University Teaching through the Medium of English: Code-mixing or Code-switching?

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Abstract: The internationalization of Russian higher education contributes to the steady increase in the number of courses and programmes in the intermediary language, which in most cases is English, steadily gaining the status of the language of instruction. The article deals with the linguistic phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing in the context of university teaching of special disciplines in English, which is a foreign or a second language for all participants in the educational process – teachers and students. Particular attention is paid to the distinction between the terms "code-switching" (CS) and "code-mixing" (CM), which is of practical significance for the formation of the methodology of teaching special disciplines in an intermediate language as a special field of professional linguodidactics, as well as for the formation of the content of professional development programmes for university teachers. The phenomenon of code-switching discussed in the article deserves close attention of linguists and psycholinguists, but in this article the author limits herself to studying speech behavior of bilingual university teachers from the linguodidactic point of view. Thus, this study lies in the field of pedagogy and is an attempt to determine the nature of switching from English as the language of instruction or intermediary language to Russian as the native language in the aspect of the English-Russian code-mixing and code-switching. The subject under study in this case is the attitude of Russian-speaking university teachers to the role of the native language in the process of teaching the subject in English by means of a survey. The results of the survey, though subjective, allow us to make a primary statement that the observed transitions from the language of instruction (English) to the native language (Russian) in the teacher's speech represent cases of marked and conscious code-switching, carried out in the context of the educational process, rather than code-mixing. The study was conducted at St. Petersburg State University, the participants included teachers of special disciplines of a wide range of the humanities and sciences.

Keywords: Code-switching (CS); Code-mixing (CM); Insertions; Language as a medium of instruction, English as a medium of instruction, Internationalization of higher education, Bilingual higher education in Russia

1. Introduction

The development of a global network of higher education and a worldwide academic community contributes to the creation of a multilingual environment in the global educational space. Higher education in Europe and Asia is no longer exclusively monolingual and requires updated pedagogical approaches [1].

Bilingualism has become a characteristic feature of higher education in many European and Asian countries. English, as a language of international communication, has rapidly transformed into a lingua franca in the realm of higher education and academia. The stable position of English as the dominant language in higher education and academic communication is driven by the ever-increasing volume of

scientific publications and articles in English, international research projects, academic mobility, and the continuous growth of university courses and educational programs offered in English. Leading universities, aiming for educational internationalization, are increasingly using English as the lingua franca of the academic community and as the language of instruction in countries where it is not the native language, as emphasized by researchers studying the internationalization of higher education and the role of English in European countries [2-6], as well as in Asian countries [7]. The scale of this phenomenon is often referred to as the anglicization of higher education [8,9].

The internationalization of Russian higher education and its integration into the global educational space is also accompanied by the increasing of the role of the English language. Since Russia's participation in the Bologna Process in 2003, Russian higher education has been focused on increasing their export potential, and Russia's leading universities have been striving to improve their rankings and international prestige overall to attract international prestige and attract foreign students, which will secure financial resources for further stable development [10]. As a result, the issue of teaching specialized disciplines in English is no longer a subject of debate, and the number of academic courses taught in English and English medium educational programs is increasing annually. However, there is currently no consensus among key figures in Russian higher education of special disciplines in English there is no consensus among leading figures in Russian higher education regarding the teaching of specialized disciplines in English, and unified approaches to the implementation of English in the educational process of Russian universities have not been fully developed yet.

Teaching specialized disciplines in English gradually encompasses various fields and specialties. Today, Russian-speaking university professors give lectures and/or conduct practical or seminar sessions in English for Russian-speaking students, while there may not be any foreign students in the course who actively engage in interactions in English. In this context, English serves as a medium of instruction or a language of teaching and is also a foreign/second language for all participants in the educational process. In the Russian terminology system, a stable term denoting the language of instruction has not yet been established. The term "language mediator" [11] is encountered, which is often used in the context of teaching a foreign language, where the native language of the learners acts as the language mediator. To designate English as the "universal contact tool" of the internationalization process and specialized communication in the educational environment, the somewhat cumbersome term "subject-oriented English lingua franca" has been suggested [12]. The British Council proposes using the term "lingua academica." In the works of foreign authors, the established phrase "English as a medium of instruction," abbreviated as EMI, is used, which can be translated into Russian as "английский как язык обучения" (English as the language of instruction). This term has already been recognized and has become part of the English terminology system. The term "language mediator" does not imply the dominant role of English, and as a result, it is considered politically correct and neutral.

Teaching specialized disciplines in English in universities where English is not the official language has drawn the attention of specialists and has become the subject of research. One of the main focuses of such research is the speech behavior of teachers or instructor discourse in the mediator language or language of instruction, which is different from their native language. The research findings indicate that all participants in the educational process, both teachers and students, engage in code-switching, switching from the language of instruction to their native language [13,14]. A literature review revealed only four articles by foreign authors presenting the results of code-switching research in the context of teaching specialized disciplines in universities. One particularly interesting study explores the pedagogical functions of code-switching in the speech of eight Spanish-speaking university instructors, based on a qualitative method: linguistic discourse analysis of their lectures and sessions [15]. Another significant study was conducted in Indonesian universities, where qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews involving 28

instructors were used to investigate the attitudes of Indonesian university instructors towards teaching specialized disciplines in English [16]. A noteworthy fundamental research project explored the code-switching phenomenon from several African languages to English, aiming to examine the interaction between the mediator language and the native language of instructors and students [17]. Another large-scale code-switching study in Chinese universities aimed to identify the language needs of university instructors teaching students in the mediator language (English) and was conducted using a quantitative survey method [18].

Let us note that higher education is also the most important sphere for the interaction of language codes. The increase in the number of courses and programs conducted in the intermediary language will inevitably lead to the formation of pedagogical approaches and methodological principles reflecting the specificities of teaching specialized disciplines in the intermediary language.

The relevance of this study is justified by the fact that the phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing in the context of teaching specialized disciplines in the mediator language in Russian higher education institutions seems to be insufficiently studied. Our study issue of code-mixing and code-switching to the Russian language in context of teaching specialized disciplines in the English is an attempt to fill this gap.

The purpose of this study is to determine the nature of the switch from the intermediary language to the native language in the speech of bilingual university teachers, to find out the reasons of this switch, and the respondents' attitudes towards the use of their native language in the context of teaching university disciplines in the intermediate language in general.

The novelty of this research lies in the fact that language phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing in the discourse of bilingual university instructors have become the subject of study in Russian linguodidactics for the first time. The analysis of the survey results and initial conclusions can hold practical significance in the development of a domestic methodology for teaching specialized disciplines in the mediator language as a specialized area of professional linguodidactics. Additionally, it can contribute to shaping the content of professional development programs for faculty members in Russian universities.

2. Distinguishing between "code-switching" and "code-mixing"

The linguistic phenomena of code switching (CS) and code mixing (CM) have been discussed in foreign linguistics for the last four decades. The study of language contact issues has evolved into an independent branch of linguistics, within which CS and CM are considered the most common speech behavior patterns of bilingual individuals. Attempts to build a unified theory during the process of understanding empirical data have not yet been successful, and the proposed approaches are controversial, using different terminological systems. In foreign linguistics, there are various interpretations of CS and CM, and there is no consensus among researchers regarding the definitions of these phenomena. Alongside scholars who consider only the concept of CS or use the terms CS and CM interchangeably, there are also those who attempt to differentiate between these two phenomena. The distinction between the concepts and terms of CS and CM is considered extremely important for this research.

The distinction proposed by Myers-Scotton between marked and unmarked choices in CS is significant for understanding the essence of CS. Marked CS occurs when the speaker consciously switches in a way that is noticeable to the interlocutor [19]. The differentiation between intersentential CS (between sentences) and intrasentential CS (within a sentence) is also important, although it is interpreted differently. Myers-Scotton considers both types of CS as internally unified phenomena [19], while Muysken, on the contrary, opposes them and identifies intrasentential CS with CM [20]. Myers-Scotton also introduced the opposition of matrix and embedded languages involved in intrasentential CS. In this case, the primary language (the language of the grammatical frame of the sentence) and the embedded language (from which "insertions"

or "embedded elements" are made) are distinguished. Muysken, like other researchers, identifies "insertion" of material (lexical units or entire constituents) from one language into the structure of another language within intrasentential code-switching, but he also identifies "alternation" between structures of the interacting languages. It is evident that Myers-Scotton and Muysken present the process of speech production in CS differently. Eppler describes two more types of CS: "smooth" and "flagged" [21]. Smooth CS is characterized as an unconscious process and corresponds to unmarked CS according to Myers-Scotton, whereas flagged CS is intentional and functionally marked.

The lack of consensus and differing views on defining the concepts of CS and CM indicates the complexity of these phenomena in bilingual speech, which prevents accepting Myers-Scotton's viewpoint that "introducing the concept of CM alongside CS adds unnecessary confusion to the problem" [22]. In her article "On the Differentiation of the Concepts of 'Code-Switching' and 'Code-Mixing,'" Mutyilina analyzes the psycholinguistic nature of CS and CM phenomena in Russian-Chinese bilingual speech. To establish criteria for differentiating these two concepts, not only the dictionary definitions of "switching" and "mixing" were used but also the interpretation of the processes from the perspective of physiology and psycholinguistics. Thus, regarding linguistic codes, we can talk about complete replacement or transition from one to another during code-switching and about the coexistence or non-separation of codes during code-mixing [23].

The distinction between the terms "code-mixing" (CM) and "code-switching" (CS) can also be based on the semantics of the words "смешение" (mixing) and "переключение" (switching). CM is more commonly observed in individuals with low language proficiency. Essentially, CM refers to the process of using two or more languages in speech and tends to become a stable characteristic of the speaker. CS on the other hand, or "смешанный язык" (mixed language), is characterized by having the grammar of one language and the lexicon of two languages, whereas CM involves the grammar and lexicon of two languages and thus sounds more fluent [24].

Indeed, the field of domestic linguistics has shown interest in CM and CS, especially concerning various issues related to borrowing and bilingualism. Zhiganova, who investigated these phenomena in advertising discourse, argues that CS is a motivated process, as it serves a specific function in the communication situation. On the other hand, CM tends to be spontaneous, often occurring within closely related word combinations and lacking functional motivation [25]. The ability to code-switch indicates a relatively high level of language proficiency and a certain level of communicative and general culture of a person. The mechanisms of CS facilitate mutual understanding between individuals and provide relative comfort in the process of speech communication [26]. Therefore, the study of these phenomena in the context of domestic linguistics is relevant and sheds light on various linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of language use.

Let us agree with the proposed differentiation of the terms code-switching (CS) and code-mixing (CM), and in this article, we will consider CS as a conscious transition from one language to another, while CM as an unconscious transition between languages. Thus, our primary interest lies in the pragmatic aspect of CS, where the speaker intentionally switches between languages with a specific purpose in mind. Consciously CS enables the speaker to achieve certain communicative goals. Therefore, we view CS as a functional and consciously controlled phenomenon.

When considering CS and CM, it is essential to mention the English term "insertion," which can be translated into Russian as "вставки" or "вкрапления" (both meaning "insertions"). This term refers to the mechanism of using individual lexemes from one language in the speech of another language, essentially representing "insertions" or elements of the included language in the process of speaking on the matrix or base languages. The terms "вставки" and "вкрапления" do not have semantic differences, as they are used to denote the same English concept of "insertions," translated into Russian using two synonymous words.

In this article, for further reference to the words, phrases, and sentences inserted in the language of instruction from the native language, the term "вкрапления" will be used. The reasons for "вкрапления" can vary, including emphasizing specific points, reflecting new phenomena, striving for speech economy, etc. Thus, "вкрапления" serve as examples of the CS phenomenon.

Intra-sentential code-switching, where "вкрапления" consist of individual lexical units (words, phrases, idiomatic expressions, etc.), is referred to as brief or short-term code-switching. On the other hand, intersentential code-switching, where "вкрапления" consist of one or more sentences, is called extended or long-term code-switching. However, regardless of its duration, this phenomenon is categorized as code-switching.

Thus, within the scope of this research, code-switching is examined in terms of the degree of intentionality and consciousness in switching to another language. Code-switching is characterized by a specific communicative function or pragmatic intention of the speaker. It is used consciously by the speaker with the aim of achieving a certain result.

Protsenko suggests that all modern studies on CS and CM are based on three main sets of CS factors, which divide the research into three directions: external, sociolinguistic or "on the spot"; internal, psycholinguistic or "in the head"; and linguistic or "out of mouth" [27]. This study focuses on the pedagogical factors of code-switching, which belong to the internal or psycholinguistic factors (in the head).

3. Aims, objectives and method of research

The object of this study is the speech activity of university professors who are bilingual and capable of explaining their subject in more than one language, specifically in Russian and English. We adopt the prevailing broad understanding of bilingualism in linguistics and acknowledge that language competence should be considered at different levels of language proficiency. In this study, CS is understood in a broad sense as switching from one language to another during the process of teaching or learning. As described earlier, the nature of CS can be either conscious or marked (CCS) or unconscious (UCS). The speech situation, social status, and roles of the participants remain unchanged; only the topic of interaction within the educational course or discipline varies.

The main purpose of this study is to determine the nature of switching from English as the language of instruction to Russian as the native language in the aspect of the English-Russian CM and CS. The central focus of the study revolves around the question of whether switching from the medium language to the native language in the teaching discourse should be classified as CS or CM.

The subject of this research was the attitude of Russian-speaking bilingual university instructors towards the simultaneous use of English and Russian languages in a rather atypical situation, where English is the dominant or primary language of instruction, and Russian, being the native language for the instructors and most students, serves as the "supportive" language. The choice of studying CS from English to Russian is not arbitrary. It is driven by the fact that such CS is a characteristic feature of the teaching discourse in the context of instructing students for whom Russian is their native language while being taught in English.

To achieve the objective, it was necessary to solve a number of tasks: to define key concepts and terminological framework of the study; to study the nature and characteristics of the English-Russian CS and CM, taking into account the subject of interaction and educational context; to determine the pragmatic function of using Russian language elements in teaching discourse; to determine the factors that stimulate English-Russian CS and/or CM in the speech of a bilingual teacher.

The target group of this research comprises Russian-speaking bilingual university instructors who conduct seminars, practical classes, and/or lectures in various university disciplines in English, which is not their native language. The participants of the anonymous survey in this study were instructors from

different faculties of St. Petersburg State University. Among the 23 respondents who participated in the survey, there were instructors from faculties of international relations, law, medicine, psychology, physics, earth sciences, sociology, economics, philology, journalism, and management. The respondents had teaching experience in English or the medium of instruction ranging from 1 to 7 years and an overall teaching experience from 5 to 23 years. All participants of the survey were attendees of an intensive course titled "English for Instructors of Special Disciplines in Universities," organized to enhance their qualifications. As part of this course, the respondents were introduced to the concepts of "code-switching" (CS), "code-mixing" (CM), and "insertions," which was necessary to ensure accurate responses during the survey.

Characterizing the target group of St. Petersburg State University (SPbSU) teachers, it is important to note that their level of proficiency in the English language ranges from B1+ to B2+ on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The primary research method used was an anonymous survey of the target group, conducted through the widely-known online platform MonkeySurvey, which provides cloud-based software for developing, administering, and visualizing the results of online surveys. The survey consisted of closed-ended "Yes/No" questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. Additionally, the questionnaire included a set of questions about the respondents' characteristics (gender, age, teaching experience, experience in teaching specialized disciplines in English). Due to the article's limitations, the complete survey questionnaire cannot be presented in full.

4. Analysis of the results of the study and initial conclusions

This article will analyze the answers of respondents to the following 5 questions:
1. What is your attitude towards using your native (Russian) language in the process of teaching an academic discipline in an intermediate language (English)? (Answer options: positive/negative);
2. Do you switch to your native (Russian) language during the course of the lesson? (Yes/No);
3. If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, please indicate whether you are doing it consciously and with specific intentions? (Yes/No);
4. How often do you switch to your native language (Russian)? (Answer options: occasionally/at every lesson);
5. For what purpose do you switch to your native (Russian) language? (Pedagogical, learning/educational, organizational, etc.) Give examples of situations in which you make "insertions" of your native language.

The central hypothesis of this study was the assumption that in the English-speaking discourse of university professors teaching special disciplines, CS occurs intentionally and with a specific purpose rather than being CM. Based on the findings, it was observed that among the respondents there was unanimous agreement (Question 2 – 100%), indicating that CS is indeed a conscious process of intentionally switching to the native language with a specific communicative intention.

The analysis of the responses obtained during this survey convincingly indicates that Russian-speaking university professors intentionally switch to their native language (Russian) from the medium language (English) and have a well-defined purpose for doing so. 100% of the respondents answered positively to this question. The vast majority of the respondents (94% of those who answered "Yes" to question 1) expressed confidence that switching to the native language is necessary and has a positive impact on the quality of education. The respondents who advocated for excluding the native language from the teaching process were in the minority (6% of those who answered "No" to question 1). This allows us to conclude that the majority of respondents are proponents of including the native language in the English-medium instruction. Thus, the answer to the key research question of whether Russian-speaking university professors are advocates of including their native language (inclusivity) has been obtained. However,

making generalizations and drawing conclusions based on the findings of this study presented in this article may be somewhat premature due to the relatively small representative sample of respondents in the conducted survey.

Most respondents indicated that they switch to Russian language in every class (question 4: occasionally – 2%; at every lesson – 98%).

The survey data allow us to make an initial conclusion that CS serves as a means or tool for solving conscious communicative, often pedagogical, tasks or problems. The overall cultural and intellectual level of university teachers, as well as their high level of professional competence, encourages them to use the CS for pedagogical purposes. From this, we can conclude that CS can be considered as one of the pedagogical strategies in the context of teaching through a language intermediary to achieve various educational goals.

The more detailed analysis of the survey data reveals that teachers use CS to achieve various pedagogical goals and tasks. It is noteworthy that many respondents emphasized the principle of appropriateness when using CS. Interestingly, all respondents (question 5 - 100%) identified the goals of CS as pedagogical, although they used different formulations such as "educational," "instructional," "methodological," or "educational" goals. This indicates that teachers view CS as a valuable pedagogical tool to enhance the learning process and achieve educational objectives effectively.

The data from the survey shows that more than half of the respondents (68%) mentioned administrative goals for CS, which pertain to addressing organizational issues related to the educational process rather than the content of the discipline being taught. Examples of administrative CS included providing explanations about the grading system, intricacies of the grading and ranking system, student requirements, and discipline-related matters. Respondents viewed CS as a means to simplify and expedite the resolution of administrative and organizational matters in their native language.

A small number of respondents (12%) also mentioned that they used the CS as a way to bridge the gap with students, establish contact with the study group, and create a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

Other responses from the respondents regarding the goals of CS included formulations indicating the intention of the teacher to "ensure full understanding of key concepts and/or terms by students," "overcome students' lack of understanding of course material," "enhance the effectiveness of the learning process," "verify that students have understood the course material," "establish rapport with the group," "assist students," and more. Despite variations in the formulations, there is still reason to believe that CS is directed towards solving pedagogical tasks that the teacher sets for themselves consciously. Some of the provided formulations point exclusively to pedagogical goals. The formulations related to establishing contact with the group also have communicative and social nature; however, strictly speaking, even these tasks can be considered pedagogical, especially considering the higher education institution's efforts to make the educational process student-centered.

In response to the request in question 5 to provide examples of situations where the teacher makes a conscious decision to switch to their native language and/or use code-switching, the respondents described frequent situations that trigger CS in a free form. Despite the variety of formulated answers, the analysis of the data allowed us to identify a number of the most common CS situations, and we present only those in this article that did not raise doubts or discrepancies during the analysis of the provided responses.

The most frequent situation of code-switching with insertions of the native language into the target language (L2) was the introduction of new concepts or terms related to the taught subject, as described by 87% of the survey participants. Respondents explained that during the process of knowledge acquisition in the subject, they aim to develop students' terminological systems in both the target language (L2) and their native language. Many respondents viewed CS as a strategy to help students establish correspondences between terms in English and Russian. They emphasized the importance of building a conceptual

framework in the subject to enable students to read and understand literature in both English and their native language. This is a natural inclination of the teacher to educate specialists capable of conducting scientific research in two languages and becoming bilingual professionals in their field. Such arguments were particularly prominent among teachers in disciplines and fields of knowledge that have made significant contributions to Russian science and possess fundamental scientific works in Russian that students should be acquainted with. In the situation of introducing new concepts and terms, the teacher consciously makes insertions in the form of Russian terms, thus establishing correspondence between the two terminological systems: English and Russian. In this case, CS can be regarded as a way of semanticizing new terminological lexicon, alongside translation or visual semanticization [28].

Slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) also mentioned using CS to repeat in their native language what was said in the target language (L2) in situations where they receive verbal and non-verbal signals from students indicating difficulties in understanding what was spoken in the L2. Upon receiving such a signal, the teacher first repeats what was said clearly and slowly in the L2, and if additional communicative signals or requests for help are received, they use CS with insertions of their native language, starting with occasional insertions and then, if the effectiveness is low, resorting to intersentential CS. CS with the aim of repeating what was said in a language familiar to the recipient ensures adequate understanding [29]. In this case, the question of the function of CS remains open: whether it serves a purely linguistic function or has a pedagogical purpose.

The language systems of the intermediary language (in our case, English) and the inclusion language (in our case, Russian) mutually complement each other, forming not only a socio-communicative but also a professionally-oriented system for the bilingual teacher in the educational context. CS in the bilingual teacher is an important competence that reflects the communicative flexibility of the individual, the ability to modify and adapt their speech depending on the communicative situation, conditions, and factors of interaction. Marked and conscious CS, therefore, "is one of the components that form a multilingual and multicultural language personality, possessing a high level of social intelligence." [30].

5. Conclusion

The conducted survey, therefore, allowed us to hypothesize that in the speech of bilingual teachers, we are dealing with "code-switching" rather than "code-mixing" on the grounds that this code-switching is conscious and has specific pedagogical goals. This assertion undoubtedly needs confirmation and further research with a much more representative sample of university teachers. A survey as a quantitative research method cannot provide highly reliable results due to the subjectivity of the obtained responses. In future research on teacher discourse, it is necessary to use qualitative methods, which, in combination with quantitative methods, will ensure much higher reliability of the results.

Questions about the mechanisms of code-switching in the speech of bilingual teachers using a language of instruction, the nature of interlingual connections and how they operate, the most frequent linguistic units that unite them, and the pedagogical factors that influence them, require further study and research, particularly in the educational context of Russian higher education.

Currently, code-switching (CS) is an actively studied phenomenon, with each scientific discipline focusing on specific aspects of it. Linguistics investigates the structural aspects of CS within the language system, sociolinguistics identifies non-linguistic factors influencing CS, and psycholinguistics examines the internal mechanisms underlying CS. However, a deeper understanding of the essence of such a complex phenomenon as CS can only be achieved through interdisciplinary research [31]. CS in the context of teaching discourse also deserves close attention from specialists in the fields of professional language teaching, pedagogy, and andragogy.

It is necessary to resolve the key contradiction between the need of Russian higher education to teach

specialized disciplines in the target language and the necessity of developing pedagogical approaches and methodological principles that consider the specificity of this area in university pedagogy. It is also important to prevent attempts to transfer traditional teaching systems into the realm of teaching specialized disciplines in the target language, which may not be fully aligned with the integration of the latest educational technologies in higher education on the language of instruction. The primary goal of domestic language teaching methodology is to meet the demand of Russian higher education for university teachers who are prepared for professional activities in a bilingual and multilingual educational environment, using the target language as a medium of instruction.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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