



CODE-SWITCHING AS A STRATEGY IN UZBEK EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract. Code-switching is widely used in multilingual classrooms as a pedagogical strategy to facilitate language learning. In Uzbek English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, teachers and students frequently alternate between English and Uzbek to improve comprehension and participation. This study investigates the role of code-switching as an instructional strategy in Uzbek EFL classrooms and its impact on students' language learning. The research explores how code-switching supports understanding of complex concepts, reduces learners' anxiety, and enhances classroom interaction. A mixed-method research design was employed, including classroom observations and surveys among EFL teachers and students. The findings indicate that strategic use of code-switching can improve students' understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and task instructions. However, excessive reliance on the native language may limit students' exposure to English. The study suggests that balanced and purposeful code-switching can serve as an effective pedagogical tool in Uzbek EFL classrooms.

Keywords: code-switching, EFL classrooms, Uzbek language, language teaching strategies, bilingual education

Introduction. English has become one of the most important international languages used in education, science, and global communication. In countries where English is taught as a foreign language, teachers often face challenges in ensuring students understand complex linguistic concepts. One commonly used strategy in such contexts is code-switching, which refers to the alternation between two or more languages during communication. In Uzbekistan, English is widely taught in schools and universities, but most students share Uzbek as their first language. As a result, teachers often switch between English and Uzbek while explaining grammar,



vocabulary, or instructions. This practice helps learners understand difficult concepts more easily and reduces misunderstandings during the learning process. Previous studies have shown that code-switching can be a useful teaching strategy in multilingual classrooms. It may help clarify meaning, maintain classroom management, and build stronger teacher–student interaction. At the same time, some researchers argue that excessive use of the native language can reduce students’ opportunities to practice English. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of code-switching in Uzbek EFL classrooms and determine how it influences students’ comprehension and participation.

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

How frequently do teachers use code-switching in Uzbek EFL classrooms?
What are the main purposes of code-switching during English lessons?
How do students perceive the use of code-switching in language learning?
Understanding these issues may help educators develop more effective teaching strategies and improve English language learning outcomes in Uzbekistan.

Methods. This study employed a mixed-method research design to investigate the role of code-switching in Uzbek EFL classrooms. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Research Participants. The participants of the study included 40 university students and 10 English language teachers from several higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. The students were enrolled in English language courses and had intermediate-level proficiency in English. The teachers had at least three years of experience teaching English as a foreign language.

Data Collection. Two main data collection methods were used:

Classroom observations. Several English lessons were observed to identify how often teachers used code-switching and in which situations it. Occurred

Questionnaires. Surveys were distributed to both teachers and students to collect their opinions about the effectiveness of code-switching in language learning.



The questionnaires included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to obtain detailed responses.

Data Analysis. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods and qualitative analysis. Quantitative data from questionnaires were summarized using percentages and frequency counts. Qualitative responses from students and teachers were categorized according to common themes such as comprehension support, vocabulary explanation, and classroom management.

Results. The results of the study revealed that code-switching is a common practice in Uzbek EFL classrooms. Most teachers reported that they occasionally switch to Uzbek when explaining complex grammar rules, new vocabulary, or task instructions. According to the classroom observations, code-switching occurred mainly in the following situations:

Explaining difficult grammar structures
Clarifying unfamiliar vocabulary
Giving instructions for classroom activities
Managing classroom discipline

Survey results showed that approximately 75% of students believed that occasional use of Uzbek helped them understand the lesson more clearly. Many students stated that code-switching reduced confusion and allowed them to follow the lesson more effectively. Teachers also expressed positive attitudes toward code-switching. They indicated that using the students' native language can save time and prevent misunderstandings. However, most teachers emphasized that code-switching should be used carefully and not replace English communication in the classroom. The findings suggest that code-switching plays a supportive role in language learning when used strategically and moderately

Discussion. The findings of this study support previous research indicating that code-switching can be an effective instructional strategy in foreign language classrooms. In Uzbek EFL contexts, switching between English and Uzbek helps students better understand difficult concepts and participate more actively in classroom activities. One



important benefit of code-switching is its role in reducing students' anxiety. Many learners feel nervous when they cannot understand instructions or explanations in English. By occasionally using the native language, teachers can create a more comfortable learning environment and encourage students to ask questions. Another advantage is improved comprehension. When teachers briefly explain complex grammar rules or vocabulary in Uzbek, students can quickly grasp the meaning and return to English communication more confidently. However, the study also highlights the need for balance. Excessive reliance on the native language may limit students' exposure to English, which is essential for developing language proficiency. Therefore, teachers should use code-switching strategically rather than habitually. Pedagogically, teachers can adopt several strategies to maintain balance. For example, Uzbek may be used only for explaining complex instructions, while classroom interaction and practice activities remain in English. Such an approach ensures that students receive both clarity and sufficient exposure to the target language.

Conclusion. This study examined the role of code-switching as a teaching strategy in Uzbek EFL classrooms. The results demonstrate that code-switching is frequently used by teachers and generally viewed positively by students. It helps clarify difficult concepts, improve comprehension, and reduce learners' anxiety during English lessons. At the same time, the research emphasizes that code-switching should be used in a controlled and purposeful manner. While the native language can support learning, excessive use may reduce opportunities for students to practice English. Overall, balanced code-switching can serve as an effective pedagogical strategy in Uzbek EFL classrooms. Future research may explore how different levels of code-switching influence students' language proficiency and long-term learning outcomes.

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