



ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING IN THE SPEECH OF THE DIGITAL GENERATION: THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: *The rapid expansion of digital technologies and global communication has significantly influenced the linguistic behavior of young people. One of the most noticeable phenomena is the increasing use of English elements in everyday speech through code-switching practices. This article examines the characteristics, functions, and sociolinguistic factors of English code-switching in the speech of university students as representatives of the digital generation. The study aims to identify the most common patterns of code-switching and explore the motivations behind the incorporation of English lexical units into native-language discourse. The research employed qualitative and quantitative methods, including questionnaires and observations conducted among university students. The findings indicate that English code-switching is primarily associated with digital communication, academic activities, social media interactions, and the influence of global popular culture. Students tend to switch codes to express modern concepts, demonstrate group identity, enhance communicative efficiency, and compensate for lexical gaps. The study highlights that code-switching among university students reflects broader processes of globalization and digitalization affecting language use. The results contribute to contemporary sociolinguistic research and provide insights into the evolving language practices of the younger generation in multilingual contexts.*

Keywords: *code-switching, digital generation, university students, English language influence, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, digital communication, language practices.*

The twenty-first century has witnessed unprecedented technological advancement, leading to profound transformations in communication practices worldwide. The widespread use of smartphones, social networking platforms, online educational resources, and digital media has created an environment in which multilingual

interactions have become increasingly common. English, as a global lingua franca, occupies a central position in these interactions and exerts considerable influence on the linguistic behavior of young people.

Among representatives of the digital generation, university students constitute a particularly relevant group for



investigating language change. Their active participation in academic settings, online communities, and international information networks facilitates frequent exposure to English vocabulary and expressions. Consequently, the phenomenon of code-switching—the alternating use of two or more languages within a single conversation or utterance—has become a characteristic feature of their speech.

The present study seeks to analyze English code-switching among university students, identify its communicative functions, and determine the factors contributing to its prevalence in the speech of digitally connected youth.

Code-switching has long been a subject of sociolinguistic inquiry. Early studies by John J. Gumperz (1982) emphasized the contextual and interactional functions of language alternation in bilingual communities. Later, Carol Myers-Scotton (1993) proposed the Matrix Language Frame Model, explaining structural constraints governing code-switching practices.

Recent research has shifted attention toward the role of digital communication in shaping multilingual language use. Social media platforms, online gaming environments, and educational technologies encourage the incorporation of English expressions into local languages. Scholars argue that English code-switching among youth often serves symbolic functions related to identity construction, prestige, and membership in technologically oriented communities.

In multilingual societies, code-switching is no longer viewed solely as a sign of linguistic deficiency; rather, it represents a communicative resource enabling speakers to navigate diverse social contexts effectively.

The study employed a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Participants. The research involved 100 university students aged between 18 and 24 years enrolled in different academic programs.

Data collection methods

- questionnaires investigating students' attitudes toward English code-switching;
- observation of naturally occurring speech in educational settings;
- analysis of examples collected from students' digital communication practices.

Data analysis. The collected data were categorized according to:

- frequency of code-switching;
- communicative functions;
- domains of language use;
- motivational factors influencing language choice.

Results and discussion. The findings demonstrate that English code-switching is a common feature of university students' speech.

Major contexts of code-switching include:

1. Digital communication (social networks, messaging applications);



2. Academic discourse, particularly in technology-related disciplines;

3. Entertainment and popular culture;

4. Peer-group interactions.

Students reported using English expressions such as deadline, online, feedback, update, presentation, and challenge even when equivalents existed in their native language.

Several factors explain this tendency:

- Technological influence. Digital platforms predominantly operate in English, facilitating lexical borrowing and code-switching.

- Communicative efficiency. Certain English terms are shorter or more widely recognized within specific communities.

- Identity construction. The use of English indexes modernity, global awareness, and affiliation with digitally connected youth cultures.

- Academic exposure. Access to scientific literature and educational resources in English encourages the adoption of specialized vocabulary.

These findings support previous sociolinguistic studies emphasizing the

functional and symbolic nature of code-switching. Rather than indicating language erosion, English code-switching may reflect the adaptive strategies of multilingual speakers responding to changing communicative environments.

Conclusion. English code-switching has become an integral aspect of the speech practices of university students belonging to the digital generation. The phenomenon is shaped by technological developments, educational experiences, globalization, and evolving patterns of social interaction. The study demonstrates that code-switching fulfills multiple communicative and social functions, including enhancing efficiency, expressing identity, and facilitating participation in digital communities.

Future research may focus on comparative analyses across different regions, disciplines, or age groups to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between digitalization and language change. Additionally, investigating the pedagogical implications of code-switching may contribute to more effective approaches to multilingual education.

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