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PRAGMATIC AND INSTRUCTIONAL FUNCTIONS OF CODE-SWITCHING IN UZBEK-ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

Khabibullaeva Dilshoda
dilshodakobilovna1996@gmail.com
+99899 077-39-96
Independent researcher

Abstract

The study examines how code-switching functions in Uzbek-English classrooms, focusing on its pragmatic and instructional purposes. Using classroom observation and transcript analysis, the research highlights how code-switching aids comprehension, interaction, and language growth. Results suggest that when used deliberately, code-switching enhances teaching effectiveness and supports learning outcomes. The findings provide practical implications for English language teachers in Uzbekistan.

KEYWORDS: Code-switching, communicative bridge, pragmatic function, instructional function, classroom communication.

1. Introduction

In Uzbekistan, the demand for effective English language instruction has grown rapidly due to educational reforms, internationalization, and the increasing importance of English in academic and professional life. As English becomes central to the national curriculum, teachers face the challenge of delivering instruction that is both comprehensible and engaging for learners whose first language is Uzbek. One strategy commonly used to address this challenge is code-switching—the intentional alternation between English and Uzbek during classroom interaction.

The relevance of this issue reflects the realities of multilingual societies, where teachers must promote English proficiency while ensuring classroom communication and understanding. In such contexts, code-switching functions not only as a communicative bridge but also as a pedagogical resource that supports comprehension, interaction, and language development.

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2.   Literature review

Scholars such as Sert (2005) and Ferguson (2003) have identified key instructional functions of code-switching, including topic shifts, affective support, translation, and classroom management. While international studies have recognized its usefulness, research in Uzbekistan remains limited. Existing works (e.g., Murodova, 2024; Saydazimova & Rustamov, 2025) highlight the potential of code-switching but are often based on general observations.

This study contributes to the field by examining real classroom transcripts to identify the practical functions of code-switching in English language teaching. By focusing on authentic classroom data, it provides concrete insights into how teachers strategically alternate between languages, and offers guidance on how code-switching can be used more effectively in Uzbekistan classrooms.

3. Methodology

This study is based on a 45-minute English lesson recorded in an Uzbek secondary school with 11th-grade students at an intermediate proficiency level. The class was taught by an experienced EFL instructor using a communicative approach, with occasional Uzbek for instructional purposes. The session was audio-recorded with consent and later transcribed. Instances of code-switching were extracted from the teacher's discourse, and a coding scheme was applied to identify their pragmatic and instructional functions.

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to examine the pragmatic and instructional functions of code-switching in an Uzbek EFL classroom. A single 45-minute lesson was observed, audio-recorded, and transcribed for analysis. Using qualitative content analysis, instances of code-switching in the teacher's speech were coded based on frameworks from Sert (2005) and Ferguson (2003), with adaptations to the local context. To ensure reliability, the transcript was reviewed multiple times.

3.   Findings

The classroom transcript revealed several instances of teacher code-switching, serving both communicative and instructional purposes. These functions supported comprehension, maintained interaction, and facilitated the teaching–learning

process. The findings are consistent with earlier research (e.g., Sert, 2005; Ferguson, 2003), which emphasizes that strategic code-switching can enhance classroom communication and learning outcomes.

3.1. Main functions identified

The analysis revealed that code-switching in English–Uzbek classrooms serves two broad categories of functions: instructional and pragmatic. Each category includes several sub-functions that contribute to teaching effectiveness and student engagement.

Instructional Functions

• Enhancing students' understanding: Teachers switch to Uzbek to simplify explanations and ensure that learners fully grasp complex concepts.

• Asking a question: Teachers use Uzbek to pose questions, allowing all students to engage actively, regardless of their English proficiency.

• Checking understanding: Teachers confirm whether learners have comprehended material or instructions by briefly switching to Uzbek.

• Clarification: Code-switching is employed to clarify difficult terms, ideas, or instructions when confusion arises.

• Reiteration: Important information is repeated in Uzbek to reinforce comprehension and aid retention.

• Making inferences: Teachers encourage students to connect ideas or make predictions by providing prompts in Uzbek.

• Vocabulary development: New words are introduced with Uzbek equivalents, strengthening students' retention and comprehension of vocabulary.

• Recalling or memorizing: Teachers encourage students to recall prior knowledge by strategically switching into Uzbek.

Pragmatic Functions

•Emphasizing: Key ideas are highlighted through code-switching, ensuring learners recognize their significance.

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- Classroom discussion: Students feel more comfortable contributing ideas in Uzbek, which encourages richer discussions.
- Managing the class: Teachers rely on Uzbek for classroom organization, discipline, and giving clear instructions.
- Giving feedback: Feedback is sometimes provided in Uzbek to make it more direct, understandable, and supportive.
- Entertainment: Code-switching introduces humor, cultural references, and warmth, making the learning environment more engaging and enjoyable.

The analysis revealed that code-switching helps clarify difficult concepts, manage interaction, and foster rapport, thereby enhancing student comprehension and engagement (Khabibullaeva, 2025).

The findings confirm that, when used strategically, code-switching is an effective pedagogical tool in bilingual settings. Drawing on students' L1 allows teachers to scaffold learning and create a more inclusive classroom environment. At the same time, the study highlights the need for moderation, since overuse may reduce learners' exposure to English and slow L2 development.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, code-switching should be recognized as a purposeful teaching resource rather than a weakness. Ongoing teacher training and further research are needed to refine its application and evaluate its long-term impact on language acquisition in multilingual contexts like Uzbekistan.

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