

THE NATURE OF THE TERM “CODE-SWITCHING”: ITS TYPES, AND THEIR FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENCES

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Abstract

This article explores the linguistic and sociolinguistic dimensions of code-switching by examining its conceptual nature, structural types, and functional differences. Drawing on foundational theories and recent studies, the paper traces the evolution of the term *code-switching* from a grammatical alternation to a socially and pragmatically meaningful practice in bilingual and multilingual contexts. The article also investigates the communicative functions of code-switching, including identity expression, topic management, emphasis, politeness, and accommodation. By integrating structural and functional perspectives, this study highlights the complexity of code-switching and its significance in multilingual discourse. The findings underscore the need for a comprehensive and context-sensitive approach to understanding language alternation in real-life interactions.

Keywords: *code-switching; bilingualism; inter-sentential switching; intra-sentential switching; tag-switching; language function; Matrix Language Frame model; sociolinguistics; identity; communication strategies*

Ushbu maqola kod-almashinuv hodisasining lingvistik va ijtimoiy-lingvistik jihatlarini tahlil qiladi. Maqolada ushbu atamaning mazmun - mohiyati, turlari va funksional farqlari ko'rib chiqiladi. Ilmiy nazariyalar va zamonaviy tadqiqotlar asosida kod-almashinuv tushunchasining grammatik hodisadan ijtimoiy va pragmatik ma'no anglatadigan til strategiyasiga aylanishi ko'rsatiladi. Shuningdek, maqolada kod-almashinuv hodisasining kommunikativ funksiyalari yoritiladi va strukturaviy hamda funksional yondashuvlar uyg'unligi orqali mazkur tadqiqot kod-almashuvning murakkabligi va ko'p tilli muloqotdagi o'rni muhim ekanini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: *kod-almashinuv; ikki tillilik; gaplararo almashuv; gap ichidagi almashuv; til funksiyasi; kod almashinuv modellari; sotsiolingvistika; kommunikatsiya strategiyalari*

В данной статье рассматриваются лингвистические и социолингвистические аспекты переключения кодов через анализ его природы, структурных типов и

функциональных различий. Основываясь на ключевых теоретических моделях и современных исследованиях, автор прослеживает эволюцию термина переключение кодов от грамматического явления до значимого коммуникативного и прагматического инструмента в билингвальной и многоязычной среде. Также анализируются коммуникативные функции переключения кодов, включая выражение идентичности, управление темой, акцентирование, вежливость и адаптацию речи. Интеграция структурного и функционального подходов позволяет выявить сложность данного явления и подчеркнуть его важную роль в многоязычном взаимодействии.

Ключевые слова: переключение кодов; билингвизм; межфразовое переключение; внутрифразовое переключение; теговое переключение; языковые функции; модель *Matrix Language Frame*; социолингвистика; идентичность; коммуникативные стратегии

Introduction. Code-switching is a widely observed linguistic phenomenon that occurs in multilingual communities where speakers alternate between two or more languages or language varieties within a single conversation, sentence, or even clause. Over the past several decades, the term *code-switching* has gained considerable attention in sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and bilingualism studies due to its complex nature and the variety of functions it serves in communication. Although the concept appears straightforward on the surface—shifting from one linguistic code to another—it encompasses a range of structural patterns, social meanings, and communicative strategies that reflect both individual speaker choices and broader sociocultural dynamics.

The terminology surrounding code-switching has evolved significantly since its initial usage in the mid-20th century. Scholars have debated its definition, scope, and classification, with some viewing it primarily as a grammatical phenomenon, while others emphasize its socio-pragmatic dimensions. As a result, multiple typologies have been proposed, including inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching, each reflecting different linguistic and functional aspects of language alternation.

This article seeks to explore the nature of the term *code-switching*, trace its conceptual development in linguistic theory, and examine the major types identified in academic literature. Furthermore, it analyzes the functional differences among these types, emphasizing how speakers employ code-switching for a variety of communicative purposes, such as signaling group identity, managing discourse, or adapting to social context. By synthesizing structural

and functional approaches, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of code-switching as a multifaceted and dynamic feature of multilingual communication.

Literature review. The phenomenon of code-switching has been extensively explored across multiple linguistic disciplines, from structural linguistics to sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. Scholars have long debated both the definition and scope of the term *code-switching*. Early conceptualizations, such as those by John Gumperz, emphasized its social function in conversational interaction, defining code-switching as the juxtaposition of two codes within the same speech exchange. Gumperz's work was foundational in shifting the focus from purely grammatical alternation to the social meaning encoded in language choice.

Blom and Gumperz introduced the distinction between *situational* and *metaphorical* code-switching. In situational switching, the language changes in response to a shift in the setting or participants, while in metaphorical switching, the shift reflects a change in topic, attitude, or relational alignment.¹ This distinction was pivotal in demonstrating that code-switching is not merely a random alternation but a socially motivated act.

Myers-Scotton developed the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model, which proposed that in intra-sentential code-switching, one language functions as the *Matrix Language* (ML), providing the morphosyntactic structure, while the other serves as the *Embedded Language* (EL), contributing content morphemes.² This model provided a systematic explanation of how different grammatical systems interact in bilingual speech, reinforcing the idea that code-switching follows identifiable linguistic rules.

In addition to structural models, functional approaches have gained prominence. Auer introduced the concept of *conversational code-switching*, focusing on how bilingual speakers use language choice as a contextualization cue.³ According to this view, code-switching plays a key role in constructing social meaning, signaling discourse structure, or managing speaker alignment and topic shifts.

More recently, Bullock and Toribio emphasized the importance of considering both grammatical and pragmatic dimensions in the study of code-switching. They argue for an

¹ Blom, J.-P., & Gumperz, J. J. (1972). Social meaning in linguistic structure: Code-switching in Norway. In J. J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication* (pp. 407–434). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

² Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for codeswitching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³ Auer, P. (1998). *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. London: Routledge.

integrative approach that accounts for the sociolinguistic realities of bilingual speakers and the variability in code-switching practices across communities and settings.

These foundational studies demonstrate that code-switching is not a monolithic phenomenon but a multidimensional practice shaped by linguistic, social, and pragmatic factors. This review provides the theoretical grounding for analyzing the types and functional differences of code-switching in diverse linguistic contexts.

The Nature of the Term *Code-Switching*. The term *code-switching* generally refers to the alternation between two or more languages or language varieties within a communicative event. It has been used since the mid-20th century but has evolved in meaning across disciplines. Initially, the term was largely confined to descriptions of bilingual speakers shifting between languages. As early as the 1950s, linguists recognized that this practice was not merely a sign of linguistic confusion or incompetence, but rather a complex, rule-governed behavior.⁴

John Gumperz was instrumental in redefining code-switching from a purely structural phenomenon into a sociolinguistic one. He emphasized that code-switching is a socially meaningful choice, used by speakers to index social identity, manage conversational footing, or reflect shifts in discourse. This reorientation highlighted that code-switching must be understood not only in terms of when and how it occurs grammatically, but also why it occurs in a given interaction.⁵

Myers-Scotton advanced this discussion by introducing the *Markedness Model*, which explained how speakers use language alternation to negotiate social roles and relationships. She argued that the choice of language itself can be a "marked" or "unmarked" choice, indicating the speaker's intentions and expectations about the social norms in a particular context.⁶

As a result, code-switching is now recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon that intersects with linguistic competence, sociocultural knowledge, and interactional strategies.

Types of Code-Switching. Scholars have proposed several classifications of code-switching based on structural patterns. The most widely accepted typology, introduced by Poplack, consists of three main types:

1. Inter-sentential Code-Switching

This type occurs between complete clauses or sentences. For example:

⁴ Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in contact: Findings and problems*. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York.

⁵ Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶ Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for codeswitching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

"I told you already. Men uni aytdim-ku."

This type of switching requires strong proficiency in both languages, as speakers must construct grammatically correct sentences in each language. It is commonly found in formal conversations, storytelling, and speeches.

2. Intra-sentential Code-Switching

In this type, the switch happens within a single sentence or clause. For example:

"U bugun schoolga bormadi." ("He didn't go to school today.")

This form is more structurally complex and constrained by grammatical rules. According to Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame model, one language (the Matrix Language) provides the sentence structure, while the Embedded Language contributes lexical items. In the example above, Uzbek serves as the Matrix Language, and English is embedded.

3. Tag-Switching (Emblematic Switching)

Tag-switching involves the insertion of short fixed expressions (e.g., *you know, right?, I mean*) from one language into a sentence in another. For example:

"Bugun juda charchadim, you know."

These expressions are often discourse markers and require little or no integration into the grammatical structure of the host sentence.

Other scholars have proposed additional distinctions. For instance, Blom and Gumperz distinguished between **situational** and **metaphorical** code-switching. In situational switching, the language shift is determined by changes in the physical or social setting. In metaphorical switching, the shift conveys a change in topic or speaker attitude. This classification highlights the social and pragmatic motivations behind code-switching rather than grammatical structure alone.

Functional Differences Between Types of Code-Switching. Beyond structure, code-switching serves a variety of communicative and pragmatic functions. Speakers do not switch languages randomly; each switch can carry distinct meaning and purpose in interaction.

Identity Construction and Group Membership. Code-switching is often used to assert or align with a particular social identity. Bilingual speakers may switch to signal membership in an ethnic group, a professional community, or a peer group. For instance, young bilingual speakers in urban Uzbekistan may insert English phrases to express modernity or global awareness.

Topic Shift or Emphasis. Switches can signal a change in topic or highlight specific content. Inter-sentential switches, in particular, are frequently used to emphasize key ideas or to mark a narrative boundary.

Quotation and Reported Speech. Speakers may switch codes when quoting someone directly, especially if the original statement was made in a different language. This is common in multilingual storytelling.

Clarification or Repetition. Switching can also function as a strategy for clarifying or reinforcing a message. A speaker may restate a phrase in another language to ensure understanding, especially in mixed-language audiences.

Humor and Irony. In informal contexts, code-switching is often used for humorous effect or to express irony. Tag-switching is particularly effective in this role, as it allows for the insertion of culturally loaded expressions or tones.

Accommodation and Politeness Strategies.

Drawing on Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory, speakers may switch languages to accommodate their interlocutor's preferences, express solidarity, or reduce social distance.⁷ For example, in a multilingual workplace, a speaker may alternate between languages to show inclusivity and build rapport.

These structural and functional distinctions demonstrate that code-switching is not a monolithic or chaotic practice but a sophisticated form of linguistic and social navigation. Understanding the different types of code-switching and their communicative purposes is essential for analyzing multilingual interactions, whether in formal discourse, casual conversation, or mediated communication.

Conclusion.

Code-switching is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon that reflects the linguistic, social, and psychological dimensions of bilingual and multilingual communication. As demonstrated in this study, the term *code-switching* has evolved from a narrowly structural definition to a broader sociolinguistic concept that encompasses both grammatical patterns and pragmatic functions. By examining the foundational literature, it becomes clear that code-

⁷ Giles, H. (1991). Accent and social identity: A communication approach. In H. Giles, J. Coupland, & N. Coupland (Eds.), *Contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics* (pp. 191–222). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

switching is governed by systematic linguistic principles while also serving important communicative purposes in various social contexts.

The classification of code-switching into inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching provides a structural framework for analyzing how bilingual speakers navigate multiple languages in discourse. Furthermore, the functional diversity of these types—from expressing identity and marking emphasis to signaling politeness and managing interaction—reveals that code-switching is not merely a linguistic alternation but a strategic communicative act.

Understanding the types and functions of code-switching contributes to a deeper appreciation of the cognitive flexibility and sociocultural awareness involved in multilingual speech. It also highlights the importance of contextual factors such as audience, setting, topic, and speaker intention. As multilingualism continues to expand in global and local contexts—including Uzbekistan—the study of code-switching remains crucial for exploring how languages coexist, compete, and complement each other in everyday life.

Future research may further explore how these types and functions vary across specific speech communities, age groups, or digital communication platforms. Such investigation would not only enrich our understanding of bilingual behavior but also inform educational, political, and intercultural practices in linguistically diverse societies.

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