

UDC 81

<https://doi.org/10.23951/1609-624X-2024-4-33-40>

Code-Switching and Code-Mixing as Indicators of Modern Persian Bilingual Communication

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Abstract

The article explores the phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing between Persian (Afghanistan) and English. Code-switching refers to the phenomenon of switching between two or more languages within a single conversation, while code-mixing involves the blending of languages within a sentence or utterance. The study focuses on two specific communicative settings. One is informal spoken communication, the other is literature. To conduct the research, the data was collected from a group chat involving 30 students studying English Language and Literature at Balk University's Faculty of English in Afghanistan. The group was created to discuss academic and non-academic issues informally. The messages exchanged in this group chat serve as a case study for analyzing informal conversational communication. Additionally, the novels of Khaled Hosseini, an American author of Afghan origin who is fluent in both Persian (Afghanistan) and English, were chosen as examples of literature. Khaled Hosseini has gained international recognition for his writings. His works often explore themes of identity, family, love, loss, and the impact of political turmoil on individuals and society. The paper belongs to the specialty 5.9.8. Theoretical, applied and comparative linguistics (philological sciences). The main objective of the research is to identify the reasons and purposes behind code-switching and code-mixing in different communicative settings. By examining the patterns and contexts in which these language practices occur, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations behind them. Overall, this research seeks to shed light on the phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing between Persian (Afghanistan) and English by analyzing both informal spoken communication and literature, to unravel the reasons and purposes behind these language practices.

Keywords: *code-switching; code-mixing; multilingual communication; Persian linguaculture; communicative setting; bilingual environment*

For citation: Andrey G. Fomin, Abdul Haq Haqiq *Code-Switching and Code-Mixing as Indicators of Modern Persian Bilingual Communication. Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta – Tomsk State Pedagogical University Bulletin*, 2024, vol. 4 (234), pp. 33–40. <https://doi.org/10.23951/1609-624X-2024-4-33-40>

Переключение и смешение кодов как показатели современной двуязычной персидской коммуникации

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Аннотация

В статье предпринимается попытка исследовать феномен переключения и смешения между персидским (Афганистан) и английским языками. Переключение языков описывает ситуацию, когда говорящий меняет язык внутри одной речевой ситуации. Это может происходить на уровне предложений, фраз или даже отдельных слов. При переключении языков говорящий переходит из одного языка в другой с целью коммуникативного удобства, выражения своей идентичности, обозначения социального статуса или принадлежности к определенной группе. Смешение языков отличается от переключения языков тем, что происходит смешение элементов разных языков внутри одного предложения или даже слова. Это может быть результатом языкового влияния, билингвального воспитания или желания говорящего выразить себя с помощью различных языковых ресурсов. Исследование сосредоточено на двух коммуникативных ситуациях. Первая коммуникативная ситуация представлена неформальным разговорным общением, другая относится к области художественной литературы. Для проведения исследования были собраны данные из группового чата с участием 30 студентов, изучающих английский язык и

литературу на факультете английского языка Университета Балк в Афганистане. Группа была создана для неформального обсуждения академических и неакадемических вопросов. Сообщения, которыми обмениваются в этом групповом чате, служат примером для анализа неформального разговорного общения. Кроме того, в качестве примеров литературы были выбраны романы Халед Хоссейни, американского писателя афганского происхождения, который свободно владеет персидским (Афганистан) и английским языками. Халед Хоссейни получил международное признание благодаря своим произведениям. В его работах описываются культурные и исторические реалии жизни в Афганистане, часто затрагиваются темы идентичности, семьи, любви, потерь и влияния политических потрясений на отдельных людей и общество. Исследование выполнено по специальности 5.9.8 «Теоретическая, прикладная и сравнительно-сопоставительная лингвистика (филологические науки)». Цель исследования – выявить причины и цели, стоящие за переключением и смешением языков в различных коммуникативных ситуациях. Анализ контекстов, в которых происходят такие языковые практики, позволяет определить мотивы коммуникантов.

Ключевые слова: переключение кодов, смешение кодов, многоязычная коммуникация, персидская лингвокультура, коммуникативная среда, двуязычная среда

Для цитирования: Fomin A. G., Abdul Haq Haqiq. OCode-Switching and Code-Mixing as Indicators of Modern Persian Bilingual Communication // Вестник Томского государственного педагогического университета (TSPU Bulletin). 2024. Вып. 4 (234). С. 33–40. <https://doi.org/10.23951/1609-624X-2024-4-33-40>

Introduction

Due to various historical events, such as colonization, and recent globalization, many countries in the world have become examples of a mix of different peoples and languages. Some places have clear boundaries between their dominant language and culture, while others have a closer connection and more intertwined structure.

Regardless of political events, language adapts and integrates new ideas, including those from foreign languages and cultures. Therefore, in multicultural and multilingual societies, code-switching and code-mixing occur more often.

Although this phenomenon is well known in linguistics and is a natural part of language use in multilingual environments, there is still a lack of research on the topic. Not all its aspects have been fully identified or studied. Code-mixing and code-switching raise many questions that require further research to answer. Although code-switching and code-mixing in multilingual environments are a common phenomenon, they occur for various reasons in different communicative situations and serve various purposes. This diversity of reasons makes it a fascinating and significant aspect of cultural and linguistic studies. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of two communicative situations with the same set of linguacultures – Persian (Afghanistan) and English. The analysis of group chat aims to reveal the peculiarities of daily conversations among bilingual students, while the analysis of linguistic elements present in the novels of Khaled Hosseini aims to understand how the author employs English and Persian, and the reasons for these linguistic choices.

To achieve this purpose, the study had to address several objectives. First, to identify cases of code-mixing and code-switching in the group chat messages. Second, to analyze identified cases to reveal the moti-

vation for switching and mixing codes. Third, to analyze the use of English and Persian in Khaled Hosseini's novels and identify the contexts and purposes for which the author switches between languages. Fourth, to compare the cases of code-switching and code-mixing in two communicative settings.

Preliminary analysis at the stage of material selection suggested the following hypothesis: the phenomenon of switching between Persian (Afghanistan) and English in daily communication and literary texts although have different purposes, however, can be explained by socio-cultural, linguistic, and pragmatic factors.

Various aspects of code-switching and code-mixing have been highlighted in a range of research presenting code-switching and code-mixing as a complex bilingual behavior [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. However, despite this, there is still no consensus on the interpretation of these terms or criteria for differentiating between them.

There are several key research papers in the area of code-switching and code-mixing. Some researchers [1, 10] provide a general overview of switching languages and bilingualism, examining various aspects such as sociolinguistic context, motivations for switching, communicative functions, and consequences of switching.

Others [11, 12] explore the phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing in communication, drawing attention to social and cultural factors that influence switching and its impact on language development.

Aneta Pavlenko [13] analyzes the psychological aspects of bilingualism, exploring the relationship between language, thinking, emotions, and identity in bilingual individuals.

A group of authors [14] explores the phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing in written communication, examining various approaches to analyzing this phenomenon in written discourse. The authors investigate the functions of language mixing and provide insights into how it can be used in multilingual written communication.

In literature, the switching and mixing of different languages is not only indicative of the author's proficiency in multiple languages but it also serves as a stylistic device. Mexican-American author Gloria Anzaldua explores the theme of language switching in her works. Her novel "Borderlands: La Frontera" [15] utilizes language switching to illustrate the cultural identity and experiences of bilingual individuals.

The Indian author Amitav Ghosh employs language switching in his writings to create authentic dialogue and depict cultural differences. In his works, such as "The Hungry Tide" [16], he demonstrates how language switching can effectively create literary images.

Khaled Hosseini, an American author of Afghan origin, employs the use of language switching in his novels to convey the cultural identity and emotional states of his characters. He demonstrates how switching between languages can serve as a tool for adding depth and complexity to literary works.

This study presents a novel investigation into the phenomenon of code-switching and its mixing between Persian (Afghan) and English languages in two distinct communicative settings, allowing for an understanding of the reasons for code-switching and mixing, as well as their impact on communication and interaction. A multidimensional approach is employed in the study, enabling the investigation of code-switching in both informal communication and literary works, which provides a more thorough understanding of how linguistic phenomena manifest and operate in various contexts.

Materials and Methods

For an informal communicative setting, the authors analyzed a group chat of 30 university students at Balk University in Afghanistan. The chat was created for informal communication between students outside their academic curriculum, allowing them to discuss issues related to their learning experience. In total 94 units were selected from the group chat for analysis. As for the literature context, two of Khaled Hosseini's novels were selected as research material – "The Kite Runner" [17] and "A Thousand Splendid Suns" [18].

The characteristics of the selected material and the previously defined purpose and objectives of the research led to the use of a comprehensive methodological framework. Using general scientific methods, the authors selected and classified the material, as well as analyzed and synthesized cases of code-mixing and code-switching.

Khaled Hosseini's novels were subjected to literary and linguistic analysis to identify instances of code-switching and code-mixing. Additionally, instances of different language use in novels were subjected to contextual analysis to determine the reasons for these language strategies.

The preliminary findings from the analysis of code-mixing and code-switching in various communicative contexts were subjects of comparative analysis at the final stage of the research.

Results and Discussions

The phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing between Persian (Afghanistan) and English in spoken communication among students at Balk University's Faculty of English in Afghanistan and literature is driven by sociolinguistic identity, language proficiency, cultural adaptation, and expressive needs. The use of code-switching and code-mixing serves to enhance communication and interaction, facilitating the expression of complex ideas, bridging linguistic gaps, and reinforcing a sense of cultural belonging and identity within a multicultural context.

Before characterizing these phenomena, it is essential to define them and determine whether there is a distinction between these concepts and, if so, what that distinction is.

In linguistics, code-switching is defined as the alternation between two or more languages or linguistic varieties within a single conversation, sentence, phrase, or word. Various scientists have approached the definition of this phenomenon from different methodological positions. For example, the ethnosociolinguistic definition states that code-switching is "the use of different languages, dialects, or varieties of language in the same conversation" [19]. The sociolinguistic definition emphasizes "the use of languages or their varieties in different speech situations" [20]. From a pragmatic point of view, code-switching can be used as "a communication strategy to achieve specific communicative goals" [21]. The grammatical definition involves «the incorporation of elements from one language into another» [22]. The contextual definition highlights that code-switching is "a linguistic behavior that is influenced by contextual factors such as social situations, participants in a conversation, topic, and purpose of communication" [23]. All these definitions emphasize that code-switching is a complex phenomenon that can be influenced by sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and grammatical factors. It reflects the interactions between languages and the socio-cultural aspects of communication.

Code-mixing in linguistics refers to the phenomenon of using different language codes or styles within a single communication [24]. This can happen when a speaker consciously or unconsciously combines elements from different languages, dialects, or sociolects [25] in their speech. Code-mixing can occur both within sentences, where elements of different languages are combined within the same sentence, or between sentences or dialogue, where the speaker switches between languages or styles. In linguistics, code-mixing is analyzed as a part of a sociolinguistic approach and

examines its functions, motives, and implications for communication and language development.

Code-switching and code-mixing are two related terms that refer to the use of different languages in communication. The main difference between these two concepts is that code-switching involves switching between two or more languages within a conversation or a text while code-mixing focuses on mixing elements of different languages within sentences, phrases, or words.

Code-switching can occur on a variety of levels, from a single word to a whole conversation, depending on the context and purpose of communication. Code-mixing occurs within individual sentences or phrases and can be used to express complex ideas or to add emphasis to certain words or concepts.

In code-switching, each language usually retains its integrity, meaning that the speaker switches between languages without mixing them. This means that they preserve the grammar, vocabulary, and style of each language when switching. In contrast, code-mixing involves mixing and combining language elements within sentences, resulting in hybrid constructions and mixed language forms.

Code-switching and code-mixing may be motivated by different sociolinguistic factors. Code-switching can be used to convey identity or belonging to a specific group while code-mixing can be due to incomplete knowledge of a language or used in mixed language situations.

An analysis of messages in a group chat revealed that code-mixing and code-switching both occur in informal

conversations between students. In this case, Persian was switched to English, as well as the mixing of these languages was expressed in the interspersing of English words and expressions into the conversation in Persian. This is because all participants in the group chat belong to Persian linguoculture, whereas English is an acquired skill during study in the university (see Table 1).

The results showed that code-mixing occurred more often than code-switching. Out of 94 cases, 35 instances of code-switching were identified in the selected material. An analysis of the code-switching between Persian (Afghanistan) and English revealed that they were mostly simple, often one-word constructions, used to address classmates (“Salam *my dears!*”; “*Hello, guys!*”), an expression of agreement (“*Good!*”; “*Okay!*”) or gratitude (“*Thanks!*”; “*Thank you!*”).

Also, switching to English happened in situations when students were talking about some subjects or phenomena that do not have an equivalent in the main language, it is mainly about the software or the names of computer programs needed by students during the learning process (*Advanced Download Manager*; *Share Slide upload*; *Group Admin*, etc).

Cases of code-mixing in the selected units were more common. They were mainly manifested by the incorporation of English words into the structure of a Persian sentence. However, there were also instances of more specific code-mixing (see Table 2).

These examples demonstrated a special case of code-switching, where the switching between English

Table 1

Group Chat Messages

Code-switching	Code-mixing
(1) Salam, sar <i>group</i> hay aziz! Lutfan nam tamam daneshjyan <i>group</i> hay khud ra <i>list</i> kunid wa sepas bahais <i>member</i> ha dar <i>group add</i> kunid. Hama dar ein <i>group chat admin</i> astand!	(2) Besyar khob, <i>thank you!</i>
(3) <i>Nice</i> zendegy <i>relax</i> dashta bashid!	(4) <i>Okay, thank you!</i>
(5) Salam! Lutfan dar moured tadad <i>participant</i> ha <i>research</i> ustad X ba man begoyed? Aya man ham dar jam <i>participant</i> hay ein <i>research</i> astam?	(6) <i>Very good!</i>
(7) Salam! Tadad <i>participant</i> ha 30 ast. Baly shuma ham dar jam <i>participant</i> ha astid.	(8) <i>Excellent</i> , besyar khob!
(9) salam! <i>Description</i> ein <i>group</i> az taraf key <i>share</i> shuda ast?	(10) <i>Good</i> , mamnon!
(11) Chan lahza pish <i>description</i> ein <i>group</i> az taraf numayanda senf ma <i>share</i> shuda ast.	(12) Kar khob ast, <i>very nice!</i>
(13) Agar dar moured tarikh khatm <i>semester</i> daqiq malomat bedehid, mamnon mishawam!	(14) <i>I hope so, thank you</i> , azizanam!
(15) <i>Semester</i> dar 15 mah qous khatm mishawad wa emtehan <i>final</i> ba tarikh 20 qous shuro mishawad.	(16) <i>Welcom</i> , dost ha ayam!
(17) Az ein ke dar khatm दौरا chahar sala tahsil qarar darim wa <i>department</i> az ma khasta ast gharaz takmil bazy <i>document</i> ha ba edara <i>department</i> murajea murajea kuniam.	(18) salam <i>my dears!</i>
(19) Aya kasy <i>slide</i> had <i>lecture</i> akhir dar moured fan bayan ra darad?	(20) Baly, <i>you are right!</i>

Table 2

Special Cases of Code-Mixing

Persian	English
(21) Dar bara prozha kamy malomat bedehid ke che qesm tartib kunam?	Give me some information about the project , how should I arrange it?
(22) Qesmy ke man sample card dawad ra check kardam English and Persian, logo daneshga mushkel techniqueky darad	As I checked the invitation card sample, the university logo has a technical problem.
(23) Aya kasy camera professional digitaly darad? Agar baly ast, lutfan aan ra ba khud ba mahfel beyawarid!	Does anyone have a professional digital camera? If yes, please bring it with you to the party.
(24) Wow, cheqadar fissiony	Wow, how fashionable !
(25) Baly, khaily styly ast! hahaha	Yes, it is very stylish ! hahaha.
(26) Good, aya dar bakhsh logisticcky ham shuma numayenda astid?	Good! Are you also a representative in logistics ?

and Persian (Afghanistan) takes place not only within a single sentence or communicative context but also within a single word. In this case, the English word (“project”, “technical”, “digital”, “fashionable”, “stylish”, “logistics”) has been incorporated into the dominant language, altering its original foreign form and blending with the Persian word-formation process (“prozha”, “techniqueky”, “digitaly”, “fissiony”, “styly”, “logisticcky”).

Some studies indicate that code-switching and code-mixing can positively influence the development of bilinguals and multilinguals. The phenomena help individuals establish boundaries between languages and improve their linguistic skills. Research also shows that code-switching and code-mixing can facilitate interaction and understanding between languages. They help to fill lexical or grammatical gaps, as well as to convey specific meanings and nuances that may not be present in a single language.

Code-switching has been shown to enhance language flexibility and cognitive abilities in speakers. This phenomenon may also reflect an individual’s social identity, cultural background, and sense of community, influencing their language choices.

Code-switching may be influenced by social factors such as group identity, acceptance of cultural norms, and belonging to a specific social group. People may switch codes to show their affiliation with a particular group or to strengthen ties within that group. All the participants in the group chat are members of the same social group – university students. Therefore, to maintain a sense of belonging to this social group, all members adhere to the same communication style or a kind of sociolect that has been established within this group.

Context and situation play a significant role in determining code-switching and code-mixing. Results have demonstrated that they are linked to self-expression and the expression of personal or group identity. Speakers switch between languages or mix them first of all, to showcase their multilingual abilities; and also, in a multilingual environment.

Considering that the students selected for the study are majoring in English Language and Literature, they actively use English words to diversify their speech, especially in situations of informal communication.

Code-switching can serve different communicative purposes. It can be used to express emotions, emphasize certain ideas or arguments, establish or maintain social relationships with interlocutors, or attract attention. These aspects are most clearly manifested in literature [26, 27], where switching and mixing codes are used as a pragmatic tool for creating a certain authentic atmosphere or a more ethnically colored image. Of course, to a greater extent, this technique is available to writers who speak one or more foreign languages.

Khaled Hosseini utilizes code-switching and code-mixing to represent the cultural and linguistic identities of his characters. Analysis showed that code-mixing occurs more often which may be explained by the fact that despite the Afghani origin, all the novels were written in English and the initial purpose was to present the uniqueness of Afghani linguaculture to non-Afghani population.

In “The Kite Runner” the protagonist, Amir is a bi-cultural character who occasionally incorporates Persian words and phrases into his English narrative to reflect his dual identity.

(27) *I didn’t know who Henry Kissinger was, and I might have asked. But at the moment, I watched with horror as one of the **chapandaz** fell off his saddle and was trampled under a score of hooves.*

(28) *I smiled: **Bas**, you donkey. No one’s sending you away.*

This linguistic shift highlights his connection to his Afghani heritage and cultural background.

In “A Thousand Splendid Suns” Mariam, is presented as a woman from rural Afghanistan and Hosseini employs code-mixing in her dialogues to capture her linguistic and cultural origins. For example, she might switch to Persian when conversing with characters who share her cultural background or when experiencing intense emotions.

(29) *I mean a real school, **Akhund Sahib**. Like in a classroom. Like my father's other kids.*

(30) *Nay. I want you to take me.*

This reflects Mariam's attachment to her native language and her sense of belonging in a particular cultural context.

Another character from the same story Nana represents traditional Afghan culture, and she is Mariam's mother. In interactions with Nana, the author employs code-mixing to emphasize her adherence to Afghan customs and her limited knowledge of other languages.

(31) *You are a clumsy little **harami**! This is my reward for everything I've endured An heirloom-breaking, clumsy little **harami**!*

(32) ***Aneh**, Nana said. You see? Your father agrees.*

Compared to other characters, Nana uses more Persian words and phrases, reflecting her strong cultural identity and the impact of her upbringing in Afghanistan.

In Hosseini's novels, characters in the diaspora often exhibit code-mixing or switching patterns that reflect their experiences in different cultural and linguistic settings. Depending on the situation, they may mix Persian and English, adapting their language use to the cultural norms and expectations of their new environment. It reflects the desire of the company to preserve its cultural identity and heritage.

In Khaled Hosseini's novels, there are various techniques used to switch between the Persian (from Afghanistan) and English languages. Hosseini frequently employs Persian words and phrases within English sentences to capture cultural nuances or emotions that may not always be adequately expressed in English alone. For instance, in "The Kite Runner", the term "*taarof*" is used to describe the intricate etiquette and social customs of Afghan culture; religious terms "*Inshallah*" (if God allows), and "*Mashallah*" (Praise the God) serve as indicators of Islamic aspect of Afghani culture.

Sometimes Hosseini provides translation equivalents or definitions of Persian words and terms in English, thereby assisting readers unfamiliar with the Persian language to comprehend the intended meaning and context. This approach helps to bridge the linguistic gap and enhance comprehension.

(33) *But Mariam's favorite, other than Jalil of course, was Mullah Faizullah, the **elderly village Korian tutor, its akhund***

(34) *...to teach Mariam the five **daily namaz prayers**...*

Code-mixing between Persian and English is employed in the dialogues of Hosseini's works to reflect the bilingual nature of character interactions. This technique adds authenticity to the narratives and contributes to a more immersive reading experience. This is often done to express strong emotions, establish familiarity, or illustrate the dynamics of characters from different cultures.

In Hosseini's novels, readers can find references to various aspects of Afghan culture, including traditions, customs, and historical events, using Persian terms and concepts. These references contribute to a more in-depth understanding of Afghan culture.

In each of these instances, Hosseini's use of code-mixing corresponds to the cultural and linguistic identities of his characters. This demonstrates their connection to Afghan culture, their experience living in different linguistic environments, and their ability to navigate various identities. Through the use of code-switching, Hosseini conveys the complexity and richness of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of his characters, adding depth and authenticity to their portrayals.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is proved that both code-switching and code-mixing appear frequently in multilingual environments and occur both in situations of informal communication and in literature. Generally, the use of several languages as a means of communication is employed to achieve mutual understanding. However, the group chat messages revealed that students use code-switching and code-mixing following their sociolinguistic identity, incorporating both their Afghan and English language backgrounds. This identity may manifest itself in the desire to maintain a connection with their native language (Persian) while engaging with the English-speaking academic environment. Switching and mixing codes can also fulfill the expressive needs of students. It allows them to convey emotions, humor, and personal experiences more effectively. Certain emotions or cultural concepts may be best expressed in one language, while others may be more appropriately conveyed using another language, and mostly they use words from another language simply because they like it, it gives them a sense of belonging.

In the literature, the practice of code-switching and code-mixing enriches a narrative, making it more profound and interesting. Authors may employ code-switching and mixing to accurately portray the linguistic realities of their characters and settings. When characters belong to diverse cultures or speak multiple languages, this technique allows for a more reliable representation of their cultural identities and experiences. Different languages contain cultural nuances that are difficult to capture in a single language. By incorporating code-switching or mixing, authors can capture the subtleties, humor, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references inherent to a particular language, thereby enhancing the reader's understanding of the context and adding depth to the narrative.

The use of code-switching and mixing can effectively depict characters who are bilingual or proficient

in multiple languages. Using a different language within a predominantly monolingual text can alter the tone, highlight the emotional state of a character, or demonstrate cultural conflicts or connections.

Thus, a comparative analysis of code-switching and code-mixing in two communicative settings revealed more similarities than differences. Both in informal communication and novels, code-mixing and

switching emphasize the multilingualism of speakers and demonstrate their desire to be part of their social or ethnic group. However, in literature, it is always a conscious choice by the author and is used to create an authentic image. In addition, in an informal setting, both phenomena occur quite frequently, in Khaled Hosseini's novels predominantly appear code-mixing.

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Статья поступила в редакцию 14.12.2023; принята к публикации 24.05.2024

The article was submitted 14.12.2023; accepted for publication 24.05.2024