

THE ROLE OF CODE-SWITCHING IN EXPRESSING CULTURAL IDENTITY AMONG UZBEK EFL LEARNERS

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Annotation

This study examines code-switching among Uzbek EFL learners, especially in university context, using classroom observation. It shows that students switch between three languages - Uzbek, Russian and English naturally during interactions due to difficulties in expressing their thought, emotions, peer interaction with informal setting and academic tasks. Each language serves a different function related to identity and context. Overall, code-switching supports both interaction and identity building in multilingual EFL classrooms.

Keywords

Code-switching, multilingualism, Uzbek EFL learners, language identity, cultural belonging and solidarity, classroom interaction, Uzbek, Russian, English.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganuvchi o'zbek talabalar orasida, ayniqsa universitet kontekstida, kod almashinuvi ya'ni bir gapda ikki va undan ortiq tillarni ishlatishni, tanlab olingan gurux yordamida ko'rib chiqadi. Bu shuni ko'rsatadiki, o'quvchilar o'z fikrlarini, his-tuyg'ularini ifoda etishdagi qiyinchiliklar, norasmiy sharoitda tengdoshlari bilan muloqot qilish va akademik vazifalarni bajarishda qiyinchiliklar tufayli o'zaro muloqot jarayonida tabiiy ravishda uchta til - o'zbek, rus va ingliz tillarini almashtiradilar. Har bir til o'ziga xoslik va kontekst bilan bog'liq bo'lgan har xil funktsiyani bajaradi. Umuman olganda, kodni almashtirish ko'p tilli EFL sinflarida o'zaro ta'sir va identifikatsiyani shakllantirishni qo'llab-quvvatlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar

Kod almashtirish, ko'p tillilik, O'zbek tilini o'rganuvchilar, til identifikatori, madaniy mansublik va mustahkamlik, sinfdagi o'zaro ta'sir, O'zbek tili, Rus tili, Ingliz tili.

Аннотация

В этом исследовании изучается переключение кода среди узбекских учащихся EFL, особенно в университетском контексте, с использованием наблюдения в классе. Показано, что учащиеся естественным образом переключаются между тремя языками - узбекским, русским и английским во время взаимодействия из-за трудностей в выражении своих мыслей, эмоций, взаимодействия со сверстниками в неформальной обстановке и выполнения академических задач. Каждый язык выполняет разные функции, связанные с идентичностью и контекстом. В целом, переключение кода поддерживает как взаимодействие, так и построение идентичности в многоязычных классах EFL.

Ключевые слова

переключение кода, многоязычие, узбекские учащиеся EFL, языковая идентичность, культурная принадлежность и солидарность, взаимодействие в классе, узбекский, русский, английский.

Introduction.

Code switching is “using the words and structures from more than one language or linguistic variety altering between two languages by the same speaker within the same conversation or speech situation” according to Callahan [2,p.5]. Code-switching may occur between sentences or within single sentence and it may also include single words, phrases or longer chunks of the speech. Also it should not be considered as random or deficient linguistic behavior, since it is the way of communicative strategy used mostly by bilingual, multilingual speakers to achieve specific social and pragmatic goals. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context classrooms, code-switching is used in terms of pedagogical functions as clarifying the meaning of the word or phrase, delivering the comprehension or managing classroom discourse. Also there has been researches which shows the role of code-switching in the construction of identity. As mentioned by Deumert this pedagogical shift is crucial in an EFL setting where English exposure is scarce, and classroom interaction is the only source of input [4,p.274].

This article will address code-switching in the context of Uzbekistan that provides rich context for studying this phenomenon, due to its multilingual environment. Since code-switching is using elements from different languages within a conversation and is ubiquitous among multilingual people as Uzbek nation as mentioned by Deumert [4,p.268]. Even though, Uzbek is the state language of the country, Russian and English also coexists as the most used

languages by Uzbek people. Russian functions as a lingua franca in many urban, academic and professional settings, while English has become important as a global language associated with education and international communication. As a result, many Uzbek EFL learners have to use three languages (Uzbek, Russian and English) in their daily lives. But in this context, choosing the language is not only about proficiency, but also about social position (status), cultural background and communicative purpose. Switching between these three languages signal identity, group belonging and formality levels.

Language is not only a means of communication, but also it is a way of expressing ones, who they are, how they relate to other and showing identity. Code-switching allow speakers to show different aspects of their identity and connect with specific social or cultural groups. It can also create a sense of solidarity and shared understanding which almost has the same concept of power which requires asymmetrical relationship between entities, having more of something, which is important as money, status, influence and so on as mentioned by Wardhaugh [8, p32]. furthermore, learners may also switch the languages to feel more comfortable, especially when it is difficult to express complex ideas or feelings in their mother tongue or foreign languages. With this study, the role of code-switching in expressing cultural identity among Uzbek EFL learners will be examined, not only focusing on its practical use (such as, helping students understand lesson or explaining any grammar rule via code-switching), but also how it's related to identity, emotional comfort and sense of belonging in Uzbek context with the focus on switching between Uzbek, Russian and English.

Materials and methods.

In this study observational approach used to explore how Uzbek EFL context students naturally use code-switching in authentic interactions. This paper does not really depend on surveys or questionnaires, but focuses on natural occurrence of the spoken information. As the subjects of this research, 8 Uzbek students were chosen from a university setting whose language and cultural backgrounds are different, including bi-ethnic Uzbek-Russian individuals. All of them are multilingual speakers who constantly use Uzbek, Russian and English in their studies and daily communications. Data is collected through natural classroom observation as audio recordings of group discussions and informal peer conversations during English lesson, as the main source of the information for this article. The length of each recording lasts approximately 20-30 minutes and 2-3 classes are observed totally. After collecting all the recording, they are transcribed for analyzing them. In order to identify why and when code-switching happened in

interaction, the collected information was analyzed with thematic discourse analysis. That involved identifying instant switches between Uzbek, Russian and English and classifying the types of switches such as single words, phrases or full sentences. Also consequences of switching was also grouped, for instance if they switched the language to express their feelings (emotional comfort), lack of vocabulary, topic or classroom context, or solidarity with their peers. Also via this analysis, I tried to pay attention to how language choice reflected the cultural identity and group belonging. Participants were informed about recording but not specific focus of the study before recording begins in order to keep the authenticity of the research and their interactions. In order to keep privacy, only pseudonyms are used in transcript and reports.

Data analysis and discussions

The classroom interaction analysis shows that Uzbek EFL learners frequently use code-switching between Uzbek, Russian and English. The results of the classroom observation are presented in terms of code-switching patterns, situational triggers and identity-related usage of the language.

Patterns of code-switching - three main patterns of code switching were observed in the recordings, including Uzbek-Russian switching, Uzbek-English switching and mixing all three languages. For example:

Uzbek-Russian pattern: Switching between Uzbek and Russian within interaction, example from recordings: **E ti chyo**, yozmaysanmi?

Uzbek-English pattern: switching between Uzbek and English, examples from recording: **Teacher**, xullas, bu **taskga** tushunmadim.

Trilingual mixing: using all three languages in one interaction, example from recordings: **Menimcha, eto voobshe** easy.

In terms of these examples from classroom interaction recordings, Uzbek-English switching happened frequently during task-based discussions or addressing teacher with problems related to comprehension, while Uzbek-Russian switch appeared more often in informal communication among students. When it comes to trilingual mixing, it occurred less frequently rather than Uzbek-Russian and Uzbek-English but was present in spontaneous speech and in slang among Generation Z students.

Situational Triggers of Code-Switching - Code-switching occurred in specific situations while interaction. The most common triggers were difficulty in English, emotional expression, peer interaction, and classroom context. Due to English difficulties, code-switching was observed as the main trigger. Emotional expression

occurred in peer-related interactions in Uzbek, while classroom-related switching included both Uzbek and Russian. Examples from recordings:

Difficulty in English: It is when students' vocabulary or fluency was not enough to express themselves: Teacher, what is the word... **haligi... mol-mulk** in English?

Emotional expression: Expressing feelings or reactions: That is crazy, **voobshe** daxshat.

Peer bonding: Informal interaction with classmates: Hey brooo, **Chyo tam?**

Academic context: Explaining or discussing the tasks: **What should we do now? Textni o'qisak**, that's it?

Identity markers in language choice

Throughout the sessions which were recorded, the data showed the different languages which were used to reflect identity. Uzbek was commonly used in emotionally expressive and culturally related aspects. Russian appeared more often in casual and humorous interactions, while English was mainly used for academic tasks and formal discussions. Below you can check the examples from recordings:

Uzbek : cultural identity and familiarity: Tuyani dumi yerga tegganda is uzbek maqol, it is in english when pigs fly.

Russian: Informal communication filled with generation z and alpha slang: Bu mashq **dushnila menya, a ti uzhe vse, napisala?**

English: Academic and formal context: From my perspective, it could have been either...

These findings show that Uzbek EFL learners use different types of code-switching relying on the situation. It occurs most often during struggling with English, expressing their feelings, and informal peer conversations. In addition, each language occurs to be related to different interactive functions in classroom communication.

The results of this study show that code-switching among Uzbek EFL context learners is meaningful rather than random behaviour. According to Nuessel's words "Contrary to popular belief, code switching is not a bastardized reconfiguration of two separate languages as an uninformed public may believe" [7,p.129]. It plays a crucial role in expressing identity, emotions, keeping comfort and reflecting the multilingual context of Uzbekistan. Especially learners who switch Uzbek, Russian, and English to present who they are, and that supports the idea of code-switching as the form of identity performers as mentioned by Min [6,p.21]. Also students switched the languages from English to Uzbek or Russian when they struggled to remember the word or express their thoughts, which

proves the previous research showing that code-switching helps learners manage their limited vocabulary and proficiency instead of avoiding the conversation gaps which was highlighted by Gahramanova [5,p.11]. I also remember when I was practicing speaking in Russian, whenever I could not remember the word I used to switch automatically to English if my partner knew English or Uzbek when I could not find proper word in both Russian and English, which can be evidence for studies made by Azimova and Surmanov, who mentioned “code-switching serves multiple pragmatic functions, including identity expression, emphasis, clarification, politeness, and emotional expression” [1,p.77]. So that code-switching is not just a random phenomenon to show off but it should be seen as one of the most genius way of avoiding “awkward pause” that supports the communicative competence rather than a weakness. The use of Russian in informal and peer communications also reflects the history, post-Soviet multilingual reality, where Russian still has influences in everyday language use and social identity as defined by Chernyavskaya and Zharkynbekova [3,p.13]. In contrast, English is mostly used in academic contexts and usually seen as the access to global communication and education.

Conclusion.

With this paper, I tried to examine how Uzbek EFL learners, more specifically university students, use code-switching between three languages - Uzbek, Russian and English, is a natural and purposeful phenomenon. It helps students manage the difficulty in expressing emotions, building connections with other, while showing and building cultural identity. Each language serves different role, such as Uzbek supports cultural belonging and daily conversations, while Russian also reflects everyday social interactions between peers, and English, on the other hand, is related to professionalism with more focus on academic and global communication. Overall, the study shows the code-switching as useful recourse in multilingual settings as university classrooms.

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