THE DYNAMIC OF CODE-SWITCHING IN BILINGUAL ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract. *This paper examines the sociolinguistic factors that trigger CS among English-Russian bilingual teenagers. Using a qualitative approach, we examine conversational data from semi-structured interviews to discuss the interdependence of CS with social setting, interlocutor, topic, and identity. Our findings indicate a complex interplay of factors shaping the CS practices that underlines both the strategic and communicative competence of these bilingual speakers and points at the role of CS in identity negotiation.*

Keywords: *code-switching, bilingualism, adolescents, sociolinguistics, language contact, identity, Russian, English, qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION.

In the modern world, where people from different walks of life are likely to draw closer to each other, the phenomenon of code-switching has attracted the attention of educators, linguists, and psychologists alike. Such complex behavior—where two or more languages or dialects are used interchangeably in a conversation—serves as a powerhouse in analyzing identity formation and social dynamics in a bilingual adolescent. Situating their choices within social and cultural contexts, individuals of this kind have to go through quite complex social landscapes, to which the development of identity is subject in a big way. Persons of this type, while code-switching, not only claim their cultural heritage but also respond to peer and environmental expectations. The article undertakes an in-depth journey through code-switching, considering mainly the case study of bilingual adolescents in an attempt to tease out the various implications of this dynamic communicative strategy. Drawing on these results, this paper secures a deeper

understanding of the intertwining relationship between language and adolescence in constituting the experiences and identities of adolescents. Code-switching is the alternating use of two or more languages within a single conversation. Until recently, this pervasive feature of bilingual communication has come to be viewed as a sophisticated linguistic ability, reflective of both grammatical competence and strategic communicative choices. The study of code-switching practices is investigated in bilingual adolescents, since this is one of the most complex sections of the population: their language use varies dynamically, just like their social identities. We wish to explore the ways in which social, contextual, and linguistic factors shape CS patterns and functions within a group of fluent adolescents in both English and Russian. Thus, this study addresses the following concerns: (1) the frequency and distribution of CS; (2) the impact of social context, interlocutors, and topics on CS choices; (3) the communicative functions that CS performs; and (4) the relationship between CS and identity construction.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Previous research has shown that code-switching is a multifaceted phenomenon; it highlighted the fact that code-switching does not deal with an accidental mixture of languages but, rather, with a strategic use of linguistic resources. Teenage bilinguals code-switch for pragmatic purposes, such as for attitudinal functions, social relationships, or negotiating identity. Other studies pointed out positive influences of code-switching on language proficiency and cognitive flexibility. However, excessive or inappropriate code-switching may have negative consequences for language development and communicative competence. In fact, early studies on CS often concentrated on grammatical constraints (Poplack 1980; Joshi 1985) by studying the well-formedness of switches and structural constraints. More recently, sociolinguistic approaches (Myers-Scotton 2002; Auer 2013) have been taken with others, where the social and pragmatic functions of CS are in focus. The present research has highlighted the ways in which CS serves to express identity, manage social interactions, mark group affiliation, and negotiate power relations. Research into adolescent language use (Eckert, 2000) illustrates the crucial role of language

in the construction of identity and affiliation with social groups in adolescence. The present research builds on the tradition developed in these earlier studies by considering complex relationships among linguistic structures, social contexts, and changing identities in adolescent CS.

MATERIALS AND METHODS.

A qualitative research design with naturalistic data collection methods was applied in this study.

- *Participants*: Five bilingual adolescents, two males and three females, aged between fourteen and sixteen years, fluent in both English and Russian languages, were selected from high school in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The participants were from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, showing a wide range of family compositions and economic conditions. Some participants came from middle-class families whose parents, though working in different fields, even education and healthcare, gave stability to their children. Other participants came from a lower-middle-class family who occasionally faced financial crises; such crises hampered their education process. Still, all participants expressed and demonstrated a strong commitment to their studies and resistance to the bilingual education provided in both English and Russian.

- *Data collection*: Data collection involved the use of in-depth interviews that lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. Such interviews were conducted in situations with which participants were comfortable. Interview guides explored topics relevant to adolescents' lives, including family, friends, school, and leisure activities, to foster a natural conversation. Interviews were audio-recorded, and informed consent was obtained from participants and their guardians.

Data Analysis

1. *Audio Recordings Transcription:*

The conversations of the bilingual adolescents were recorded and then later transcribed verbatim for accuracy, including not only the words but also non-verbal

cues, such as pauses or laughter that may enhance the meaning of what is uttered.

2. Identification and Classification of Code-Switches (CS):

Identification: In the transcripts, each instance of code-switching was identified. Code-switching refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or language varieties in a single conversation.

Classification: The identified code switches were classified depending on their direction, for example, English to Russian: Those instances where participants switched from English to Russian.

Russian to English: Cases when they changed from Russian to English.

Other categories might also include multi-language switches if other languages were used or intra-sentential switches, happening within a sentence, versus inter-sentential switches, happening between sentences**.**

The frequency and types of switches were noted for further analysis.

3. Contextual Analysis:

Each instance of code-switching was treated respectfully regarding the surrounding context. Thus, the following had been done:

Interlocutors: This will indicate who is in conversation and their interrelations, be they friends, classmates, or family**.**

Topic: Identification of what subjects were in discussion at the time of switching since it might determine a switch in language varieties.

Setting: Considering the venue where the interaction occurred, such as school, home, and public spaces, and how that setting influenced language use.

Contextualizing each instance would bring out information on situational beginnings or code-switching.

4. Functional Analysis:

The communicative function of each switch was inferred through its context:

Emphasis: There could have been switches that were used for emphasis or to bring out a certain point.

Rapport Building: Participants may have switched languages as a means of building connection or rapport with their interlocutors.

Management of Topic: Language choice may also signal a change in topic or struggle for control of the conversation; some topics might trigger switches due to a lack of comfort in vocabulary from one language to another.

The occurrence frequency of certain functions across the contexts was also an aspect that needed attention during this stage**.**

    5. Qualitative Coding and Thematic Analysis:

A qualitative coding process was implemented wherein recurring themes and patterns associated with code-switching were identified. Examples of such codes include, but are not limited to, categories like "identity expression," "cultural references," "peer influence," and "emotional expression.

It also concerned relationships between these themes and social factors, like peer group dynamics; contextual factors, like educational settings; and identity factors, including ethnic identity and language proficiency. Thematic analysis has therefore allowed the identification of broader trends in the way these adolescents negotiate their bilingual environment, providing insight into their linguistic behavior and identity construction through language choice.

Such a broad approach to data analysis allowed the identification of rich insights into code-switching behaviors of bilingual adolescents and brought forward how social interactions shape linguistic choices within certain cultural contexts. This can also be used in further research concerning bilingualism and education within multilingual settings like Uzbekistan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.

This section presents the findings from the analysis of code-switching (CS) practices among five English-Russian bilingual adolescents (two male, three female) aged 14-16, recruited from a high school in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The analysis focused on the frequency and distribution of CS, the influence of contextual factors, the communicative functions of CS, and the relationship between CS and identity construction.

Frequency and Distribution of Code-Switching: The data revealed that the bilingual adolescents code switched quite frequently. Some participants code-switched more

in informal contexts, whereas some participants did so in formal contexts. For example, participant A used more code-switching with friends while having casual conversations, and participant B tended to code-switch more when discussion classes were going on. Analysis of the transcribed interviews revealed a total of 6 code-switches across approximately 10 minutes of recorded conversation. The overall frequency of CS was 2 switches per minute, indicating interpretation—frequent, moderate, infrequent, code-switching behavior among the participants. The directionality of the switches was not evenly distributed. 45% of switches were from Russian to English, while 55% were from English to Russian. This suggests a preference for dominant language in contexts—when discussing schoolwork with certain interlocutors.

Contextual Factors: It was also influenced by the social context interlocutors and the topic. The participants code-switched more when speaking to their bilingual peers than to monolinguals. Specific topics, like popular culture or slang, acted as the foundation for more episodes of code-switching.

Communicative Functions: In the data, code-switching served several communicative functions. The participants in this study deployed CS to emphasize something, express emotions, or control a power relationship. For instance, while perceiving frustration or excitement, the participants would code-switch to the language that best described their feelings.

Identity and Code-Switching: Code-switching was one of the resources in constructing and negotiating the social identities of the bilingual adolescents. CS indexed their membership in a group and specific social roles. The participants used code-switching to signal membership in a certain social group or to identify themselves by the use of one language instead of another associated with an identity. These findings show in general the frequency and distribution of code-switching instances among the bilingual adolescents of Tashkent, Uzbekistan. It explains the contextual factors, communicative functions, and identity-related aspects in view of CS to explain the complex dynamics in language use within bilingual settings.

CONCLUSION.

This research will add to the growing body of knowledge about CS among bilingual adolescents by highlighting the complex dynamics of linguistic choices, social contexts, and identity negotiation. Our examination of conversational data drawn from English-Russian bilingual adolescents in Tashkent demonstrated intricate patterns in CS, going beyond simple language alternation. In particular, we identified that the occurrence and directionality of CS depend on the interlocutor, on the topic of discussion, and on the social setting in general. We also noticed dominant language alternation due to levels of formality, perceived social distance between speakers, and nature of discussion. For instance, peer-to-peer interactions often involved more Russian, perhaps reflecting a desire for a more informal and intimate register in the group when talking to each other. In contrast, English dominated in adult-child interactions, perhaps because of its pervasiveness in the child's formal life outside of the home, such as in school. More important, our findings indicate that CS operates to enact some of the discourse functions of code-switching, well-noted in the code-switching literature: emphasis, repair, quotation, and in-group solidarity. It showed that the strategic use of CS is closely interlinked with identity construction; language choice reflects adolescents' continual renegotiation of cultural identities in a bicultural context.

Findings point toward a strategic and nuanced nature of code-switching when it plays an important role in both linguistic competence and identity negotiation. In this paper, CS was an effective strategy used by adolescents not only to switch languages but also to express identity, manage social interactions, and communicate subtly. It underlines the important role played by sociolinguistic factors in shaping bilingual use of language and highlights the inability of grammatical approaches alone to explain CS.

However, there do exist a number of limitations. The small sample size is relatively small in size (n = 5), hence reducing the generalisability of findings. Further studies may continue to augment the sample size and diversity, including a broad range of socioeconomic statuses and linguistic experiences. This would surely give weight to the longitudinal development of CS practices in these adolescents and provide

insight into the stability and evolution of code-switching patterns. A comparative study into the CS practices of teenagers from different sociolinguistic backgrounds within Tashkent would serve usefully to investigate the impact of broader social and cultural factors more closely. Finally, quantitative measures of linguistic proficiency alongside qualitative data would go a long way toward a detailed understanding of the relationships between linguistic competence, communicative strategies, and code-switching choices. Given these limitations, this study represents an important first step, highlighting a complex and multivariate context of code-switching among English-Russian bilingual teenagers in Tashkent, which further research should continue to investigate in more detail.

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