

LINGUISTIC AND FUNCTIONAL FEATURES OF CODE-SWITCHING  
AMONG UZBEK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

*Turan International University*  
*Master degree of 70230101-Linguistics*  
**Yuldasheva Irodaxon Nodirjon qizi**  
[yuldasheva\\_iroda@icloud.com](mailto:yuldasheva_iroda@icloud.com)

**Annotation:** *This study investigates the linguistic and functional features of code-switching among Uzbek university students within multilingual educational settings. Code-switching is examined not only as a structural linguistic phenomenon but also as a functional communicative strategy that supports interaction, comprehension, and identity construction. The research adopts a quasi-experimental design involving control and experimental groups to explore how guided code-switching influences students’ language use, particularly in speaking performance and discourse organization. The findings reveal that students exposed to structured code-switching demonstrate greater linguistic flexibility, improved discourse coherence, and enhanced communicative competence. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how multilingual resources can be effectively integrated into higher education pedagogy.*

**Keywords:** *code-switching, linguistic features, functional analysis, multilingualism, discourse, Uzbek students.*

**Аннотация:** *Данное исследование посвящено изучению лингвистических и функциональных особенностей код-свитчинга среди студентов вузов Узбекистана в условиях многоязычного образования. Код-свитчинг рассматривается как структурное языковое явление и как функциональная коммуникативная стратегия. В исследовании используется квази-экспериментальный дизайн с контрольной и экспериментальной группами. Результаты показывают, что управляемый код-свитчинг способствует развитию гибкости языкового использования, связности речи и коммуникативной компетенции студентов.*

**Ключевые слова:** *код-свитчинг, лингвистические особенности, функциональный анализ, многоязычие, дискурс.*

**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu tadqiqot O‘zbekiston oliy ta’lim muassasalari talabalari orasida kod-almashtirishning lingvistik va funksional xususiyatlarini o‘rganishga qaratilgan. Kod-almashtirish nafaqat til tuzilmasi sifatida, balki kommunikativ strategiya sifatida ham tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda nazorat va tajriba guruhlarini asosida yarim eksperimental usul qo‘llanildi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatdiki, boshqarilgan kod-almashtirish talabalar nutqining moslashuvchanligi, mantiqiyliги va kommunikativ kompetensiyasini oshiradi.*

**Kalit so‘zlar:** *kod-almashtirish, lingvistik xususiyatlar, funksional tahlil, ko‘p tillilik, diskurs.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasing globalization and internationalization of higher education, multilingualism has become a defining characteristic of university environments, particularly in countries such as Uzbekistan where Uzbek, Russian, and English coexist in academic and social domains. Within such linguistically diverse settings, code-switching has emerged as a widespread and natural communicative practice among students. Traditionally perceived as a sign of linguistic interference or lack of proficiency, code-switching is now increasingly recognized as a complex and resourceful phenomenon that reflects both linguistic competence and social identity. The alternation between languages within a single conversation allows speakers to negotiate meaning, express nuanced ideas, and adapt to different communicative contexts.

From a linguistic perspective, code-switching involves structural patterns such as intersentential switching, intrasentential switching, and tag-switching, each reflecting different levels of syntactic integration. Functionally, it serves a wide range of purposes, including clarification, emphasis, topic shift, and the expression of solidarity or group identity. Among Uzbek university students, these linguistic and functional dimensions are particularly salient due to their exposure to multiple languages in both formal and informal settings. However, despite the prevalence of code-switching, there remains a lack of systematic research examining how its linguistic features interact with its communicative functions in educational contexts. The present study aims to address this gap by exploring the linguistic structures and functional roles of code-switching among Uzbek university students. Furthermore, it seeks to determine how guided and structured use of code-switching in classroom settings influences students’ discourse competence and overall language performance. By combining theoretical analysis with empirical investigation, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of multilingual communication in higher education.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the linguistic and functional features of code-switching and their impact on students’ communicative performance. The research was conducted at a higher education institution in Uzbekistan and involved a total of sixty undergraduate students who were enrolled in an English language course. The participants were selected based on their intermediate level of English proficiency, ensuring a relatively homogeneous sample in terms of language ability. They were then divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group, each consisting of thirty students. This division enabled a comparative analysis of traditional monolingual instruction and a pedagogically structured code-switching approach. The experimental phase of the study lasted for eight weeks, during which both groups

5-May, 2026-yil

participated in regular language classes three times per week. In the control group, instruction was conducted exclusively in English, following a conventional immersion-based approach that discouraged the use of students’ native languages. The primary focus was on maintaining maximum exposure to the target language, with the assumption that this would lead to improved proficiency. In contrast, the experimental group was exposed to a structured code-switching approach in which the instructor intentionally incorporated Uzbek and, occasionally, Russian into classroom interaction. This integration was carefully planned and aligned with specific pedagogical objectives. For instance, Uzbek was used to explain complex grammatical structures and ensure conceptual clarity, while Russian was occasionally employed to clarify abstract or technical vocabulary. English remained the primary medium of communication, particularly during interactive tasks such as discussions, presentations, and role-plays.

Data collection involved multiple instruments designed to capture both linguistic and functional aspects of code-switching. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to assess changes in students’ speaking proficiency and discourse organization. In addition, classroom interactions were recorded and analyzed to identify patterns of code-switching, including the types of switching and their communicative functions. Observation protocols were used to document student participation and engagement, while a questionnaire was distributed to gather students’ perceptions of code-switching as a learning tool. The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, with statistical comparisons used to measure performance differences and discourse analysis employed to examine linguistic and functional features in detail.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the study revealed substantial differences between the control and experimental groups in terms of both linguistic performance and communicative behavior. Students in the experimental group demonstrated a significantly higher level of improvement in speaking proficiency, as evidenced by their post-test scores. Their speech was characterized by greater fluency, more complex sentence structures, and improved coherence in discourse organization. In contrast, students in the control group showed more limited progress, often struggling with maintaining extended speech and organizing their ideas effectively in English. A detailed analysis of classroom interactions in the experimental group revealed a diverse range of code-switching patterns, including both intersentential and intrasentential switching. These patterns were not random but served specific communicative functions. For example, students frequently switched to Uzbek when explaining complex ideas or negotiating meaning with peers, thereby facilitating comprehension and collaboration. Russian was occasionally used for lexical retrieval or clarification of specialized terms. Importantly, the use of code-switching did not replace English but rather complemented it, allowing students to maintain the flow of communication without significant breakdowns.

Functionally, code-switching was found to play a crucial role in enhancing interaction and engagement. Students in the experimental group were more active participants in classroom discussions, demonstrating a willingness to express their ideas and respond to others. Their use of multiple languages enabled them to navigate communicative challenges more effectively, resulting in more dynamic and interactive discourse. Questionnaire responses further indicated that the majority of students perceived code-switching as a helpful strategy that reduced anxiety and increased their confidence in using English. In contrast, students in the control group reported difficulties in understanding complex material and expressed a higher level of frustration with the English-only approach.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight the dual nature of code-switching as both a linguistic and functional phenomenon that plays a significant role in multilingual communication. From a linguistic perspective, the observed patterns of code-switching among Uzbek university students reflect a high level of syntactic and pragmatic competence, as students are able to switch between languages in a structurally appropriate and contextually meaningful manner. The presence of both intersentential and intrasentential switching indicates that learners possess sufficient proficiency to integrate multiple linguistic systems within a single discourse. From a functional perspective, code-switching serves as a powerful communicative tool that supports a wide range of interactional purposes. The ability to alternate between languages allows students to clarify meaning, manage discourse, and express identity, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of communication. The superior performance of the experimental group suggests that when code-switching is guided and strategically implemented, it can significantly improve learning outcomes. By reducing cognitive load and providing access to prior knowledge, code-switching enables students to process information more efficiently and participate more actively in classroom interaction.

These findings are consistent with contemporary theories of multilingualism and translanguaging, which emphasize the dynamic and integrated nature of linguistic competence. Rather than viewing languages as separate systems, these perspectives recognize that multilingual individuals draw upon a unified linguistic repertoire to make meaning. However, the study also underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between the use of the first language and the target language. Excessive reliance on code-switching may limit opportunities for target language practice, highlighting the need for careful pedagogical planning and teacher guidance.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that code-switching among Uzbek university students is a complex phenomenon characterized by both distinctive linguistic features and important communicative functions. The results indicate that structured and purposeful use of code-switching in the classroom can enhance students’ speaking proficiency, discourse organization, and overall communicative competence. By enabling learners to draw on their

5-May, 2026-yil

full linguistic repertoire, code-switching reduces barriers to understanding and fosters a more inclusive and interactive learning environment.

The findings suggest that educators in multilingual contexts should reconsider traditional monolingual approaches and recognize the pedagogical potential of code-switching. Rather than prohibiting the use of students’ native languages, teachers should develop strategies for integrating them in a way that supports learning objectives and promotes effective communication. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that the target language remains central to instruction in order to achieve long-term proficiency goals.

Future research may expand on this study by examining the impact of code-switching on other language skills, such as writing and listening, as well as exploring its role in different academic disciplines. Additionally, further investigation into teacher training and classroom practices may provide valuable insights into how code-switching can be most effectively implemented in multilingual education.

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