at sentence or clause boundaries). Myers-Scotton's (1993) Matrix Language Frame approach proposed that within code-switched speech, a language is generally the "matrix" or source language providing the morphosyntactic frame, and elements of the "embedded" language are embedded in the frame. This model has proved particularly effective at explaining the grammatical constraints on intrasentential code-switching. Auer (1999) approached code-switching from a conversation-analytic perspective, drawing attention to its sequential structure and interactional character. He distinguished between discourse-related switching (used to find conversational activity) and participant-related switching (with which speakers' preferences or capabilities are linked).

Research on English-based code-switching has reported different patterns across different language pairs and communities. Research on Spanish-English bilinguals in the US has reported clause-bound switching and single-noun switching into otherwise Spanish speech (Poplack, 1980; Zentella, 1997). In contrast, English-code-switching studies to typologically distant languages such as Chinese (Li, 1994), Japanese (Nishimura, 1997), and Korean (Lo, 1999) show more heterogeneous patterns with increased switching between specific word classes or syntactic positions. Gardner-Chloros's (2009) comparative analysis demonstrated that patterns of code-switching are influenced not only by structural compatibility between the two languages but also by sociohistorical context and community practice. For example, postcolonial environments where English is in an official status as well as the indigenous languages (such as India, Singapore, or Nigeria) will have the usual patterns of code-switching reflecting the multilevelled language policies and language hierarchies of the communities (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2004). Researchers have identified that code-switching has served various functions in bilingual discourse. Gumperz (1982) proposed a range of conversational functions, i.e., quotation, specification of addressee, interjection, repetition, qualification of message, and personalization and objectivization. Later research has expanded this functional list.

Code-switching is often used as a strategy for constructing and expressing identity. Bailey's (2000) research on Dominican American teenagers showed how they used Spanish-English code-switching to negotiate multiple identities and resist binary

ethnic categorizations. Similarly, Rampton's (1995) concept of "crossing"—using language varieties associated with social or ethnic groups to which the speaker does not belong—highlights how code-switching can be used to challenge or transgress established social boundaries. In multilingual classrooms, code-switching can function as a pedagogical resource. Lin's (2013) research in Hong Kong schools demonstrated how teachers strategically switched between English and Cantonese to facilitate understanding, maintain classroom discipline, and create solidarity with students.

Computer-mediated communication has created new environments for code-switching. Studies of computer-mediated communication among English bilingual speakers have shown how text messaging, social media, and online forums' written code-switching has both functional and aesthetic applications (Androutsopoulos, 2013; Lee, 2017). Code-switching behavior is influenced by a broad array of factors including setting, topic, participants, and communicative purpose. Grosjean's (2001) language mode hypothesis states that bilinguals operate on a continuum from monolingual mode in interactions with monolinguals to bilingual mode with others who speak their languages, and code-switching becomes more likely in the latter case. Attitudes to code-switching also vary widely across communities and contexts. While, in some communities, code-switching is embraced as a marker of double identity and bilingual competence, others stigmatize it as "improper" language use (Romaine, 2000). Such attitudes frequently index broader language ideologies and power relations. The relationship between code-switching and language proficiency remains complex. Although early views represented code-switching as a compensatory strategy for linguistic deficiency, it has been shown time and again that proficient code-switching requires proficiency in both languages (Poplack, 1980). Bullock and Toribio (2009) qualify, however, that different types of code-switching can be linked to different proficiency profiles, with certain patterns occurring during language acquisition or attrition.

Taking an integrative literature review method, the research synthesizes findings of empirical studies conducted on different bilingual communities to examine reasons for and directions of code-switching among bilingual English speakers. Studies with different methodological frameworks are included in the review:

1. "Corpus-based" studies of naturally occurring data of code-switching in spoken dialogue, media, and texts.
2. Ethnographic studies of code-switching in community and cultural context.
3. Experimental studies examining the cognitive and psycholinguistic foundations of code-switching.
4. Questionnaire studies of language attitudes and self-reported code-switching behavior.

## CONCLUSION

Code-switching in English bilinguals is a natural, meaningful aspect of communication, not an error or weakness. It enables speakers to be themselves, bond with others, and respond to varying social contexts. Rather than being haphazard, it is a manifestation of profound linguistic ability, adaptability, and cultural awareness. Recognizing code-switching makes us more sensitive to the richness of bilingual communication and nudges language policies and classroom practices further toward the dynamic and natural patterns more people actually employ contemporary world.

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