

PATTERNS OF CODE-SWITCHING BETWEEN ENGLISH, UZBEK, AND RUSSIAN IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract. This article provides an in-depth analysis of code-switching practices between English, Uzbek, and Russian in English language classrooms. The study explores the reasons for code-switching by both teachers and students in a multilingual context and its impact on teaching and learning. Findings suggest that code-switching serves as an effective tool to clarify meaning, explain new concepts, provide cultural context, and engage learners in active communication. At the same time, the study acknowledges potential drawbacks of excessive code-switching, such as reduced linguistic independence and slower language competence development. The article also proposes methodological recommendations for organizing effective English lessons in multilingual classrooms, emphasizing balanced and purposeful code-switching strategies.

Key words: code-switching, English language teaching, multilingual education, classroom interaction, communication strategies, motivation, methodological recommendations.

Introduction. Nowadays, multilingualism has become a defining characteristic of many educational contexts, especially in regions where national and regional languages coexist alongside English as a foreign or second language. English has established itself as the global lingua franca, serving as the primary medium for international communication, academic exchange, and professional development. However, the teaching and learning of English in multilingual societies such as Uzbekistan often take place in classrooms where Uzbek (the national language) and Russian (a widely used regional language) are actively present. This coexistence of languages creates a unique linguistic environment where both teachers and students naturally rely on code-switching as part of the teaching-learning process. Code-switching, generally defined as the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a single conversation or discourse, has attracted significant scholarly attention in the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and education. In English language classrooms, it emerges not only as a spontaneous communicative strategy but also as a deliberate pedagogical tool employed by teachers to clarify complex concepts, scaffold learning, and maintain classroom interaction. Students, on the other hand, may use code-switching to express themselves more accurately, seek clarification, or reduce anxiety when facing linguistic challenges. The presence of code-switching in the classroom has both advantages and drawbacks. On the positive side, it can enhance comprehension, support vocabulary acquisition, create cultural relevance, and build a bridge between students' prior knowledge and new linguistic input. It may also foster inclusivity by validating the learners' linguistic identities. However, excessive reliance on code-switching may hinder the development of target-language proficiency, reduce opportunities for authentic language use, and reinforce dependency on the mother tongue. Thus, striking a balance between effective use of code-switching and maintaining the primacy of English is a central concern for educators. Against this background, the present study examines the patterns, functions, and pedagogical implications of code-switching between English, Uzbek, and Russian in English

language classrooms. By analyzing how and why code-switching occurs, this article aims to shed light on its role in enhancing or limiting the effectiveness of English language instruction. Furthermore, the study seeks to provide practical recommendations for teachers on how to use code-switching purposefully in multilingual classrooms, ensuring that it supports rather than impedes language learning. In today's globalized world, English has become the dominant international language for communication, education, and professional growth.

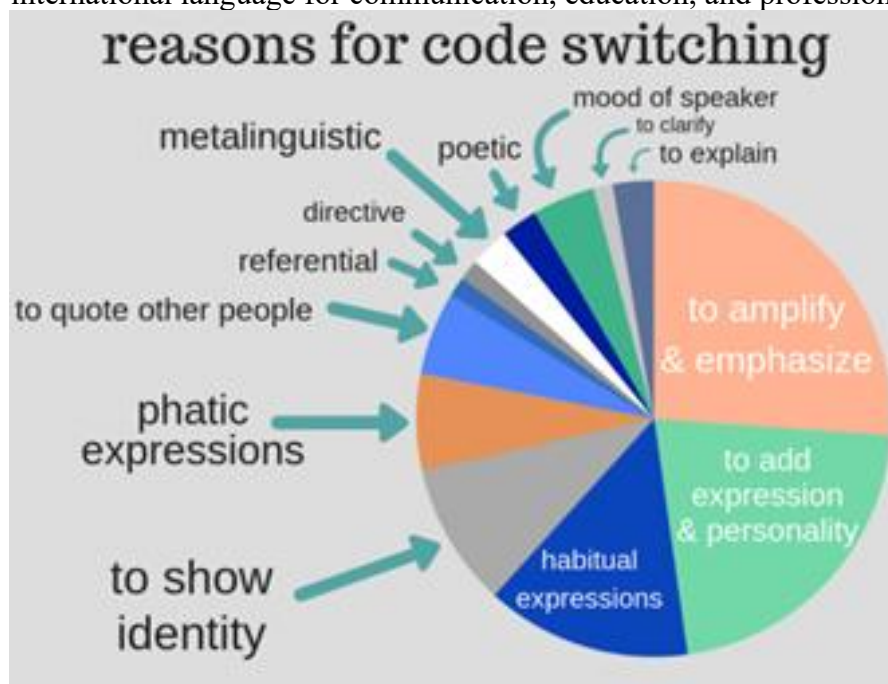


Figure 1. Reasons for code switching between English, Uzbek, and Russian languages

As a global lingua franca, it plays a vital role not only in higher education but also in everyday interactions that cross cultural and linguistic boundaries. In multilingual societies such as Uzbekistan, however, English is not taught in isolation. It is learned in classrooms where Uzbek, the national language, and Russian, a widely used regional language, continue to play important communicative functions. This coexistence of three languages creates a unique linguistic environment that shapes teaching and learning practices. Far from being random, this practice is usually purposeful and context-dependent. Teachers may switch from English to Uzbek or Russian to explain difficult concepts, manage classroom interaction, or ensure that all students understand the lesson. Students, in turn, may code-switch to seek clarification, express complex ideas, or reduce anxiety when they lack the appropriate vocabulary in English. In this way, code-switching emerges as both a communicative strategy and a pedagogical tool. The use of code-switching in language classrooms has sparked significant scholarly interest. On the one hand, it is argued that code-switching can enhance comprehension, scaffold learning, and validate learners' linguistic identities. It provides a bridge between existing knowledge and new language input, thereby making the learning process more accessible and inclusive. On the other hand, some researchers argue that excessive code-switching may slow down the acquisition of English, reduce opportunities for immersion, and create dependency on the mother tongue. The central

challenge for teachers, therefore, lies in finding the right balance between making lessons understandable and encouraging maximum use of English. Despite growing international research on code-switching, limited attention has been given to the specific interplay of English, Uzbek, and Russian in classroom contexts in Uzbekistan. This trilingual situation is particularly noteworthy because both Uzbek and Russian carry strong cultural, social, and educational significance, while English functions as a foreign language of global importance. Understanding the patterns of code-switching in this environment is crucial for developing teaching methods that are both effective and culturally responsive. The aim of this study is to explore the patterns, functions, and pedagogical implications of code-switching between English, Uzbek, and Russian in English language classrooms. The article seeks to identify the common types of code-switching, analyze the reasons behind its use by both teachers and students, and evaluate its benefits and limitations for the learning process. In addition, it proposes methodological recommendations for English language teachers, emphasizing the importance of purposeful and balanced code-switching strategies that enhance learning while maintaining English as the central medium of instruction.

Literature review. Research on code-switching has been widely conducted in the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and education, with a particular focus on its role in multilingual contexts. Early studies (e.g., Gumperz, 1982) described code-switching as a natural feature of bilingual and multilingual communication, emphasizing its function in shaping identity and signaling group membership. Later scholars, such as Myers-Scotton (1993), classified code-switching into different types — intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching — providing a theoretical framework for analyzing classroom discourse. These foundational works have laid the groundwork for subsequent research into the educational implications of code-switching. A growing body of research has examined the pedagogical benefits of code-switching in second and foreign language classrooms. For example, Ferguson (2003) and Cook (2001) argue that code-switching can serve as a scaffolding device, enabling teachers to explain difficult concepts more effectively and ensuring that learners maintain comprehension throughout the lesson. In contexts where students share the same mother tongue, strategic use of code-switching can facilitate vocabulary acquisition, grammar explanation, and classroom management. Similarly, Macaro (2005) highlights how judicious code-switching can build confidence among learners by validating their linguistic repertoire, thus lowering affective barriers in the classroom. On the other hand, some researchers caution against overuse of code-switching, warning that it may reduce opportunities for authentic target language practice. Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis emphasizes the importance of providing learners with rich and meaningful exposure to the target language. Excessive reliance on code-switching, therefore, could undermine immersion, slowing down the development of communicative competence. Scholars such as Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) recommend a balanced approach, where code-switching is used sparingly and purposefully, ensuring that the primary medium of instruction remains the target language. In the Central Asian context, relatively few studies have explored the dynamics of English language learning in classrooms where Uzbek, Russian, and English interact. However, existing research on multilingual education in post-Soviet countries (e.g., Pavlenko, 2008; Makarova, 2011) suggests that Russian continues to play a dominant role in academic and professional domains, while national languages are central to cultural and identity-related functions. English, as a global language, adds another dimension to this linguistic landscape. Studies from similar

multilingual regions indicate that code-switching can help learners connect global knowledge with local realities, thus making language learning more relevant and meaningful (Hornberger & Link, 2012). Taken together, the literature suggests that code-switching in English classrooms should not be viewed as either entirely positive or negative. Instead, it should be understood as a flexible strategy whose effectiveness depends on frequency, context, and purpose. While scholars agree on its potential benefits for comprehension, motivation, and inclusivity, they also stress the importance of ensuring that it does not replace authentic English exposure. This ongoing debate highlights the need for more context-specific studies, particularly in Uzbekistan, where the interplay of English, Uzbek, and Russian creates a distinctive trilingual educational setting.

Research methodology. The present study employs a qualitative and descriptive research design to explore the patterns of code-switching between English, Uzbek, and Russian in English language classrooms. This approach was chosen because code-switching is a complex sociolinguistic and pedagogical phenomenon that requires in-depth examination of naturally occurring classroom interactions rather than purely numerical data. By focusing on qualitative data, the study aims to capture the authentic use of languages, the motivations behind code-switching, and its impact on the teaching–learning process. The research was conducted in several English language classrooms at the university level in Uzbekistan, where Uzbek and Russian are commonly spoken alongside English. A purposive sampling method was applied to select participants who were directly engaged in multilingual classroom practices. The sample included both teachers and students from different academic years, allowing the researcher to observe a variety of perspectives and experiences. In total, data were collected from 5 English language instructors and 60 undergraduate students, representing a mix of linguistic backgrounds. To gather comprehensive data, the study employed multiple research instruments. Classroom observations were carried out over a period of eight weeks to record real instances of code-switching during lessons. An observation checklist was designed to categorize types of code-switching (intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching) and to note their frequency and context of use. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and students to explore their attitudes toward code-switching and the reasons behind its use. Finally, relevant lesson transcripts were analyzed using discourse analysis techniques to identify recurring patterns. For data analysis, a thematic coding approach was applied. Instances of code-switching were coded based on type, function, and pedagogical purpose. Teacher interviews were analyzed to reveal the strategies and intentions behind their language choices, while student interviews provided insights into how code-switching influenced their comprehension, motivation, and classroom participation. Triangulation of observation, interview, and transcript data enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings, ensuring that results were not based on a single source. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all teachers and students. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms instead of real names in transcripts and reports. The study also respected the institutional guidelines for research involving human subjects, ensuring that participants' rights and privacy were fully protected. This methodological framework provides a solid foundation for examining how code-switching functions in the trilingual classroom environment of Uzbekistan. By combining qualitative tools such as observation, interview, and discourse analysis, the study offers a holistic view of the

pedagogical and communicative dimensions of code-switching, laying the groundwork for meaningful interpretation of results in the following sections.

Method	Purpose	Advantages
Classroom Observation	To record authentic instances of code-switching during lessons	Provides real-time, naturalistic data; captures genuine teacher-student interaction
Semi-structured Interview	To explore teachers' and students' attitudes and reasons for code-switching	Allows flexibility; gives deeper insights into personal experiences and motivations
Lesson Transcript Analysis	To identify recurring patterns of code-switching in classroom discourse	Ensures systematic analysis; enables classification of code-switching types
Thematic Coding	To analyze data based on themes, types, and functions	Helps organize large amounts of qualitative data; increases reliability

The discussion highlights that code-switching in English language classrooms is not a random occurrence but a systematic and purposeful strategy. Teachers and students use English as the primary medium of instruction, while Uzbek and Russian serve supportive roles. The choice of switching depends on learners' needs, the complexity of the topic, and the sociolinguistic background of the class. Rather than hindering English acquisition, code-switching functions as a scaffold, helping learners bridge gaps in comprehension, reduce anxiety, and actively participate in classroom interaction. This underscores the importance of recognizing multilingualism as a pedagogical resource rather than a challenge.

Research discussion. The findings of this study provide meaningful insights into how code-switching between English, Uzbek, and Russian functions in English language classrooms. The results show that code-switching is not a random or unplanned occurrence but a purposeful pedagogical tool that teachers and students employ to make learning more effective. Rather than being seen as a weakness in English proficiency, code-switching emerges as a resource that enhances communication, facilitates comprehension, and supports classroom interaction.

One of the most prominent functions of code-switching is its pedagogical value. Teachers often shifted into Uzbek or Russian to explain difficult grammar rules, introduce new vocabulary, or clarify abstract concepts that were not easily understood in English. By doing so, they ensured that all students, regardless of their English proficiency level, could follow the lesson and remain engaged. For many learners, the use of their native language acted as a scaffold, enabling them to gradually build stronger English skills while relying on familiar linguistic resources. This suggests that code-switching plays a supportive role in the learning process rather than obstructing it. Classroom management was another area where code-switching was used strategically. Teachers frequently resorted to Uzbek or Russian to maintain discipline, deliver quick instructions, or regain students' attention. Such shifts into the students' native languages were often more effective than continuing in English because they carried greater authority and immediacy. Similarly, students themselves engaged in code-switching when interacting with their peers, asking questions, or negotiating meaning. This practice ensured that classroom communication flowed smoothly and that misunderstandings were quickly resolved.

The study also highlighted the emotional and affective dimensions of code-switching. Teachers sometimes used Uzbek or Russian to encourage students, reduce their anxiety, or create a more comfortable learning atmosphere. These moments of linguistic switching carried a sense of warmth and personal connection that was not always achievable in English. Students also relied on their native languages to express feelings such as confusion, excitement, or frustration, particularly when English expressions were insufficient. In this way, code-switching not only supported comprehension but also fostered positive relationships and emotional security in the classroom. Patterns of switching varied according to context. Intra-sentential switching, where a single Uzbek or Russian word was inserted into an English sentence, was common when teachers explained culturally specific terms or technical vocabulary. Inter-sentential switching, where full sentences alternated between English and another language, was often used when teachers repeated instructions, translated key points, or summarized content. While English remained the dominant instructional language, Uzbek and Russian complemented it in meaningful ways. The choice of which native language to use often depended on the linguistic background of the students, with Uzbek more frequent in homogeneous groups and Russian more common in mixed classrooms. Both teachers and students expressed largely positive attitudes toward code-switching. Teachers acknowledged that while teaching entirely in English might be the theoretical ideal, it was not always practical in multilingual classrooms. They considered code-switching a helpful tool for ensuring student understanding and engagement. Students, in turn, reported that code-switching increased their confidence and reduced the sense of pressure they sometimes felt in English-only settings. These attitudes suggest that code-switching is widely accepted as a natural and beneficial practice in the local educational context. Taken together, these findings have important implications for language policy and pedagogy. While English-only policies are often promoted as a way to accelerate language acquisition, this research indicates that such rigid approaches may not be effective in multilingual settings like Uzbekistan. Instead, teacher training programs should equip educators with strategies for using code-switching intentionally and strategically. In this way, code-switching can serve as a bridge that connects students' existing linguistic knowledge with the target language and enhances the overall effectiveness of instruction.

Conclusion. This study has demonstrated that code-switching between English, Uzbek, and Russian is a natural and purposeful practice in English language classrooms. Far from being a sign of linguistic weakness, it serves as a strategic tool that supports comprehension, facilitates classroom management, and enhances communication between teachers and students. The findings reveal that teachers employ code-switching to explain difficult concepts, provide translations, and maintain discipline, while students use it to negotiate meaning, seek clarification, and express emotions. In this way, code-switching contributes to both the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning. The analysis further shows that patterns of code-switching are shaped by sociolinguistic factors, such as students' language backgrounds, and by pedagogical needs during classroom interactions. Teachers and students alike perceive code-switching positively, acknowledging its role in reducing anxiety, fostering inclusion, and building confidence. These attitudes highlight the importance of recognizing multilingual realities rather than enforcing rigid "English-only" policies. The implications of the study suggest that educators should adopt a balanced approach that encourages English immersion while allowing space for strategic and intentional code-switching. Teacher training programs in

multilingual contexts should emphasize how to use code-switching effectively as a scaffold rather than a crutch. By doing so, teachers can harness the benefits of students' native languages to support their progress in English.

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