

THE LANGUAGE OF INCLUSION: CODE-SWITCHING IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

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Annotation. This article examines the role of code-switching in political campaigns through a linguistic and sociolinguistic lens. Politicians who aim to connect with multilingual and multicultural audiences often alternate between languages during their speeches. This research identifies the rhetorical and symbolic functions of such switches and emphasizes how they contribute to the creation of inclusive political discourse. The methodology consists of a qualitative discourse analysis of speeches that were delivered by multilingual politicians. The findings indicate that code-switching functions as a tool for audience alignment, identity representation, and emotional emphasis. The study concludes that when code-switching is used authentically, it strengthens political engagement and fosters inclusivity among linguistically diverse voters.

Keywords: code-switching, political discourse, linguistic inclusivity, identity representation, rhetorical strategy, sociolinguistics.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada siyosiy doiralarda kod-almashish (code-switching) hodisasining lingvistik va sotsiolingvistik jihatlarini tahlil qilinadi. Turli tillarda soʻzlashuvchi va madaniy jihatdan xilma-xil auditoriyaga murojaat qilayotgan siyosatchilar oʻz nutqlari davomida koʻpincha bir tildan boshqa tilga oʻtadilar. Tadqiqotda kod-almashishning ritorik va ramziy funktsiyalari aniqlanib, uning inklyuziv (inklyuzivlikka yoʻnaltirilgan) siyosiy nutq yaratishdagi roli taʼkidlanadi. Koʻp tilli siyosatchilar tomonidan aytilgan nutqlar uchun tadqiqot metodologiyasi sifatida sifatli diskurs tahlili tanlangan. Tahlil natijalariga koʻra, kod-almashish auditoriyaga moslashish, shaxsiy va etnik identifikatsiyani ifodalash hamda hissiy taʼsir kuchini oshirish vositasi sifatida xizmat qiladi. Xulosa shuki, kod-almashish haqiqiy va kontekstga mos tarzda qoʻllanganda, u siyosiy ishtirokni kuchaytiradi va til jihatidan xilma-xil auditoriyalarning oʻzini bagʻrikenglik bilan qamrab olingandek his qilishga xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: kod-almashish, siyosiy nutq, lingvistik inklyuzivlik, identifikatsiya, ritorik strategiya, sotsiolingvistika.

Introduction

Code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon which occurs when a speaker uses two or more languages within the same communicative situation. Scholars such as Wardhaugh (1986) have defined it as the act in which a speaker alternates between language varieties during an interaction. In the context of political communication, code-switching serves both rhetorical and symbolic purposes. Politicians who speak to diverse audiences often choose language varieties that reflect the cultural and linguistic identity of those audiences.

Despite the widespread use of code-switching in modern political campaigns, limited research has explored its inclusive potential and the ways in which it affects the perception of authenticity. Some audiences view it as a sincere effort which reflects cultural awareness, while others interpret it as a manipulative strategy that lacks genuineness. This study addresses the gap which exists in the literature by investigating how code-switching operates as a persuasive tool in political discourse.

The aim of this study is to analyze the functions of code-switching in political campaigns and to determine whether it can promote inclusivity and audience engagement. The study focuses on the ways in which politicians use language alternation to express identity, build trust, and reach multilingual communities.

Blom and Gumperz (1972) introduced a distinction between situational and metaphorical code-switching. The former refers to language alternation which results from a change in social context, while the latter refers to alternation which allows the speaker to refer to more than one social meaning within the same situation. Gumperz (1982) later expanded this framework by identifying rhetorical characteristics which influence code choice. According to him, speakers rely on macro-social factors such as the social setting, type of event, and audience expectations when they select a code.

Myers-Scotton (1993) proposed the Markedness Model, suggesting that speakers use code-switching based on the social role they intend to adopt. The model views the speaker as a rational actor who selects codes with specific socio-psychological goals. Goffman (1981) supported this idea through his notion of “footing” which refers to shifts in alignment and stance expressed through changes in language.

Recent studies by Heller (1988), Gal (1998), and Li Wei (1998) have shown that code-switching plays a central role in identity performance and group membership. These scholars argue that speakers use multiple languages not only for functional purposes but also to construct hybrid identities. Within political discourse, this type of language use reflects a desire to be perceived as culturally aware and relatable.

Research Methodology

This study employs *qualitative discourse analysis* in order to examine selected political speeches that contain instances of code-switching. The sample includes speeches delivered by politicians who are publicly recognized for their bilingual or multilingual identities, including Barack Obama, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Kamala Harris.

Each speech was transcribed and analyzed manually in order to identify code-switching patterns. The analysis focused on three elements: the *context* in which the switch occurred, the *function* of the switch, and the *relationship* between the speaker and the audience. The aim was to determine how code-switching was used as a rhetorical device in various campaign settings.

Results

The data analysis revealed three primary functions of code-switching in political campaigns:

1. Audience Alignment and Cultural Recognition

Politicians used code-switching in order to acknowledge and respect the linguistic identity of their audience. For example, the inclusion of Spanish in speeches delivered to Hispanic communities created a sense of shared belonging. The speakers who used culturally specific phrases or greetings were often praised for their awareness and sensitivity.

2. Identity Representation

Code-switching also allowed politicians to express their own cultural or ethnic identities. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, for example, occasionally used Spanish expressions in order to affirm her Puerto Rican heritage. Such instances helped her build a personal connection with her constituents and reinforced her image as an authentic representative of minority voices.

3. Emotional and Rhetorical Emphasis

In several speeches, code-switching occurred at moments which carried strong emotional or symbolic weight. Politicians used it to highlight key points, deliver slogans, or reinforce calls to action. The strategic placement of another language at these moments increased emotional resonance and audience engagement.

Discussion

The results confirm that code-switching in political discourse fulfills both symbolic and instrumental functions. It enables politicians to position themselves as culturally competent individuals who understand the linguistic diversity of their electorate. Through language choice, speakers reinforce values such as inclusion, respect, and authenticity.

The findings are consistent with the theoretical perspectives of Gumperz and Myers-Scotton, who emphasized the strategic nature of code-switching. Politicians

who switch between languages not only adapt to the expectations of the audience but also shape how they are perceived in terms of identity and trustworthiness.

Although code-switching often promotes inclusivity, its success depends on the speaker's fluency and credibility. Audiences can detect insincerity when a language is used awkwardly or superficially. For instance, a politician who uses a foreign phrase without understanding its cultural significance may be criticized for tokenism. Moreover, in politically sensitive contexts, code-switching may be perceived as a divisive act rather than a unifying one. Politicians must, therefore, be cautious and deliberate in how they use language in multicultural settings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, code-switching is a valuable rhetorical resource in political communication which allows politicians to build cultural bridges, express identity, and promote inclusive messaging. When it is used authentically and in appropriate contexts, it enhances the speaker's credibility and emotional impact. As societies become increasingly multilingual, the strategic use of code-switching will continue to shape the effectiveness and reach of political campaigns.

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