



PATTERNS AND COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS OF CODE-SWITCHING IN UZBEK-RUSSIAN BILINGUAL SPEECH

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 10 th May 2025 Accepted: 8 th June 2025	<p>This study explores the structural and functional dimensions of code-switching in Uzbek-Russian bilingual speech, focusing on informal spoken interactions as a rich site of linguistic and sociocultural meaning-making. Situated within the frameworks of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and bilingualism studies, the research draws on Poplack's structural typology and functional models proposed by Gumperz, Appel and Muysken. The analysis is based on a corpus of naturally occurring utterances from urban Uzbek-Russian bilinguals, revealing code-switching as a patterned and purposeful practice rather than a random or deficient use of language. Findings show that intra-sentential switching is the most frequent type, particularly among younger and more proficient bilinguals, allowing for fluid integration of lexical and syntactic elements from both languages. Inter-sentential switching often serves rhetorical and discursive functions such as emphasis or thematic boundary marking, while tag-switching is employed to facilitate pragmatic alignment, soften speech acts, or manage interpersonal dynamics. Ultimately, the paper argues that code-switching in the Uzbek-Russian context reflects broader sociolinguistic realities shaped by post-Soviet language ideologies, educational backgrounds, and evolving identity formations. Far from being a linguistic anomaly, it is a sophisticated strategy through which speakers negotiate meaning, assert belonging, and navigate multiple social registers. Code-switching thus emerges as a central practice in the bilingual repertoire of Uzbek-Russian speakers, illustrating the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and identity.</p>

Keywords: code-switching; Uzbek-Russian bilingualism; intra-sentential switching; language alternation; post-Soviet discourse; tag-switching; bilingual competence; pragmatic function

INTRODUCTION

In today's multilingual societies, the phenomenon of code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within a single conversation, utterance, or sentence, has become a central object of study in sociolinguistics. It reflects not only linguistic flexibility but also complex patterns of identity construction, pragmatic intention, and social alignment. Code-switching is especially prevalent in communities where two or more languages coexist in everyday life, and speakers regularly draw from multiple linguistic repertoires to navigate different social contexts. In post-Soviet Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, bilingualism between Uzbek and Russian is a linguistic norm rather than an exception. Moreover, "Uzbekistan, a country with a rich cultural heritage and a rapidly

globalizing economy, provides a compelling case study for examining the role of linguistic modeling in intercultural communication." [1; 250p.] Following decades of Russian linguistic dominance under Soviet rule, Russian continues to function as a language of prestige, urban life, and certain professional domains, while Uzbek has gained new symbolic and institutional importance as the national language. As a result, many Uzbeks, especially in urban areas, demonstrate fluent bilingual competence and frequently switch between the two languages, both consciously and subconsciously.

M. S. Nakamura conducted an extensive discourse analysis of Uzbek-Russian code-switching and introduced the idea of a "triglossic" linguistic model, that



recognizes three linguistic varieties: 1. *Standard Uzbek* (H variety for national and cultural domains); 2. *Standard Russian* (H variety for certain professional and international domains); 3. *Mixed Uzbek-Russian* (L variety for informal, everyday communication). [4; 134p.] This triglossic model reflects the dynamic interplay between language, social role, and speaker identity. While previous studies have emphasized the structural and sociopolitical aspects of bilingualism in Uzbekistan, informal spoken interactions remain a particularly rich site for observing code-switching in its most dynamic and expressive forms. In such contexts, speakers frequently alternate between languages to mark shifts in tone, to emphasize a point, or to index aspects of personal or group identity. The use of intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching often corresponds with communicative needs such as clarification, emotional intensification, or social alignment. These bilingual practices, especially in casual digital and face-to-face environments, illustrate how linguistic repertoires are mobilized in response to shifting social roles, emotional states, and cultural affiliations. In multilingual post-Soviet societies such as Uzbekistan, code-switching thus reflects not only pragmatic efficiency but also broader patterns of identity negotiation, discursive creativity, and linguistic adaptation.

MAIN PART

The phenomenon of code-switching has been the subject of extensive linguistic inquiry since the 1970s, situated at the intersection of syntax, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis. At its core, code-switching refers to the alternation between two or more languages or dialects within a single interaction, ranging from full sentences in different languages to individual lexical insertions. Early foundational work by John Gumperz framed code-switching as a conversational code-switching as a juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. [7; 137p.] Rather than viewing code-switching as a linguistic irregularity, Gumperz emphasized its socially meaningful and structured nature.

Later theorists expanded the functional taxonomy of code-switching. Appel and Muysken (1987) identified six core functions: referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic. These functions illustrate how speakers use multiple codes not only to fill lexical gaps or signal topic boundaries but also to express emotions, mark group membership, or create rhetorical

effect. different languages may fulfil different functions in the lives of bilingual speakers, and in bilingual conversations a choke for one particular language may illustrate the primary functions appealed to at that moment. [2; 30p.] Myers-Scotton contributed the Markedness Model, positing that speakers switch codes to signal shifts in power, solidarity, or identity, often making "marked" language choices to create particular social meanings. In *Social Motivations*, Myers-Scotton defines codeswitching as 'the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded language (or languages) in utterances of a matrix language during the same conversation. [3; 388p.] In this view, the act of switching itself becomes a communicative strategy, not merely a grammatical one.

Code-switching can also be classified structurally. According to Poplack, code-switching is the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent. [6; 583p.] Poplack's typology distinguishes three primary types: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching and tag-switching. Inter-sentential switching, where the speaker alternates between languages at sentence boundaries. Intra-sentential switching, which occurs within a single sentence or clause. Moreover, tag-switching, involving the insertion of fixed expressions, interjections, or discourse markers from another language, e.g., *you know, da, kak skazat'*. This structural framework is widely used in both descriptive and applied linguistic research and will be adopted in this study to categorize the observed switching patterns.

In the context of post-Soviet bilingualism, especially in Uzbekistan, code-switching is not only frequent but often motivated by sociohistorical and cultural factors. Russian remains associated with formal education, professionalism, and cosmopolitanism, while Uzbek carries symbolic weight as the national language and is tied to cultural authenticity. As M. S. Nakamura proposes the term "post-Soviet linguistic hybridization" to describe the unique forms of language mixing, which goes beyond code-switching to encompass the creation of new linguistic forms that draw on both Uzbek and Russian resources, reflecting the hybrid cultural identities of many speakers. [4; 134p.]

Importantly, code-switching in such environments is not merely a linguistic behavior, but a form of identity work. As Pavlenko and Blackledge argue, multilingual speakers use their language choices to perform, negotiate, and sometimes resist specific social identities. Choosing the unmarked code implies alignment with the expected norms and reinforces the existing social structure of the speech event.



Conversely, a marked code-switch functions as a strategic move, signaling an intent to redefine or challenge the distribution of rights and obligations. [5; 8p.] In informal settings, such as digital conversations, street interviews, or peer interactions, language becomes a medium through which speakers construct affiliations, express emotion, and assert belonging or distance. The study draws on these theoretical frameworks to analyze a small corpus of Uzbek-Russian and English-Russian bilingual speech. By examining the types of code-switching employed and the functions they serve, the analysis aims to illuminate how bilingual speakers in Uzbekistan and related contexts mobilize their linguistic repertoires in meaningful and socially significant ways.

The collected data reveal that Uzbek-Russian bilinguals engage in various types of code-switching that serve distinct communicative functions. This section examines selected examples and classifies them according to the typology of code-switching—inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching, alongside their pragmatic functions such as quotation, emphasis, identity marking, and gap-filling.

Inter-sentential code-switching, which occurs at clause or sentence boundaries, was particularly prevalent in formal or semi-formal speech contexts such as classroom discussions or public interactions. For instance: "*Bugun juda qiziqarli mavzuni muhokama qilamiz. Потому что это касается всех нас.*" - "Today we will discuss a very interesting topic. Because it concerns all of us." Here, the speaker switches from Uzbek to Russian between two independent clauses. The Russian sentence functions as emphasis, underlining the universal relevance of the topic with a language that may carry more authoritative or formal connotation in the bilingual speaker's sociolinguistic environment.

Intra-sentential switching, where elements from both languages appear within the same clause or sentence, was the most frequent type observed, especially in casual peer-to-peer conversations. An example is: "*Men u yerga boraman, no ya ne znayu, vo skolko nachnyetsa.*" - "I will go there, but I don't know what time it starts." The sentence combines Uzbek and Russian grammatical structures fluidly, revealing a high degree of bilingual competence. The switch occurs mid-sentence, with the Russian part filling a lexical gap, a common pattern when speakers find it easier or more precise to express a concept in the second language. The phrase "*во сколько начнётся*" is a fixed expression in Russian, and its use here also demonstrates economy of expression.

Tag-switching involves inserting tags or discourse markers from one language into an utterance in another language. In this dataset, such switching often served discourse management or solidarity functions, as in: "*U hammasini to'g'ri qildi, da?*" - "He did everything right, didn't he?" The Russian tag "*da*", meaning "right?" or "yes?", is inserted into an otherwise fully Uzbek sentence. This form of switching typically serves conversational alignment, inviting agreement or confirmation from the interlocutor. Tags like "*nu*," "*da*," and "*slushay*" were frequent and functioned as pragmatic markers to manage turn-taking or reinforce group identity.

Beyond structural typology, the functions of code-switching reveal deeper socio-pragmatic motivations. The subsequent analysis draws on authentic speech examples to illustrate the functional and structural diversity of code-switching in bilingual interaction.

1. *Quotation*, when speakers often switched to Russian when quoting teachers, media, or official discourse: "*U menga aytdi: 'Надо быть ответственным.'*" - "He told me: 'You have to be responsible.'"
2. *Identity construction* or the situations when speakers used Russian to mark affiliation with urban or educated identity, or switched to Uzbek to express intimacy or local belonging: "*Biz o'zimizniki gaplashyapmiz, no kogda ofitsialno, luchshe na russkom.*" - "We're talking among our own, but when it's official, better in Russian."
3. *Lexical demand*, i.e. when certain domains, especially technological or academic vocabulary, triggered lexical insertions from Russian: "*Bu essay uchun template kerak.*" - "We need a template for the essay." Here, the word "*template*", likely perceived as more precise or domain-appropriate in Russian or English, fills a lexical gap in the speaker's Uzbek mental lexicon.

Therefore, patterns suggest that intra-sentential code-switching is more common among younger, urban bilinguals who are more fluent and flexible in both languages. In contrast, older speakers or those with lower Russian proficiency preferred inter-sentential switching, likely due to lower grammatical control in Russian. Furthermore, topic and setting significantly influenced code-switching behavior: Russian was dominant in academic, professional, or institutional discourse, while Uzbek was preferred in familial, intimate, or emotional contexts.



CONCLUSION

The present analysis of Uzbek-Russian bilingual speech confirms that code-switching operates according to both structural and functional regularities. The data reveal that intra-sentential switching is the most pervasive type, reflecting a high level of bilingual integration where speakers fluidly combine elements from both linguistic systems within a single utterance. This form of switching highlights the internalized grammatical competence and cognitive flexibility of bilingual speakers who navigate two linguistic repertoires simultaneously. Inter-sentential switching, while less frequent, serves distinct discursive purposes, such as emphasizing contrast, introducing new ideas, or shifting tone. Tag-switching, by contrast, performs a mainly pragmatic function, managing conversational flow, signaling solidarity, or softening assertions. These structural forms align with the sociolinguistic functions observed in the data, which include quotation, emphasis, identity expression, and lexical gap-filling. From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the interactional model of code-switching, wherein language choice is shaped by both linguistic competence and socio-pragmatic considerations. Language use among Uzbek-Russian bilinguals reflects a dynamic interplay between communicative intent, contextual appropriateness, and identity positioning. The act of switching codes is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a socially embedded strategy for negotiating meaning, roles, and relationships. Furthermore, code-switching emerges as a marker of hybrid identity. The choice to switch into Russian often corresponds with domains associated with education, authority, or formality, while Uzbek remains central in intimate, emotional, or culturally grounded exchanges. This distribution underscores the symbolic value of each language and the speaker's capacity to shift frames in real time. In this sense, code-switching is both a reflection of bilingual competence and a performative act that enacts identity, belonging, and social alignment. In conclusion, the study of code-switching in Uzbek-Russian bilingual speech offers important insights into how bilingual individuals mobilize language as a resource for meaning-making and self-representation. Far from being a sign of linguistic interference, code-switching is a sophisticated communicative practice that embodies the complexities of bilingual experience.

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