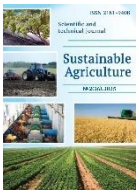
Sustainable Agriculture 2 (26) (2025) 76–78

Contents lists available at https://susagr.uz/index.php/ojs/issue/view/6

Sustainable Agriculture

journal homepage: https://susagr.uz/index.php/ojs



The Purposes and Pragmalinguistic Features of Code-Switching in Uzbek and English Languages

Maftuna Azimova[a], Sardor Surmanov[b]

[a] *ESL instructor\PhD Researcher, "Alisher Navo'i Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature (TSUULL)", Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

[b] *EFL Instructor/ Lecturer at "Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers" National Research University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

a r t i c l e i n f o

Keywords:
Code-switching, Uzbek-English bilingualism, pragmalinguistics, social identity, politeness strategies, bilingual communication, language mixing

a b s t r a c t

This study explores the purposes and pragmalinguistic features of code-switching in Uzbek-English bilingual communication. By analyzing conversational data and participant interviews, the research identifies key functions of code-switching such as expressing social identity, clarifying meaning, emphasizing points, managing politeness, and conveying emotional nuances. The findings reveal that code-switching is a deliberate communicative strategy reflecting both linguistic creativity and social context. This paper contributes to bilingual pragmatics by shedding light on the under-researched Uzbek-English language pair, offering insights into how bilingual speakers navigate multiple languages to achieve effective and meaningful interaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Code-switching, the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a conversation or discourse, is a common phenomenon among bilinguals and multilinguals worldwide. In contexts where languages coexist, such as among Uzbek-English bilingual speakers, code-switching serves not only as a linguistic tool but also as a means to fulfill various pragmatic and social functions. This study explores the purposes behind code-switching and the pragmalinguistic features that characterize its use in Uzbek and English bilingual interactions.

Understanding the pragmalinguistic aspects of code-switching involves examining how speakers use language choices to convey meaning beyond the literal level, including signaling identity, managing politeness, and structuring discourse. This paper aims to contribute to the growing body of research in bilingual pragmatics by focusing specifically on the Uzbek-English language pair, which remains underexplored compared to more commonly studied bilingual contexts.

By analyzing real conversational data and existing theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to uncover the motivations for code-switching and identify key pragmalinguistic features such as politeness strategies, emphasis, clarification, and expressive functions. The findings will offer insights into how Uzbek-English bilinguals navigate linguistic boundaries and maintain effective communication.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of code-switching has been widely studied within sociolinguistics and bilingualism research. Early foundational works by Poplack (1980) and Grosjean (1982) provided descriptive frameworks for identifying different types of code-switching, including inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching. These frameworks have since been expanded to incorporate the pragmatic motivations behind code-switching.

Researchers such as Myers-Scotton (1993) proposed the Markedness Model, which interprets code-switching as a social action used to negotiate identity and social relations. Auer (1998) emphasized the conversational functions of code-switching, arguing that it can serve to manage turn-taking, highlight discourse segments, or signal changes in stance.

In the context of Uzbek and English bilinguals, studies remain relatively sparse. However, recent work by Tursunov (2019) highlighted the role of code-switching in expressing modern identity and social mobility among Uzbek youth. Furthermore, research by Karimova (2021) examined how code-switching functions pragmatically in educational settings to clarify technical terms or express emphasis.

Pragmalinguistic features such as politeness markers, repetition for clarification, and expressive intonation patterns have been identified as key elements in bilingual speech acts. These features often overlap with cultural norms, making code-switching a rich site for investigating intercultural communication.

* Corresponding author. teachermaftunazimova96@gmail.com (M.Azimova)
E-mail addresses: sardor_surmanov@tiiame.uz (S.Surmanov).

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16512832
Received 30 April 2025; Received in revised form 30 May 2025; Accepted 3 June 2025
Available online 1 July 2025
ISSN 2181-9408/© 2025 The Authors. Published by "TIIAME" NRU. The journal "Sustainable Agriculture" is registered in the Press Agency of Uzbekistan on the 12th of February in 2018 (license № 0957). In 2019, the journal is included in the list of recommended scientific publications by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design based on the analysis of naturalistic conversational data among Uzbek-English bilinguals. Data were collected through audio recordings of informal conversations among 15 participants aged between 18 and 30, who regularly switch between Uzbek and English in daily communication.

The conversations were transcribed verbatim, and instances of code-switching were identified and categorized according to types (inter-sentential, intra-sentential, tag switching). Each instance was analyzed for its pragmatic function using a pragmalinguistic framework that considers politeness, emphasis, clarification, identity signaling, and emotional expression.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews with participants provided insights into their attitudes towards code-switching and the social meanings they associate with switching languages. The combination of conversational analysis and participant reflections allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the purposes and features of code-switching in this bilingual community.

Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture the nuanced social and pragmatic functions of code-switching that quantitative methods might overlook.

Methodology: Research Design and Context

This study adopts a qualitative research design aimed at exploring the pragmatic and social functions of code-switching among Uzbek-English bilingual speakers. Qualitative methods were chosen because they allow for an in-depth understanding of language use within its social context, capturing the subtleties of bilingual communication that quantitative methods might miss.

Research Design

The research employs conversational analysis and semi-structured interviews. Conversational data were collected through audio recordings of informal, naturally occurring interactions among bilingual participants. This approach ensures authenticity and richness of data, reflecting real-life language use rather than scripted or elicited speech.

The semi-structured interviews supplemented the conversational analysis by eliciting participants' reflections on their code-switching behaviors, attitudes, and the social meanings they attach to switching between Uzbek and English. This dual approach enables triangulation of data sources, enhancing the validity of the findings.

Research Context

The study was conducted in Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital, where English is increasingly prominent as a second language due to globalization, education, and professional demands. The participants, aged between 18 and 30, represent university students and young professionals who regularly navigate between Uzbek and English in academic, social, and workplace settings.

The sociolinguistic environment of Uzbekistan is characterized by widespread bilingualism and a growing influence of English in formal and informal domains. English serves as a language of modernity and international communication, while Uzbek remains the national language with deep cultural significance. This bilingual context makes Uzbek-English code-switching a dynamic and meaningful linguistic practice.

Participants

Fifteen participants (8 females and 7 males) were purposively sampled based on their active bilingual proficiency and frequent use of code-switching in daily communication. They were recruited through university networks and social groups.

Data Collection and Analysis

The audio recordings, totaling approximately 5 hours, were transcribed verbatim with careful notation of language switches. Instances of code-switching were identified and classified according to their structural type (inter-sentential, intra-sentential, tag switching) and pragmalinguistic function.

The analysis focused on how code-switching was used to perform specific pragmatic functions such as emphasis, clarification, politeness, identity signaling, and emotional expression. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically to complement the conversational data, revealing participants' subjective perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing personal information. Participants were free to withdraw at any stage without penalty. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects.

Data Analysis

The collected conversational data and interview transcripts were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach, with a focus on identifying the pragmatic functions and linguistic patterns of code-switching among Uzbek-English bilingual speakers. The analysis was conducted in multiple stages to ensure a thorough and systematic examination of the data.

Identification and Classification of Code-Switching Instances

First, all instances of code-switching were identified within the transcribed conversations. Code-switching was categorized into three main types based on structural criteria:

- Inter-sentential switching, where the language switch occurs at sentence boundaries;
- Intra-sentential switching, where language alternation happens within a single sentence or clause;
- Tag switching, where a tag phrase or a short expression from one language is inserted into an utterance primarily in the other language.

This structural classification helped to organize the data and provided the framework for subsequent pragmatic analysis.

Pragmatic Function Analysis

Each identified instance of code-switching was analyzed to determine its pragmatic function, drawing on established models from bilingual pragmatics and discourse analysis. The functions coded included:

- Identity signaling: switches that express or reinforce social identity, group membership, or stance;
- Clarification and precision: switches used to clarify meaning, specify technical terms, or disambiguate concepts;
- Emphasis: language alternation to highlight or intensify a message;
- Politeness strategies: switches that manage interpersonal relations, such as softening requests, expressing deference, or showing solidarity;
- Expressive functions: switches used to convey emotions, humor, sarcasm, or irony.

Multiple instances often served overlapping functions, which were noted in the analysis.

Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and coded thematically to capture participants' attitudes and perceptions towards code-switching. Themes that emerged included:

- The association of English with modernity, education, and prestige;
- The role of Uzbek in expressing cultural identity and intimacy;
- Participants' conscious or unconscious use of code-switching as a communicative strategy;
- Social contexts influencing language choice, such as formal versus informal settings.

These thematic insights provided interpretive depth and helped triangulate findings from conversational data.

Interpretation and Contextualization

The combined analysis revealed that code-switching is a purposeful and context-dependent strategy employed by Uzbek-English bilinguals to achieve specific communicative goals. The pragmatic functions identified are closely intertwined with social meanings and cultural norms, illustrating the intricate relationship between language and identity.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability, the coding process was independently reviewed by a second researcher familiar with bilingual pragmatics, and

discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Validity was strengthened by triangulating conversational data with participants' own explanations during interviews, offering a richer understanding of the social motivations behind code-switching.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of conversational data revealed several key purposes of code-switching among Uzbek-English bilinguals. One prominent function is the expression of social identity, where speakers switch languages to signal group membership or social status. For example, inserting English terms during Uzbek speech often serves to project modernity, education, or global connectedness.

Another important purpose is pragmatic emphasis and clarification. Participants frequently switched to English to highlight technical terms, abstract concepts, or to ensure understanding when Uzbek equivalents were ambiguous or less precise. This pragmatic use demonstrates bilinguals' strategic deployment of both languages to enhance communicative effectiveness.

Politeness and interpersonal management also emerged as salient pragmalinguistic features. Code-switching was used to soften requests, offer apologies, or express affection, leveraging cultural expectations associated with each language. For instance, English phrases were sometimes employed to add politeness or distance in delicate interactions.

Expressive functions such as humor, sarcasm, or emotional intensity were often marked through language switching, allowing speakers to creatively manage conversational tone. This reflects the flexible, dynamic nature of bilingual communication.

Overall, the findings suggest that code-switching in Uzbek-English bilingual contexts is not random but a purposeful communicative strategy shaped by social norms and pragmatic needs. This aligns with broader theories in bilingual pragmatics that view code-switching as a resource for meaning-making and social positioning.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the purposes and pragmalinguistic features of code-switching in Uzbek and English bilingual communication. The findings demonstrate that code-switching serves multiple pragmatic functions, including identity expression, emphasis, clarification, politeness, and emotional expression. These uses highlight the complex ways bilinguals navigate their linguistic repertoire to achieve effective and nuanced communication.

The study contributes to the understanding of bilingual pragmatics by focusing on the underexplored Uzbek-English language pair and underscores the importance of considering cultural context when analyzing language use. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring other social settings or age groups, as well as employing quantitative methods to assess frequency and patterns of code-switching.

In conclusion, code-switching among Uzbek-English speakers is a rich, multifaceted phenomenon that reflects both linguistic creativity and social meaning-making in bilingual communities.

REFERENCES

[1] Auer, P. (1998). Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity. Routledge.
[2] Bullock, B. E., & Toribio, A. J. (Eds.). (2009). The Cambridge handbook of linguistic code-switching. Cambridge University Press.
[3] Gumperz, J. J. (1982). Discourse strategies. Cambridge University Press.
[4] Gardner-Chloros, P. (2009). Code-switching. Cambridge University Press.
[5] Li, W. (2018). The multilingualism reader (2nd ed.). Routledge.
[6] Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). Social motivations for codeswitching: Evidence from Africa. Oxford University Press.
[7] Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en español: Toward a typology of code-switching. Linguistics, 18(7-8), 581–618.
[8] Rampton, B. (1995). Crossing: Language and ethnicity among adolescents. Longman.
[9] Scotton, C. M. (2006). Investigating codeswitching: Methods and results. Oxford University Press.
[10] Treffers-Daller, J., & Schröder, A. (Eds.). (2019). Code-switching: Interdisciplinary perspectives on language use. Routledge.