

Code Switching

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Code switching is defined as a mode of communication available to bi/multilingual speakers. This strategy of communication is used by such speakers for various purposes in various situations. It is said that those who code switch do so primarily in order to establish intimacy and solidarity. Speakers are also seen as using this strategy of communication for rhetorical purpose.

The research undertaken in this area by me was prompted by Professor Thiru Kandiah's inspirational lectures on 'world Englishes'. This study examines the nature of code switching in the Sri Lankan context in the light of responses made by a group of 25 adults, male and female, ranging from age 25-70.

On the whole, the respondents revealed positive perception to code switching as a communication strategy. Establishing intimacy was found to be one of the reasons for code switching and respondents revealed that they often code switched in informal contexts.

The paper focuses on code switching as psychosocial phenomenon. To this end, it examines the reasons why speakers code switch. The analysis of the data reveals that the way in which speakers code switch indicates the way in which these speakers construe relationships in society. The examination also reveals attitudes of resistance and complicity in the use of code switching as a communicative strategy. This study brings to light the complexities involved in code switching in the Sri Lankan context today and also relates the phenomenon to the attitudes of its users.

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