




A Descriptive Analysis of Sociocontextual Factors Influencing Code switching Behaviour among University Students

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Abstract

Factors such as social, cultural and institutional which determine code switching behaviour have been neglected in research. Studies on code switching have mainly documented such behaviour by looking at when and how it occurs (Wintner, Shehadi, Zeira, Osmelak & Nov, 2023). The study was conducted at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), investigating how sociolinguistic factors such as contextual and social identity shape students' language practices particularly code switching. The sociolinguistic theory by William Lubov (1971) informed the study and the data were collected from 213 university students which were analysed using SPSS version 23 respectively. The results reveal that contextual factors such as norms, cultural practices and formality have a stronger influences as ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.62$) in comparison to social identity including language preferences and peer interaction ($M=2.6$, $SD = 0.30$). These findings present important contribution of sociocontextual factors in code switching practices. However, the contextual factors seem to be more predominant in influencing code switching in ODL context. The study highlights the significance of recognising and accepting sociolinguistic factors in educational setting to enhance communicative skills and stimulate multilingualism and multicultural practices.

Keywords: Code Switching, Code Switching Behaviour, Sociolinguistic Factors, Communicative Strategies, Open and Distance Learning Institution (ODL)

Introduction and Background

Tanzania is a multilingual and multicultural nation with over 120 indigenous languages spoken across the country (Van den Berg, 2023). English and Kiswahili serve as the media of instruction particularly in secondary schools and higher education (Kajoro, 2016). Therefore, code switching (CS) is a common practice in multilingual environments and it often involves switching between English and Kiswahili or other indigenous languages (Ali & Mwila, 2021). The Open University of Tanzania is an Open and Distance learning institution which mainly uses English for teaching and learning while Kiswahili

is taught as a subject. Basically, most of the academic activities in Tanzanian universities are conducted in English and it is a prerequisite for admission of prospective university students to demonstrate basic English proficiency necessary for subsequent learning at university (Istoroyekti & Hum, 2016).

It is crucial to understand the sociocontextual factors that influence code switching behaviour among students in a multilingual/multicultural environment especially for educators, linguists, and policymakers (Kamwangamalu, 2010). Some of the factors include sociolinguistic which is concerned with how people alternate between languages and cultures in rich linguistic resources and diverse cultures. There are significant variables such as multilingualism, language proficiency, social network, social class, gender and age that shape how and why people shift between languages (Habyarimana, Ntakirutimana & Barnes, 2017; Shokhrukh, 2024). Those factors reflect a broader social dynamic, including identity, power, and group membership, but also they can have an influence on the communication strategies such as code switching (Kamwangamalu, 2010; Shokhrukh, 2024). At the OUT, as students engage in formal academic discourse between English and informal interactions in Kiswahili or other local languages during group discussions, it most likely stimulates code switching practices (Redinger, 2010; Quarcoo, 2013).

Code switching behaviour in Tanzanian universities is evident to both students and instructors particularly during classroom interactions. The study by Shartiely (2016) at the University of Dar es Salaam observed that code switching occurs when the instructor wants to accommodate students with low level of proficiency in a target language. Such practice, in teaching, enhances a more inclusive learning environment to all students. Furthermore, Simasiku (2016) argues that code switching improves learner participation by making the teaching more manageable and easy to understand the subject. When research presents the advantages associated with code switching particularly in teaching and learning (Simasiku, 2016; Gendroyono & Baharun, 2023), code switching remains questionable on its effects on language development and academic standards in educational settings (Shartiely, 2016; Martine, 2018). These findings reflect the multilingual realities of students in Tanzanian higher education and the complex role of code switching in teaching and learning (Ali & Mwila, 2021; Mapunda, 2022).

It is vital to understand the sociocontextual factors motivating code switching practices within the OUT context by providing insights into students' linguistic strategies and their implications for learning and communication. Scholars maintain that students may code switch to overcome the gaps in language proficiency (Gendroyono & Baharun, 2023), when wanting to align with peer groups (Shokhrukh, 2024), or expressing linguistic identity in a multilingual environment (Habyarimana *et al.*, 2017; Prosper, 2014). However, the contexts in which such researches were conducted are not similar to ODL universities like the OUT. By using descriptive statistics analysis, the study establishes social contextual factors influencing code switching practices among university students,

with the focus on social identity and contextual impacts with the ODL framework. The study hopes to significantly contribute towards language development and appropriate communicative strategies in multilingual educational backgrounds such as the ODL institutions.

Statement of the Problem

In a multilingual setting, code switching is used as an interactive tool for communication to improve comprehension of complex concepts, promote peer interaction, and support students with diverse linguistic experiences (Shartiely, 2016; Simasiku, 2016; Shafi, Kazmi & Asif, 2020). Nevertheless, it is unclear to what extent sociocontextual factors impact on code switching practices, particularly how such practices influence academic and communicative efficiency (Habyarimana *et al.*, 2017). Code switching research has been criticised for limiting its focus on trivial linguistic analysis, overlooking the deeper inquiry on sociocontextual dynamics that shape language use in various settings (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Wintner, Shehadi, Zeira, Osmelak & Nov, 2023). Moreover, code switching is regarded as a problem and shortfall to bilingual/multilingual students in formal teaching and learning environment (Mokibelo, 2016). Further, some scholars caution that the overreliance on code switching particularly in classrooms might negatively affect the students' proficiency in the target language and their potential in academic progress (Martine, 2018; Santos, 2021).

Scholars such as Gendroyono and Baharun (2023) argue that code switching in educational contexts lacks empirical data which affect the development of an operational language policy and pedagogical strategies pertinent to accommodate students' linguistic diversity needs. In the ODL institutions such as the OUT, the observed gap is evident where despite the prevalence of multilingualism and code switching practices, the field remain underexplored. In such situation, adverse perceptions of code switching highlight stereotypes about multilingual situation and people with multiple linguistic abilities (Mokibelo, 2016). This limits opportunities among people to exhaust the possibilities to effectively harness the multilingual resources in pedagogy as well as the communication phenomenon. In this study, code switching is presented as a communicative strategy and linguistic resource for multilingual speakers. The paper is positioned within the sociolinguistic framework to unpack the social and cultural influences on code switching practices in higher education, specifically in the ODL setting. This research intends to explore on how code switching and code switching practices in education are affected by these factors, to enable the ODL education be more effective and accessible to all in the multilingual and multicultural phenomenon. The following objectives guided the study:

1. To examine the extent social identity factors prompt code switching behaviour among students at university.

2. To examine the extent contextual factors influence code switching among students at university.

Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by sociolinguistic theory which was founded in 1971 by William Labov. It presents the multifaceted interplay of language and the social context where interaction occurs. According to Shafi *et al.* (2020), language has many functions beyond serving as an instrument facilitating communication among interlocutors. Therefore, language is used to alter practices that people's cultures, identity, social status and cultural backgrounds (Labov, 1971). The theory assumes that social and contextual factors can present language various in use. Studies on language and society argues that social related factors including class, ethnicity, identity might determine people's linguistic patterns and practices in specific settings (Labov, 1971; Coupland & Brown, 2012). Thus, sociolinguistic theory is appropriate to unpack how sociocultural factors influence on how university students use language in different situations to realise their linguistic needs.

The sociolinguistic theory argues that language is symbol of social identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Edwards, 2009). In the interaction, code switching is regarded as an instrument that facilitate effective communication among people with diverse linguistic competence (Shafi *et al.*, 2020). In Tanzanian contexts, students often switch between languages such as English and Kiswahili symbolically to represent social identity and academic status (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Dewaele & Wei, 2014). Furthermore, the theory presents people's adaptation to language in various situation including social group dynamics, identification of cultures and academic norms and practices (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; Canagarajah, 2024). For instance, students practice code switching in academic environment to express their linguistic proficiency and educational professionalism (Hyland, 2004). On the other hand, interaction that involve the use of Kiswahili and other indigenous language such as Kinyakyusa, Kisukuma, might be generous to ethnicity and maintain interaction with peers (Hall & Nilep, 2015). This aligns with the research aim which intended to explore in what way social and contextual factors such as multilingualism, cultural norms, group dynamics and cultural inheritance have effect on students' language approach such as code switching.

However, the sociolinguistic theory does not take into considerations the unique linguistic features which define the person's language preference and cognitive process during communication. It neglects the fact that motivations for language use is often constructed based on individual variances which may also influence code switching behavior (Auer, 1995; Meeuwis & Blommaert, 1994). The theory instead, concentrate heavily on how social and contextual factors impact on language use. Despite its weakness, the sociolinguistic theory remain relevant for this study because it is useful in studying

relationship between language and social dynamics in a multilingual situation (Canagarajah, 2024; Dewaele & Wei, 2014). The theory provide an understanding how socio contextual factors stimulates language practices such as code switching behavior.

Literature Review

Code switching is a common practice commonly evident in multilingual/multicultural which support communication among people with diverse linguistic needs. Code switching among students is motivated by several factors such as language barriers, representing cultural practices, portraying sense of belonging (Shafi *et al.*, 2020; Redinger, 2010). As insisted that factors such as those mentioned above may influence on people's language behaviour and practices (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The aim of this review is to present literature on sociolinguistic factors that may have effects on language practices particularly code switching.

Factors Influencing Code Switching Practices Language Practice in Higher Education

Code switching between languages may be driven by language proficiency of the participants. This corresponds to the argument that code switching discourse can significantly be affected by students' proficiency in both their first language (L1) and second language (L2) (Gendroyono & Baharun, 2023). In multilingual contexts, scholars reiterates that students often possess variety of linguistic abilities that stimulate them to shift between languages based on their comfort with particular patterns e.g. topic, phrases and clause (Redinger, 2010). Additionally, Kamwangamalu (2010) argues that code switching is possible for people with multiple abilities when faced with lack of vocabulary in any of their languages. For instance, English at universities in Tanzania is often associated with academic discourse, while the language used in more social communication is Kiswahili (Ali & Mwila, 2021). Such practice prompts code switching between English and Kiswahili at difference instances in executing educational activities. Therefore, Galegane (2020) emphasises that alternation between languages by both students and lecturers is often compelled by the gaps in proficiency to English, Kiswahili and local languages. Also, some scholars argue that code switching supports interactions particularly among students with lower language skills (Tirarast, 2019; Nazeri, Amini & Salahshoor, 2022).

Nazeri *et al.* (2022) add that code switching particularly between English and local languages may result from participants' lack of confidence in English language. On the other hand, code switching among multilingual speakers facilitates communication particularly when the language involved has complex structures (Gendroyono & Baharun,

2023). Simasiku (2016) supports the view that students with less confident in English language depend on code switching approach where they can be actively involved in learning. Also, some scholars argue that code switching supports interactions particularly for students with lower language skills (Tirarast, 2019; Nazeri et al., 2022). Thus, code switching is adopted as a communicative strategy to enhance interaction among people with limited language skills. There are factors which drive code switching practices, however, it is important to study them in relation to the context of communication. Therefore, this study is located in the ODL context, to explore the extent sociocontextual factors have influence on students' code switching behaviour.

Language Prestige and Social Class

Language practices such as code switching in society can be influenced by the perceived status of language and the social class preferences. For stance, English language in Tanzania is usually related with people's education level, prestigious and modernism (Kamwangamalu, 2010). Also, it is regarded as a language of significant social prestige and professional achievement (Blommaert, 2010). This entails that university students may code switch to English language for various purposes such as to indicate social identity and to signify academic aspirations (Quarcoo & Amuzu, 2016; Shafi *et al.*, 2020). While English dominates formal settings particularly in academia, Kiswahili is commonly used in casual situation. However, Van den Berg (2023) argues that Kiswahili among university students practically represents their national identity. This corresponds to Myers-Scotton's markedness model which states that speakers' language choice is based on their perceived shared benefits (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Additionally, in universities, code switching saves to express unity, authority and negotiation of specific group membership. Thus, code switching enables students to navigate between academic and social interactions effectively.

Research on sociolinguistics such as by Holmes and Wilson (2022) that investigated how social class impacts on choosing the preferred language revealed that diverse linguistic norms are normally connected with different social classes. This implies that a distinctive code switching pattern can signify a particular group from a certain social class. According to Suhardianto and Afriana (2022), when code switching in conversations, some people are likely to be excluded or associate themselves with spoken language pattern. At universities, for instance, some students may prefer to assimilate with the norms of higher social class by shifting to a formal speech which is perceived as a language of the educated. The students from disadvantaged background may choose to switch to the speech pattern of elite in order to gain prestige by presenting oneself as educated (Muthusamy, Muniandy, Kandsam, Hussin, Subramaniam & Farashaiyan, 2020). On the other hand, students may wish to shift to a more familiar speech in order to maintain

commonality with social groups from similar background (Holmes & Wilson, 2022).

Multilingualism in African Contexts

African countries have a wide linguistic diversity that include colonial languages (such as English, French, or Portuguese), indigenous languages such as Kiswahili and regional lingua franca (Habyarimana *et al.*, 2017). In African countries multilingualism is a common practices due to the historical background, existence of linguistic diverse in many African communities and multiple cultures (Kamwangamalu, 2020). Language practices such as code switching among multilingual speakers is prominent because of multilingualism in their contexts. Kamwangamalu (2010) argues that code switching practices in many African countries resulted from the domination of colonialism where foreign languages such as English, French and Portuguese prevail in formal settings. Additionally, the interrelationship of sociolinguistic factors such as gender, ethnicity as well as social classes might have impacts on how multilingual students use language in academic settings (Holmes & Wilson, 2022).

Tanzania in particular present an exceptional linguistic situation where people shift between diverse ethnic languages such as Kiswahili, English, Kisukuma, Kihaya and may other ethnic languages pending the context of language use. Code switching according to Gumperz (1982) is a strategy of communication that support people to practice their sociocultural activities. Scholars such as Myers-Scotton (1993) and Shokhrukh (2024) emphasises that language practice can enhance social, cultural and academic discourses.

Similarly, scholars argue that code switching assists students to be able to participate in sophisticated social roles and identities as well as to balance academic anticipation with individual and cultural associations (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). In multilingual African societies, code switching functions as an instrument for affirming ethnic groups or national identity, repelling against linguistic dominance and supporting different social groups (Kamwangamalu, 2010). Based on these social and contextual factors, the study is situated within the open and distance learning context, intending to contribute to communicative strategies such as code switching that support and promote students' multilingualism.

In Rwanda, research shows that students code switch between Kinyarwanda, French, and English as informed by the trilingual language policy of the country (Habyarimana *et al.*, 2017). For Rwandese students, code switching is instrumental to enable them associate with particular social groups, reflect identities either ethnic or regional, and express unity among social group or to exclude others. Likewise, the research conducted in Tanzania and Kenya reveals that code switching enables student negotiate and navigate through both global citizenship and national identity by changing the use of Kiswahili, English, and other indigenous language(s) in a conversation (Van den Berg,

2023). In Pakistan, a study by Shah, Furqan, and Zaman (2019) found that students engage in code switching practices to portray their social group membership and ethnic identity. Researchers insist that speakers with diverse linguistic skills do code switching to reflect their social membership and cultural identity (Muthusamy *et al.* 2020).

The literature above have presented factors that can influence code switching practices in academic situation. Such influences include social class, ethnicity, language proficiency and multilingualism. When adopted as a communicative approach, code switching can enable students to survive with academic discourses, embrace social cultural norms and embracing the broader sociolinguistic dynamics.

Methodology

Area of Study

This research was conducted at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Mwanza Regional with the purpose to describe the extent to which sociocontextual may be determining factors for students' code switching behavior. The study was conducted at the OUT because of its uniqueness in education delivery which does not require students to be on campus fulltime and students' diverse linguistic resources. The OUT is an educational institution which attracts students from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds that are likely to motivate students to engage in code-switching discourse during their communications. The linguistic resources at the OUT include Kiswahili, English, and ethnic languages which provide a gap to investigate on students' code switching behaviour in the ODL settings. The ODL involves flexible learning which encourages interaction both formal and informal environment that are suitable to pursue a sociolinguistic study among the students. The OUT was a relevant location to examine how the social and contextual impacts on students' communicative approaches such as code switching. The OUT students were engaged in this study at different intervals, like when they visited the centre, during exams period, and involvement in group discussions.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study used stratified random sampling technique to select 213 participants. The sample size involved students from various academic programmes, different age groups, and different levels in order to ensure representation of students across the faculties. The population of the study was divided into strata based on their study programmes as presented in the table. The respondents were randomly chosen from each division in proportion to the size of the particular group. As demonstrated in Table 1, the Bachelor of Arts with Education programme contributed the largest group, with 87 students, reflecting its larger enrolment size (OUT Facts and Figures, 2022/2023). The

Bachelor of Business and Human Resource Management programme followed with 56 students. Meanwhile, 30 students were selected from the Bachelor of Laws programme, 16 from the Bachelor of Science with Education programme, and 24 from the Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics. The sample was broadly distributed in order to obtain relevant information from different academic programmes and age groups that enriched this research to capture students' language practices in various areas of study.

Respondents

The study involved a representative sample of 213 university students from various faculties. Participants were divided into three age groups: those aged 18–23 comprised 99 students (46.5%), those aged 24–29 accounted for 98 students (46.0%), and participants aged 30 and above were fewer, with 16 students (7.5%). In terms of sex, male participants constituted the majority, with 126 students (59.2%), while female participants made up 87 students (40.8%). The study also categorised participants by academic year: 59 first-year students (27.7%), 54 second-year students (25.4%), 96 third-year students (45.1%), and 4 students from other academic levels (1.9%).

Regarding academic programmes, participants were selected from a range of disciplines. The largest group was from the Bachelor of Arts with Education programme, with 87 students. Other participants included 30 students from the Bachelor of Laws programme, 56 from the Bachelor of Business and Human Resource Management programme, 16 from the Bachelor of Science with Education programme, and 24 from the Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics programme, as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Variable	Category	Number (N)	Frequency (%)
Age	18-23	99	46.5
	24-29	98	46.0
	30 and above	16	7.5
TOTAL		213	100
Gender	Male	126	59.2
	Female	87	40.8
TOTAL		213	100
Programme of study	BAED	87	40.8
	LLB	30	14.1
	BHRM	56	26.3
	BA	24	11.3
	Linguistics BSc.	16	7.5
	Education		
TOTAL		213	100
Year of Study	First Year	59	27.7
	Second Year	54	25.4
	Third Year	96	45.1
	Other	4	1.9
TOTAL		213	100

Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire. The scale items were adopted from previous scholars, such as Creswell and Creswell (2017), with the research instrument employing a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, respectively.

The questionnaire was organised into three sections. Section A focused on demographic characteristics; Section B contained 13 items related to social identity factors influencing code-switching, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.60; and Section C included 12 items on contextual factors influencing code-switching, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.69. The design of the questionnaire was based on the established survey methods that was informed by Gumperz (1982) in *Discourse Strategies*. This approach discusses how

situational contexts such as formality or informality may influence language use including code switching practices.

The procedures for data collection involved distributing the questionnaires to selected students from various university programmes in order to collect necessary information. 30 to 45 minutes were allocated for each participant to complete the questionnaire. The completed questionnaires, were collected for further handling data and analysis.

Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected through questionnaires were sorted and organised systematically for a proper analysis. The responses from questionnaires were categorised and labelled systematically using a coding system. In relation to the objectives of the study, the data were processed using the SPSS software version 23 for a thorough analysis and interpretation. The findings were interpreted and reported basing on their size and uncertainty in quantitative measures such as descriptive statistics including standard deviations and means as maintained by (Larson-Hall and Plonsky, 2015).

Findings and Discussion

Table 2 presents the results analysed by using descriptive statistical tools, demonstrating social identity factors that may influence code-switching patterns.

Table 2: Social identity factors influencing code switching

Statements of the Social Identity Factors	N	Mean	Standard deviation
I code switch to language of preference to connect with my classmates in study groups	213	1.11	.34
I use a specific language to align with peers of common cultures during group discussion	213	1.50	.61
I choose the language most commonly used by my friends in working groups	213	1.62	.58
I use language based on whether I want to present myself as more formal or casual in academic discussions.	213	3.12	1.351
I switch to a more academic language when discussing with professors and	213	3.41	1.21

during formal presentations			
I use a different language when I want to reflect professionalism in group discussions and presentations/seminars	213	3.11	1.17
I change languages to show level of formality and respect when addressing university staff	213	2.98	1.29
My choice of language changes based on the status of the interlocutor in academics	213	2.81	1.11
I use a certain language to portray my academic social status during formal academic interactions	213	2.87	1.27
I adjust my language to suit the code-switching patterns of my colleagues in study groups and class activities	213	3.08	1.08
I code switch languages to associate with the language behaviours of my classmates and friends during informal discussions	213	2.98	1.275
I prefer to use my language to express my cultural identity when engaged in multicultural or international student activities	213	2.81	1.478
I switch languages to keep the bond with my cultural roots during academic and social interactions	213	3.44	1.286
OVERALL MEAN		2.67	.030

The results indicate that social identity, including professional status, cultural heritage, and group dynamics plays a fundamental role in determining the sociolinguistic dynamics of code-switching among university students. With social identity determinants, the overall score of 2.67 out of 5 suggests that although students' linguistic choices are connected to their social identities in both academic and social contexts, it is not the most determinant influencing factor in students' code switching practices. The reasonably average score of social identity reflects its significance in language discourse such as code switching while sociolinguistic factors such as contextual factors might embrace more influence in particular communicative setting.

For instance, the students' tendency of code-switching during formal and informal

academic discussions ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.35$) presents the students' understanding of linguistic appropriateness that is determined by perception of a social identity factor. This finding corresponds with the theory of Labov (1971) highlighting that the use of language is associated with the speaker's social identity and its context. Similarly, scholars such as Gumperz (1982) and Miller (2000) present language as a resource for representing and revealing social identity and group memberships. This is confirmed in the results that interactions with professors ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.21$) motivate students' alteration in their language use to show respect and professionalism.

The study further observed that language signifies professional prestige in class discussions ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.17$) as students employ code-switching to demonstrate linguistic competence and meet academic standard. According to Ali and Mwila (2021), code switching to English denotes high status discourse because of the prestige attached to the language. Also, the findings are supported by Nazeri *et al.* (2022) who argue that code switching is instrumental as it enables both lecturers and students to achieve educational goals. However, Galegane, (2020) insists that, code switching is a result of deficiency in linguistic skills such English and indigeneous language like Kiswahili.

Furthermore, social identity reflect its significance influential factor in group dynamics within academic groups and peer communication. The data reflects ($M = 1.11$, $SD = 0.34$) that students rarely code switch with intention to match group preferences. However, students change between languages more frequently when they want to collaborate with peer from the same norms and cultural backgrounds ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.61$). The communication accommodation theory (CAT) emphasises that people use common language practices to make their in-group relationship stronger (Pérez-Sabater, 2017; Beaver & Denlinger, 2022).

The data further revealed that students' language behaviour changes in order to adapt to the speech patterns of their fellows ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.08$), and also, they do code switching so as to associate with their classmates' language practices ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.28$). This is supported in Giles *et al.* (1991) and Decker & Grummitt (2017) insisting that students' language choice can be influenced by group dynamics reflecting linguistic accommodation as they adjust to a specific language pattern suitable for academics and social engagements. In addition, the findings portray language as a social indicator ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.27$) which means that, students code switch to represent their social status and academic competence subject to the context of communication. As argued that, language practices among people can symbolises their norms and cultures as well as social belongings (Pappamihel & Lynn, 2016; Pérez-Sabater, 2017).

Furthermore, the results show that students code switch in order to upkeep with cultural relations in their discussions ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.29$) and ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.48$) indicate that students alternate between languages to embrace their cultural practices. Thus, cultural identity plays a vital role in influencing code switching behaviour in the

multilingual/multicultural settings. This is in line with Myers-Scotton (1993) and Edwards (2009) who argue that language functions as a tool which represent and preserve cultural identity. In linguistically diverse settings like universities, students navigate through code-switching practices that allow them to manipulate multiple identities while reinforcing their cultural backgrounds. This idea is supported by Giles *et al.* (1991) and Hall and Nilep (2015) who attest that language is more than being a communicative tool as it acts as a symbol to reflect identity and social membership. Table 3 highlight the findings that were analysed using averages and standard deviations to provide description of how contextual variable may impact on language practices such as code switching.

Table 3: Contextual factors influencing code switching

Statements of the Contextual Factors Influencing code switching	N	MEAN (N)	STANDARD DEVIATION
I switch languages to maintain the speech patterns of my peers in study groups	213	3.08	1.08
I adapt languages to suit topic of discussion during casual activities with my colleagues	213	2.98	1.27
I switch to a speech pattern relevant to field of study	213	2.81	1.47
I code switch to align the culture of the university	213	3.44	1.28
I adjust languages to accommodate speakers with multilingual abilities	213	3.46	1.19
My language choice can be influenced by the social norms or expectations associated with different academic contexts	213	3.59	1.04
My language choice is based on social and cultural practices of the university	213	3.32	1.28
I prefer to code switch in a language that I feel more relaxed	213	3.56	1.11
I use language that corresponds with the academic standard and expectations	213	3.31	1.11
I use language suitable for given academic task e.g. group work or collaborative assignment	213	3.74	1.26
I code switch to academic speech pattern in lectures/seminars and academic assignments	213	3.33	1.29
I change the language use in relation to level of formality necessary for academic activities	213	3.31	1.43
OVERALL MEAN		3.46	.62

The results for objective two reveal that contextual factors contribute greatly in shaping sociolinguistic, influences students' use of language with average score of 3.46 out of 5. This finding presents the degree to which academic context with its variables impacts on students' language preferences and language approach such as code-switching. The primary contextual influence is portrayed by students' need to associate their language with that of their fellows in study groups ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.08$). The Accommodation Theory (Giles *et al.*, 1991) supports the contention as it argues that people adjust their use of language in order to align with the speech patterns of those in the context of communication. This is due to the fact that people code switch in order to enhance communication and strengthen social cohesion. According to Dewaele and Wei (2014), students consciously code-switch to modify their speech patterns to facilitate collaboration in academic environment and to embrace their group dynamics. On the other hand, the topic of discussion seems to have a lesser role in language choice with friends ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.27$), this indicates that peer influence stands more dynamic than the content of conversations (Brice & Brice, 2000).

Furthermore, academic discipline motivates students to code-switch, as they adjust their language to correspond the linguistic norms and practices of specific fields of study ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.47$). According to Hyland, 2004; Brice and Brice, 2000), each academic discipline establishes their specialised jargons that motivates students to use language in relation to particular fields. This finding is supported in research by Hyland (2004) which presents the specialised academic conventions to greatly influence linguistic choices particularly in academic writing and communication discourse. Likewise, university culture can influence students to alternate between languages for institutional cultural adaptation and acceptance ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.28$). An academic environment with diverse linguistic profile can make students shift in language use in order to conform to social and cultural norms of the institution (Canagarajah, 2024). Language varieties at the university as revealed in data ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.19$) further indicate how multilingualism encourages flexibility in language use in different contexts (Dewaele & Wei, 2014).

Lastly, the study shows that social norms strongly shape language choices in academic settings ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.04$), during academic ceremonies and cultural events at university with students adapt to a speech pattern suitable for use ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.28$). Language adaptation reflects the multicultural nature which allows students to alternate across varying cultural expectations (Canagarajah, 2024). Similarly, students are more comfortable to use the language of their choice in a particular contexts ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.11$) underlines the idea that context might affect language choices. Educational undertakings such as lectures and group works also act as determinants of language use and the degree of formality ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.26$). Dewaele and Wei (2014) supports the findings by claiming that the nature of academic discourse and context dictates the multifaceted linguistic dynamics and formality. According to Er and Özata (2020), formal

language tends to encourage more structured language use, contrary to informal language that allows greater flexibility in its use such as group discussions as reflected in the findings on the influence of classroom formality ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.43$) 14. By summing up, social identity as presented shows to have impact on students' language behaviour while contextual factors contribute more significantly in determining the students' dynamics of language practices and substantial use of their linguistic resources.

Contribution of the Study

The study presents how sociolinguistic factors such as social identity and context influence students' language practices like code switching. In the first objective, the findings indicate that social identity such as professional status, cultural heritage, and group dynamics impact on students' code-switching behaviour. The results portray the strategic use of code switching in academic settings, interacting with high status people like professors and the representation of professionalism in academic discussions. These findings concur with sociolinguistic theories by Labov (1971) and Gumperz (1982) that present the role of language to signify social identity, and Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles et al., 1991) that maintains peer group norms. The second objective which examined contextual factors, the study observed that code switching was strongly influenced by variables such as university culture, peer dynamics, and the multilingual environment at mean score (3.46). The findings further reveal that students adjust to linguistic norms for group membership and collaboration, corresponding to Hyland's (2004) theory on the field related language conventions. Students in multilingual environment choose their preferred form of communication to meet social needs and academic standards (Dewaele and Wei, 2014).

Limitation of the Study

In spite the above contribution, the study have constraints that should be taken into consideration. The study dependence on descriptive statistical data might introduce subjectivity because students may not fully capture their real life experiences on complexity of their code-switching practices at the university contexts. Also, the study is greatly centred on academic settings, by overlooking at the role of contexts with the prevalent multilingualism such as familial or community settings, where code-switching is equally relevant. Furthermore, contextual factors were well explored (e.g. group dynamics and disciplinary expectations). However, a more in-depth inquiry is needed, following the results on the influence of specific academic disciplines ($M = 2.81$) and conversational topics ($M = 2.98$). Therefore, further study could focus more on qualitative research to get a deeper understanding of the relationship between social identities and contextual as

determinants of students' language behaviour particularly code switching in a diverse linguistic background.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study recommends for a qualitative instrument such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in order to complement quantitative data by providing understandings on factors influencing code-switching practices among multilingual university students. In addition, further undertakings should search on the interrelationship between social identity and contextual factors affecting students' language use. To sum up, the study strongly recommends universities to recognise the role of multilingualism in enhancing academic performance and promoting social dynamics.

Largely, the findings indicate that both social identity and contextual factors were influential to university students' language use. The study concludes that contextual factors (e.g. academic context, institutional expectancies) appeared the strongest determinants compared to social identity (e.g. cultural heritage, professional status and group dynamics) which were less prevalent in influencing students' practice in using languages. These outcomes provide an insightful understanding of code-switching phenomenon being shaped by social and contextual elements. It further highlights the significance of conducive and inclusive educational environment that accommodates the multilingual resources found in multilingual environments.

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