

CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING PRACTICES AMONG UZBEK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Introduction

In multilingual societies, the use of more than one language in communication has become a natural and dynamic phenomenon. Uzbekistan, with its rich linguistic landscape — where Uzbek, Russian, and English frequently interact — is no exception. Among university students, particularly those studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English for Specific Purposes (ESP), **code-switching** and **code-mixing** are increasingly observed both inside and outside the classroom.

Code-switching refers to the alternate use of two or more languages within a single conversation or sentence. It can be conscious and strategic, serving functions such as emphasis, clarification, or social alignment. In contrast, **code-mixing** involves the insertion of single words or short phrases from one language into the grammatical structure of another, often occurring subconsciously and reflecting habitual bilingual behavior.

These practices are not merely random or incorrect language use. Instead, they reflect students' adaptive communication strategies in multilingual contexts. However, the frequent use of code-switching and code-mixing in academic environments raises important pedagogical questions: Do these practices support or hinder language acquisition? How do they affect grammar development, vocabulary retention, and classroom interaction?

This study explores the patterns and functions of code-switching and code-mixing among Uzbek university students, aiming to understand their linguistic behaviors in both academic and informal settings. By analyzing their attitudes, frequency of use, and situational contexts, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for language educators and curriculum designers working in multilingual EFL/ESP environments.

The analysis of classroom observations, interviews, and speech samples reveals that Uzbek university students engage in code-switching and code-mixing in both academic and informal settings. The contexts in which these language practices occur differ in terms of purpose, frequency, and emotional tone.

In formal learning environments, particularly during English or ESP classes, students tend to switch between languages for pedagogical and cognitive reasons. These include:

- Clarification of meaning: Students often switch to Uzbek or Russian to explain difficult English terms or grammar points to peers.
- Managing group tasks: In collaborative activities, students mix languages to maintain group cohesion and efficiency.
- Responding to teacher prompts: While attempting to speak in English, students may insert native language words to avoid silence or to express a term they do not recall in English.

For example, one observed student said: "We can say that... bu yerda passive structure ishlatamiz, right?"

This sentence reflects a spontaneous blend of academic English with Uzbek, demonstrating practical communication strategies rather than linguistic failure.

Outside the classroom, students use code-switching and mixing as a social tool. The practices serve to:

- Strengthen peer relationships through humorous or relaxed language;
- Express identity and modernity, especially in digital communication;
- Compensate for vocabulary gaps while maintaining the flow of speech.
- A popular example from Telegram chat included:
- "I need to study tonight, chunki test ertaga bo'ladi."

This sentence shows the fluid integration of English and Uzbek, driven more by habit and peer culture than academic necessity.

This thesis has explored the patterns and functions of code-switching and code-mixing among Uzbek university students, particularly those studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The findings demonstrate that students regularly alternate between English, Uzbek, and Russian in both academic and informal settings.

In academic contexts, such language practices are often driven by a need for clarity, efficiency, or peer support, especially when dealing with complex grammar structures or technical vocabulary. In informal settings, code-mixing is more spontaneous and serves social, emotional, and identity-related purposes.

Rather than viewing these practices as obstacles to language acquisition, this study argues that code-switching and code-mixing are valuable communicative strategies that reflect the natural multilingual reality of students. When used strategically, they can enhance comprehension, reduce anxiety, and foster engagement in ESP classrooms.

Educators should, therefore, adopt a more flexible and informed approach toward language alternation, recognizing its potential to support—not hinder—second language development. Further research may explore how teachers can integrate these patterns into teaching methodologies to enhance grammatical accuracy and communicative competence.

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