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# Code-Switching in Multilingual Communities: Sociolinguistic Patterns and Identity Construction

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**ABSTRACT:** This qualitative sociolinguistic study examined how bilingual and multilingual adults used French and Spanish as secondary linguistic resources within an English-primary environment to manage interaction, social relationships, and situated identity across university and community domains. The aim was to clarify how code-switching episodes can be interpreted as discourse functions, identity claims, or accommodation practices when participants' interpretations and social context shape linguistic form. Drawing on 64 semi-structured interviews, the analysis used about 62 hours of audio and about 285 coded switching episodes, classified as interview-occurring, reconstructed, or reported. Original-language transcription, selective translation, language-background profiles, field notes, and an episode matrix supported the analysis. Reflexive Thematic Analysis was integrated with interactional sociolinguistic episode coding to examine language use across family, friendship, university, workplace, and public-service settings. We identified five themes: domain-sensitive repertoire management, discourse management and lexical precision, relational accommodation, identity positioning, and ideological ambivalence toward mixed speech. Findings show that English served as the dominant academic, administrative, and professional resource, while participants strategically mobilized French and Spanish to express cultural memory, interpersonal solidarity, emotional nuance, community affiliation, topic-specific precision, and transnational belonging. The study contributes a theoretically grounded evidence hierarchy linking switch form, participant interpretation, identity relevance, and accommodation patterns. By distinguishing local discourse work from identity-relevant interpretation, the study strengthens qualitative code-switching research and clarifies how multilingual speakers negotiate belonging, competence, institutional expectations, and social positioning through situated language choice.

**Keywords:** code-switching; multilingual identity; interactional sociolinguistics; language accommodation; thematic analysis.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Multilingual speakers do not move between sealed linguistic systems. They draw on unevenly distributed repertoires to manage meaning, stance, participation, and social relationships. Code-switching is one of the most visible forms of this repertoire work, but interpreting it remains difficult because an alternation between named languages does not automatically reveal why the switch occurred or what it meant to participants. The central problem in code-switching research is evidential: how can an analyst move from an observable language alternation to a justified claim about discourse function, identity, or accommodation? Multilingual speakers routinely draw on unevenly distributed repertoires to manage meaning, stance, participation, and relationships, but an alternation between English, French, and Spanish does not by itself explain what the switch accomplished. A switch may mark quotation, topic movement, lexical precision, humor, authority, intimacy, repair, or affiliation. Gumperz's account of contextualization

cues remains important because it shows how language alternation can guide conversational inference rather than mirror external social categories [1]. Poplack's work is equally important because it established that switching is structurally patterned and should not be treated as random, deficient, or linguistically uncontrolled [2]. A sociolinguistic account therefore must connect linguistic form to the situated conditions under which speakers and interlocutors make a switch meaningful.

Later scholarship shifted attention from broad functional lists to the sequential organization of bilingual and multilingual interaction. Auer argued that the meaning of a switch emerges from its location in talk and from the alternatives made relevant by the preceding sequence [3]. Gardner-Chloros placed code-switching within community histories, language ideologies, and domain-specific expectations, showing that the same alternation may be ordinary in one setting and socially marked in another [4]. Comparative research has since emphasized that lexical access, discourse management, solidarity, authority, and identity may operate together rather than as independent explanations [5]. This point is central to the present study: a short French or Spanish insertion into English may be a practical lexical choice, but it may also carry traces of family history, community membership, professional register, cultural memory, or interpersonal alignment depending on participant evaluation and audience uptake.

Identity remains one of the most productive but also most easily overstated claims in code-switching analysis. Bucholtz and Hall conceptualize identity as relational, emergent, and produced in interaction rather than stored permanently inside a language [6]. De Fina shows that code-switching can contribute to ethnic positioning within communities of practice when speakers orient to recognizable categories [7]. Auer nevertheless cautions that analysts should not attach a fixed identity value to a code outside its local sequential and ideological setting [8]. English, French, and Spanish therefore cannot be treated in advance as stable symbols of academic status, cultural refinement, community belonging, or transnational identity. Their social meanings must be reconstructed from the switch boundary, domain, participant explanation, interlocutor role, and reported consequences of the language choice.

Bailey demonstrates that Dominican American speakers used switching to manage local conversational tasks and negotiate racialized and ethnic boundaries [9]. Gafaranga shows that, from participants' perspectives, language alternation may be orderly and that analysts must identify the interactional medium before classifying a switch as marked [10]. Li Wei's conversation-analytic work further emphasizes recipient response and sequential accountability [11]. Studies of Chinese communities in Britain show the importance of networks, generation, and language preference [12], while Cashman's work on bilingual group membership shows that language choice can display, challenge, or suspend belonging within the same interaction [13]. These studies point to a shared methodological requirement: claims about identity require more than naming languages; they require evidence of local function, participant orientation, and cross-case recurrence.

Accommodation adds a relational dimension to the problem. Communication Accommodation Theory explains how speakers may converge toward an interlocutor, maintain an established code, diverge to signal distinctiveness, or over-accommodate based on assumptions about age, competence, or status [14]. Later formulations locate these movements within power, stereotypes, institutional roles, and attributed motives [15]. Social Identity Theory clarifies why linguistic choices become consequential when group membership and intergroup comparison become salient [16]. Identity categories are not equally present in all interactions; speakers activate, soften, or resist them as they move across social settings [17]. In English-primary multilingual spaces, English may function as the dominant institutional resource, while French and Spanish operate as secondary languages whose meanings vary according to topic, relationship, biography, and local ideology.

The present study focuses on an English-primary multilingual setting in which French and Spanish operate as secondary languages across family, educational, workplace, and community domains. English serves as the primary academic, administrative, and professional resource. French and Spanish are examined as secondary resources through which participants may express cultural memory, family history, community attachment, interpersonal warmth, stylistic nuance, or transnational orientation. University settings foreground English-medium academic vocabulary, assessment, and professional aspiration. Community settings make different expectations visible: family memory, service encounters, multilingual

friendship groups, heritage affiliation, public respectability, and intergenerational evaluation. This comparison lets the study examine how the same speaker's language choices shift across domains without assuming a single stable switching style.

The study addresses a specific gap: many studies identify possible functions of code-switching, but fewer specify how much evidence an analyst needs before moving from a switch to a claim about identity, accommodation, or ideology. Large-scale self-report research shows that multilinguals vary in switching frequency and attitudes [18] and that linguistic experience and sociobiographical background shape evaluations of mixed speech [19]. Qualitative research must then show how individual episodes connect to participant accounts, transcript evidence, and cross-case thematic patterns. This paper contributes an evidence hierarchy linking switch form, social domain, participant interpretation, identity positioning, accommodation, and theoretically cautious interpretation.

## II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

This study addresses the weak evidential link that can arise between code-switching episodes and broad claims about identity construction. In multilingual studies, researchers sometimes interpret alternation between languages as evidence of belonging, resistance, prestige, or accommodation, without sufficient attention to the switch boundary, interactional sequence, speaker explanation, domain of use, or audience response. This risks overinterpreting bilingual form as social meaning. The present study responds by treating code-switching as an interpretive object that must be examined through multiple levels of evidence: linguistic form, social context, participant interpretation, identity relevance, accommodation pattern, and cross-case recurrence.

## III. RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The study aimed to examine how bilingual and multilingual adults in an English-primary environment used French and Spanish as secondary languages to organize interaction, manage social relationships, and construct situated identities across family, friendship, university, workplace, and community domains. The study also aimed to evaluate how different types of evidence, including interview-occurring switches, reconstructed episodes, participant explanations, and thematic patterns, can support cautious claims about multilingual identity construction.

The first research question asks how reported, reconstructed, and interview-occurring code-switches varied across family, friendship, university, workplace, and community domains in an English-primary multilingual setting.

The second research question asks what linguistic, interactional, emotional, and institutional considerations participants associated with particular shifts from English into French or Spanish, and from French or Spanish back into English.

The third research question asks how code-switching contributed to the affirmation, negotiation, concealment, or contestation of personal and collective identities.

The fourth research question asks how interlocutor status, familiarity, perceived proficiency, topic, and institutional expectations shaped convergence, maintenance, divergence, and perceived freedom of choice.

The fifth research question asks how code-switching practices and evaluations differed between university-linked participants and participants recruited through wider community settings.

## IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *1. STRUCTURAL AND GRAMMATICAL DEBATES IN ENGLISH-FRENCH AND ENGLISH-SPANISH SWITCHING*

Structural approaches established that bilingual speech is patterned rather than accidental. Poplack's typological account remains foundational because it shows that intrasentential and intersentential switching are not random disruptions of grammar [2]. Bullock and Toribio's synthesis further demonstrates that linguistic form, grammatical constraints, and social meaning cannot be separated in a serious account of

bilingual mixing [5]. These insights are essential to the present study because we interpret switches into French or Spanish only after considering their structural position, direction, and interactional environment.

Research on English-French and English-Spanish bilingualism provides the closest comparative foundation. Paradis, Nicoladis, and Genesee show that structural constraints on French-English code-mixing emerge early in bilingual development, indicating that mixed speech is organized even among young bilinguals [20]. Benevento and Dietrich demonstrate that Spanish-English switching interacts with pronoun placement and variable syntactic patterns [21]. Balukas and Koops show that phonetic detail, including voice onset time, may shift in spontaneous Spanish-English switching [22]. Balam and colleagues further show that bilingual verbs vary across Spanish-English communities [23]. These studies justify focusing on switch direction, integration, and local linguistic form before advancing social interpretation.

## *2. INTERACTIONAL AND DISCOURSE-FUNCTIONAL DEBATES*

Interactional scholarship asks what a switch does at a particular moment in talk. Gumperz conceptualizes code-switching as a contextualization resource that helps speakers signal how an utterance should be understood [1]. Auer adds that sequential position is central because meaning emerges in relation to what has already been established in the conversation [3]. Gardner-Chloros emphasizes that community norms and speaker evaluations also affect whether a switch is treated as ordinary, marked, prestigious, intimate, or inappropriate [4]. The present study therefore coded not only language direction but also topic, interlocutor, reported uptake, evidence type, and participant interpretation.

Several studies warn against assuming that every alternation is a marked identity act. Gafaranga shows that bilingual interaction may establish a locally ordinary medium in which alternation itself is not exceptional [10]. Li Wei's conversation-analytic perspective highlights recipient response and sequential accountability [11]. Wei and Milroy's work in a Chinese community in Britain connects switching to networks, generation, and local participation [12]. Cashman's analysis of bilingual talk shows that people can display, challenge, or suspend group membership through language choice [13]. These findings inform the study's distinction between immediate discourse function and broader identity relevance.

## *3. IDENTITY, ACCOMMODATION, AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY*

Identity-oriented studies show that code-switching may contribute to belonging, authenticity, distinction, and boundary work, but the strongest analyses avoid assigning one stable meaning to one language. Bucholtz and Hall describe identity as emergent in interaction [6], while De Fina shows that code-switching can contribute to ethnic positioning when social categories are locally recognizable [7]. Auer's postscript on code-switching and identity cautions that language choice must be interpreted in relation to sequential and ideological context [8]. These arguments support the study's evidence hierarchy: identity claims are strongest when a participant explicitly links a switch to belonging, pride, discomfort, authority, respectability, or avoidance of categorization.

Communication Accommodation Theory provides a relational explanation for convergence, maintenance, divergence, and over-accommodation [14]. Later work by Giles, Coupland, and Coupland locates accommodation within institutional contexts, stereotypes, power, and attributed motives [15]. Social Identity Theory explains why some linguistic choices become consequential when group membership and intergroup comparison become salient [16], while Hogg, Terry, and White show that identity categories are situationally activated rather than constantly present [17]. In this study, accommodation is interpreted as a relationship among audience design, perceived choice, communicative accessibility, and social positioning rather than as a simple movement toward or away from another speaker.

## *4. HERITAGE-LANGUAGE CONTEXTS, BILINGUAL FRAMING, AND MULTILINGUAL REPERTOIRES*

Heritage-language and bicultural research helps explain why secondary languages may become meaningful in family, community, and transnational domains even when English remains the dominant institutional language. Luna, Ringberg, and Peracchio show that culturally associated cues can activate different interpretive frames among bicultural individuals [24]. Chen and Bond find that bilingual participants may express some personality-related tendencies differently across languages [25]. Veltkamp

and colleagues also report language-related modulation in personality expression [26]. These studies support a contextual interpretation of identity: languages may carry different memories, audiences, and norms, but identity remains situated and relational.

Translanguaging perspectives complicate named-language boundaries by emphasizing integrated multilingual repertoires. Garcia and Li Wei argue that multilingual speakers use a unified repertoire to make meaning and construct subjectivities [27]. Otheguy, Garcia, and Reid distinguish speakers' repertoires from socially named languages, reminding analysts that named languages are historical and institutional categories [28]. Bonacina-Pugh, da Costa Cabral, and Huang show that translanguaging research benefits from clearer distinctions among spontaneous repertoire use, pedagogical practice, and the ideological organization of named languages [29]. This study retains code-switching as an analytic label when speakers orient to English, French, and Spanish as recognizable contrasts while avoiding rigid assumptions about internal linguistic boundaries.

### *5. METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT STUDY*

Contact-linguistic and bilingualism research supports treating code-switching as both structural and social. Sebba's congruence approach explains how compatibility between linguistic systems shapes switching sites [30]. Backus shows that multimorphemic units may become part of bilingual lexical resources rather than isolated switches [31]. Clyne's work on language contact demonstrates that immigrant and transnational communities develop stable patterns of contact-induced variation [32]. Grosjean and Cantone further show that bilingualism is not two monolingual systems added together but a dynamic mode of language use shaped by domain, interlocutor, and experience [33], [34]. These studies justify the paper's combined use of episode-level coding, transcript-line evidence, and thematic analysis.

The reviewed literature leads directly to the five findings. Structural research justifies attention to switch direction and integration; interactional work supports analysis of quotation, repair, stance, and lexical precision; identity studies caution against unsupported symbolic interpretation; accommodation research explains convergence and maintenance under different power conditions; and heritage-language and translanguaging perspectives clarify why French and Spanish may matter as secondary resources even in English-primary institutions.

## V. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *1. INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS AS THE PRINCIPAL LENS*

Interactional sociolinguistics served as the primary analytical lens because it focused on what a language shift accomplished at a particular point in discourse. The analysis began with the sequence: what preceded the switch, which alternatives were available, what changed in topic or footing, and how the speaker evaluated the shift. The analysis examined quotation, repair, lexical specification, stance, affect, and audience design before considering a broader identity explanation.

### *2. SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY*

Social Identity Theory examined how language choice made particular memberships, roles, and social comparisons relevant. The analysis was not restricted to ethnicity or nationality. Family generation, educational trajectory, professional role, community affiliation, and transnational orientation all provided possible identity resources. The analysis treated identity as relevant when speakers explicitly linked a language choice to belonging, authenticity, respectability, pride, discomfort, authority, or avoiding categorization.

### *3. COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION THEORY*

Communication Accommodation Theory provided the framework's relational component. It supported analysis of convergence toward an interlocutor's preferred language, maintenance of an established code, divergence that marked distinctiveness, and over-accommodation based on assumptions about proficiency or status. Accommodation was not treated as a direct measure of approval: participants could converge for clarity while describing the choice as constrained, or maintain English while still engaging cooperatively with French- or Spanish-dominant interlocutors.

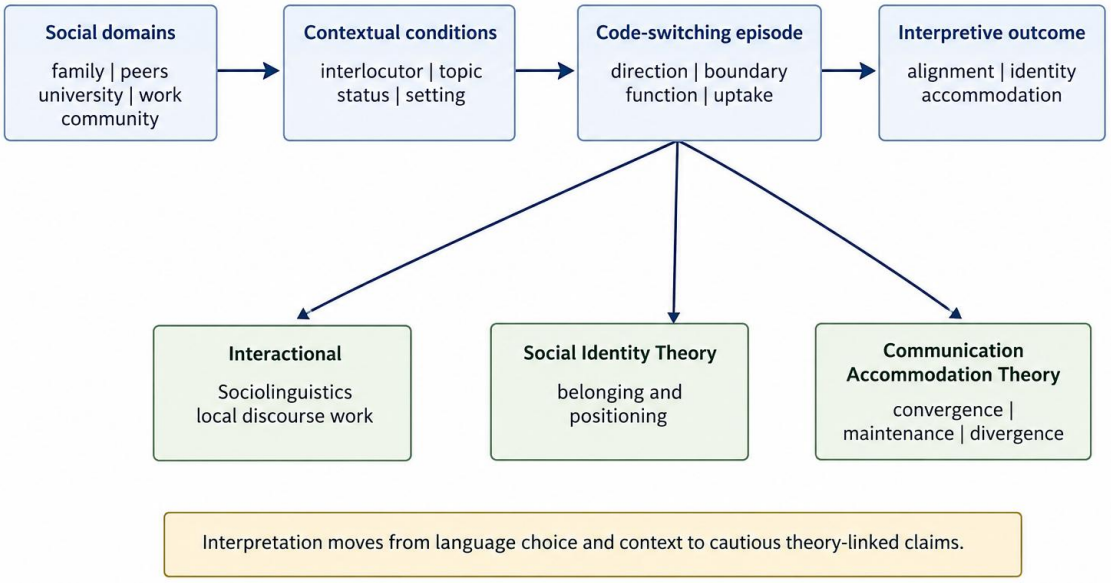



FIGURE 1. Integrated conceptual framework linking social domains, contextual conditions, code-switching episodes, identity positioning, and accommodation.

## VI. METHODOLOGY

### *1. RESEARCH DESIGN AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION*

The study used an interpretive qualitative sociolinguistic design based on semi-structured interviews with bilingual and multilingual adults from university and community settings. The design treated code-switching as situated social action rather than as a simple alternation between named languages. Reflexive Thematic Analysis was used to develop cross-case patterns of meaning [35], [36], while episode-level sociolinguistic coding retained the local form, context, and reported function of particular switches. The epistemological position was contextualist: participants' accounts were treated as meaningful reflections on multilingual experience while also being shaped by memory, audience, language ideology, and the interview encounter.

Each interpretation moved from switch form and transcript location to social domain, participant account, identity relevance, accommodation pattern, and cross-case comparison. Interview-occurring switches were treated as directly observable within the research encounter. Reconstructed switches were treated as participant-mediated accounts of earlier events. Reported switches without reproduced wording were used primarily for thematic comparison.

Methodological rigor centered on trustworthiness criteria [37], information-power sampling logic [38], transparent interview reporting [39], and meaningful coherence in qualitative inquiry [40]. Reflexive monitoring addressed researcher positioning [41]; cross-language analysis followed translation-focused qualitative guidance [42], [43]; and participant-researcher positioning was considered through an insider-outsider lens [44].

## 2. RESEARCH SETTING AND ETHICAL PROCEDURES

The fieldwork was situated in an English-primary university-community environment where English served as the main language of education, workplace communication, peer interaction, and many public-service encounters. French and Spanish operated as secondary languages in family histories, friendship groups, cultural communities, professional service encounters, and transnational networks. The setting was selected because it allowed comparison between an institutionally dominant language and two globally recognized secondary languages that participants used differently across domains.

The study followed standard ethical procedures for qualitative sociolinguistic research. Participants received an information sheet describing the study purpose, interview procedures, voluntary participation, audio recording, quotation practices, translation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. Participants provided separate consent for participation, recording, anonymized quotation, and publication of translated extracts.

## 3. RECRUITMENT, PARTICIPANTS, AND SAMPLE PROFILE

Recruitment proceeded through university announcements, student associations, community organizations, professional networks, and limited participant referral. Eligibility required participants to be at least 18 years old, to use two or more languages in everyday social life, and to have experience communicating across at least two domains. The recruitment log recorded 174 invitations or direct contacts, 103 responses, 78 eligible volunteers, 69 consented participants, five withdrawals before interview, and 64 completed interviews. This sample size aligns with qualitative information-power reasoning because it was specific, theoretically focused, and supported by detailed cross-case and cross-domain analysis [38].

We used maximum-variation purposive sampling to avoid over-reliance on a single accessible group. We sought variation in age range, gender, educational level, recruitment source, language dominance, repertoire, acquisition history, university or community affiliation, and everyday domains of language use. The final sample included university students, university staff, community professionals, and other adult community members. English was the primary language in the overall corpus, while French and Spanish were treated as secondary languages whose uses varied across family, community, professional, and transnational contexts.

**Table 1.** Participant profile for the primary-interview fieldwork sample.

| Group | n | Age | Gender | Source | Language profile | Analytical focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| University students | 26 | 18-29 | 14 W; 11 M; 1 ND | University notices; student associations | English primary; French/Spanish secondary | Peer and classroom identity |
| University staff | 12 | 30-56 | 6 W; 6 M | Professional networks | English primary; French/Spanish secondary | Institutional status and accommodation |
| Community professionals | 16 | 24-60 | 7 W; 9 M | Community and professional groups | English primary; French/Spanish secondary | Workplace and public-service talk |
| Other community adults | 10 | 28-66 | 5 W; 5 M | Community organizations; referral | English with French and/or Spanish | Family and intergenerational practice |
| Total | 64 | 18-66 | 32 W; 31 M; 1 ND | Multiple purposive channels | Bilingual/multilingual interaction | Maximum-variation qualitative sample |

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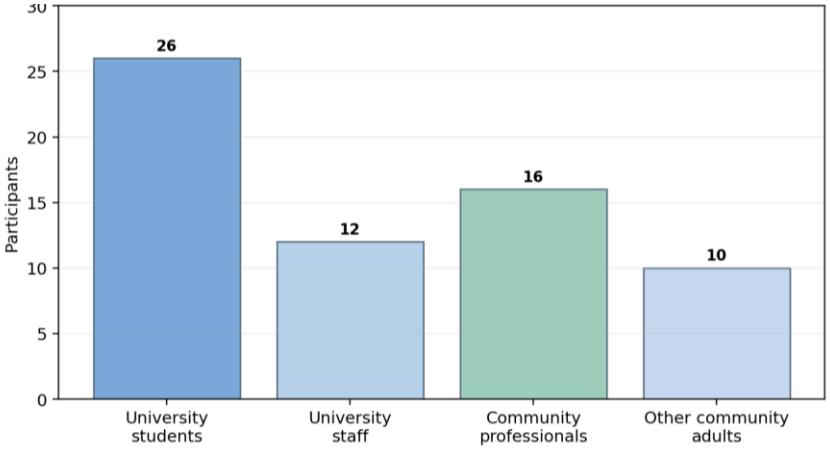



FIGURE 2. Participant distribution across university and community recruitment groups.

## 4. INTERVIEW CORPUS AND DATA COLLECTION

The interview corpus consisted of 64 semi-structured interviews conducted across a ten-week fieldwork period. Thirty-six interviews were conducted face-to-face in university or community rooms, and twenty-eight online. Interviews lasted 42 to 78 minutes, with a mean of 58 minutes and a total audio corpus of about 62 hours. Participants completed a language-background profile before the interview, covering language repertoire, self-rated proficiency, age and context of acquisition, preferred language choices across domains, and situations in which switching was monitored or avoided.

The interview guide moved from linguistic biography and social-domain mapping to recent critical incidents of code-switching, identity positioning, accommodation, language ideology, and reflections on multilingual belonging. Participants selected the interview language or combination of languages most comfortable for them. The interviewer did not ask participants to perform switching artificially. Critical-incident prompts invited participants to reconstruct recent episodes as closely as possible and to explain what the switch accomplished in that setting. We prepared field notes after each interview to document the setting, rapport, language choice, observed switching, and contextual issues relevant to interpretation.

**Table 2.** Interview corpus and fieldwork documentation profile.

| Corpus component | Fieldwork record |
|---|---|
| Recruitment period | 15 January-31 March 2021 |
| Interview period | 3 February-30 April 2021 |
| Completed interviews | 64 |
| Interview mode | 36 face-to-face; 28 online |
| Duration range | 42-78 minutes |
| Mean duration | 58 minutes |
| Total audio corpus | Approximately 62 hours |
| Primary interview languages | English as primary interview language; French and Spanish as secondary languages |
| Transcript volume | Approximately 580,000 working transcript words |
| Analyzable switching episodes | Approximately 285 reported, reconstructed, or interview-occurring episodes |
| Supporting records | Language-background profiles, field notes, translation audit, episode matrix, codebook versions, and theme-evidence matrix |

## 5. TRANSCRIPTION, TRANSLATION, AND EVIDENCE CATEGORIES

Recordings were transcribed verbatim in the languages used by participants. Transcription preserved switch boundaries, repetitions, hesitation, self-repair, laughter, reported speech, and culturally significant expressions. We assigned each extract used in the findings a transcript location in the format participant

code, transcript number, and line range (e.g., P07/T07:L118-L123). We distinguished three evidence categories: interview-occurring switches, reconstructed switches, and reported switches. This distinction was important because each category supported a different level of inference.

Original-language wording remained the primary analytical record. We prepared English translations selectively for publication extracts and treated them as interpretive representations rather than neutral replacements for the original. Translation decisions followed established concerns in cross-language qualitative research [42], [43]. A bilingual reviewer checked central French and Spanish extracts against the English translations for pragmatic force, politeness, stance, and culturally specific meaning. When a French or Spanish expression had no direct English equivalent, the original wording was retained with a brief gloss in the analytic paragraph.

## *6. CODING AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS*

Analysis combined inductive coding with theory-informed interpretation. The primary analyst manually coded transcripts in a structured spreadsheet and maintained a dated codebook, analytic memos, and an episode matrix. The first stage involved repeated listening and reading, correcting transcripts, writing case summaries, and initial memoing. The second stage involved entering substantial switching episodes into an episode matrix, recording social domain, interlocutor, language direction, switch length, function, reported response, identity positioning, affective evaluation, accommodation pattern, evidence type, and transcript-line reference. The third stage coded full transcripts using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. The fourth stage grouped related codes into candidate themes and reviewed them against complete cases, negative examples, and cross-domain variation.

The coding process began with descriptive and interpretive codes covering domain, function, identity, accommodation, ideology, and affect. We used code-recode checking to identify conceptual drift rather than to claim mechanical reliability. A critical person reviewed selected transcripts, code definitions, translation decisions, and theme boundaries. We retained negative cases when participants rejected the dominant interpretation, treated switching as unnecessary, or described secondary-language use as exclusionary rather than affiliative. We retained themes only when multiple cases supported them, they were grounded in contextualized multilingual evidence, and they linked clearly to the research questions. This approach aligns with established qualitative criteria for credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and meaningful coherence [37], [39], [40]. Reflexive memos recorded assumptions about English dominance, secondary-language prestige, heritage affiliation, educational status, and institutional authority [41], [44].

**Table 3.** Coding procedure and evidence-control process.

| Analytical stage | Procedure | Output | Quality control |
|---|---|---|---|
| Familiarization | Repeated listening, transcript reading, and case-summary writing | 64 case summaries and reflexive memos | Audio-transcript checking and field-note comparison |
| Episode coding | Identification of reported, reconstructed, and interview-occurring switches | Approximately 285 coded switching episodes with transcript-line references | Episode linked to transcript line and evidence type |
| Initial coding | Semantic and latent coding across full transcripts | Codes covering domain, function, identity, accommodation, ideology, and affect | Manual codebook version 3.2; code-recode review |
| Theme development | Grouping codes into cross-case patterns | Five central thematic areas | Negative-case review and comparison across participant groups |
| Theory integration | Interpretation through the three theoretical lenses | Evidence hierarchy linking switch form, context, identity, and accommodation | Theme-evidence matrix aligned with RQ1-RQ5 |

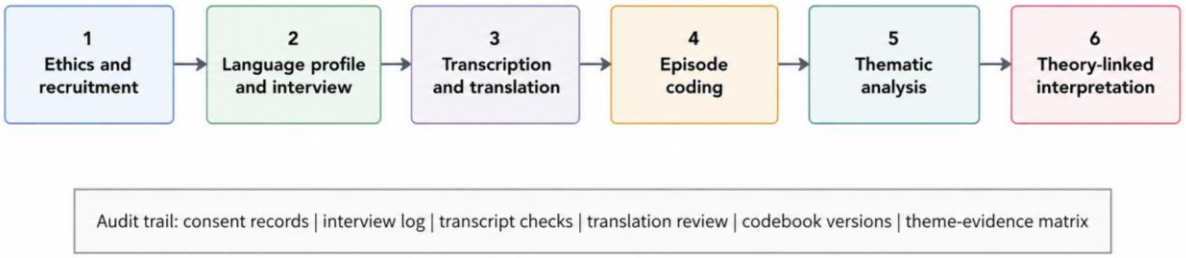



FIGURE 3. Methodology workflow connecting ethics, interviews, transcription, coding, thematic analysis, and theory-linked interpretation.

## VII. FINDINGS

### *1. CORPUS PROFILE AND THEME-EVIDENCE OVERVIEW*

The analysis identified five themes that correspond directly to the research questions: domain-sensitive repertoire management, discourse management and lexical precision, relational accommodation, identity positioning, and ideological ambivalence toward mixed speech. Across these themes, English functioned as the primary communicative base for academic, administrative, professional, and many peer interactions. French and Spanish served as secondary languages whose meanings depended on the domain, interlocutor, topic, and participants' evaluations. The findings below use extract labels, evidence-type labels, and transcript-line references to show how thematic claims were grounded.

**Table 4.** Expanded theme-evidence matrix with participant coverage, transcript-line references, and evidence categories.

| Theme | Participant coverage | Extracts / lines | Evidence type | Core pattern | Main RQs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Domain-sensitive repertoire management | 41/64 participants | E1 P07/T07:L118-L123; E2 P18/T18:L205-L211; E3 P52/T52:L064-L070 | Interview-occurring; reconstructed; negative case | Language choice shifted across family, peer, university, workplace, and public settings rather than following one stable style. | RQ1, RQ2, RQ5 |
| Discourse management and lexical precision | 46/64 participants | E4 P22/T22:L144-L150; E5 P33/T33:L091-L097; E6 P12/T12:L173-L180 | Reconstructed; interview-occurring; contrasting case | Switches supported quotation, repair, emphasis, technical naming, and stance management. | RQ2 |
| Relational accommodation | 38/64 participants | E7 P31/T31:L119-L126; E8 P44/T44:L066-L072; E9 P09/T09:L189-L196 | Reconstructed; reported; negative case | Speakers converged, maintained, or diverged according to audience, status, intelligibility, and perceived choice. | RQ4 |
| Identity positioning | 35/64 participants | E10 P14/T14:L211-L219; E11 P27/T27:L088-L095; E12 P56/T56:L132-L139 | Reported; reconstructed; negative case | Language alternation made professional, family, peer, generational, and community identities temporarily salient. | RQ3 |
| Ideological ambivalence | 43/64 participants | E13 P40/T40:L101-L108; E14 P06/T06:L156-L164; | Reported; reconstructed; | Mixed speech was valued as efficient and intimate but also | RQ3, RQ5 |

| Theme | Participant coverage | Extracts / lines | Evidence type | Core pattern | Main RQs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | E15 P60/T60:L077-L083 | contrasting case | criticized as too casual, elitist, or exclusionary. | |

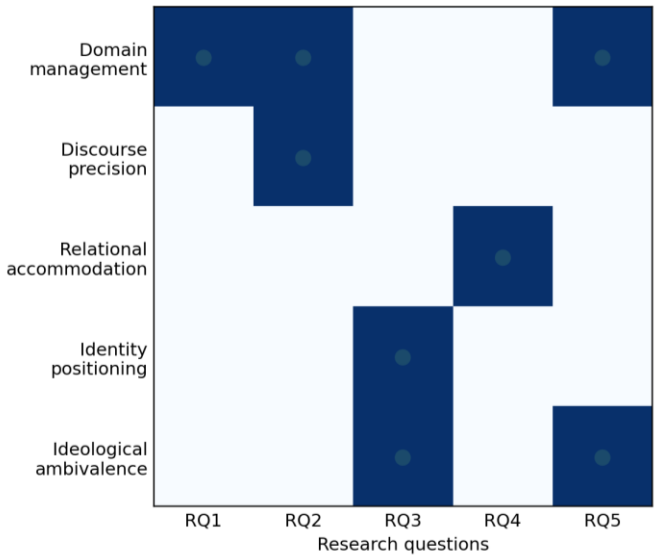



FIGURE 4. Alignment between major themes and research questions.

*2. THEME 1: DOMAIN-SENSITIVE REPERTOIRE MANAGEMENT*

The first theme showed that code-switching was organized by social domain rather than by a single speaker-level preference. Participants described English as the primary language for university, workplace, and many peer interactions, while using French and Spanish secondarily when they oriented to family memory, cultural affiliation, community participation, or interpersonal warmth. This pattern answered RQ1 and RQ5 by showing that the same speaker could maintain English as the dominant communicative base while using French or Spanish strategically in socially meaningful moments.

Extract 1 (P07/T07:L118-L123, interview-occurring switch, university student): "With my friends I usually speak English, mais quand we talk about family stories, French feels closer." Translation: "With my friends I usually speak English, but when we talk about family stories, French feels closer."

The switch was tied to topic, intimacy, and cultural memory rather than to a loss of English fluency. It shows how French became relevant when a family narrative shifted the footing of peer talk.

Extract 2 (P18/T18:L205-L211, reconstructed switch, university staff): "In the meeting I kept English for the policy points, then I said c'est plus simple comme ça when we were joking afterward." Translation: "In the meeting I kept English for the policy points, then I said it is simpler like this when we were joking afterward."

The participant distinguished institutional discussion from informal collegial alignment. English marked procedural clarity; French softened the transition into humor.

Extract 3 (P52/T52:L064-L070, negative case, community adult): "I know Spanish, but in public I usually stay with English because everyone understands it; switching can make people feel outside."

This case complicates a simple celebration of multilingual practice. The participant treated English as an inclusive default rather than a constraint, showing that not switching can also be socially meaningful.

*3. THEME 2: DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT AND LEXICAL PRECISION*

The second theme concerned the interactional work switches perform within particular accounts. Participants associated language alternation with quotation, repair, emphasis, humor, and lexical precision. Participants described English as the main academic and professional language, while using French and

Spanish secondarily to ground explanations in cultural affiliation, interpersonal warmth, or community-specific meanings. This finding answered RQ2 by showing that practical discourse management and social meaning were often intertwined.

Extract 4 (P22/T22:L144-L150, reconstructed switch, community professional): "With the customer I explain in English, pero uso presupuesto because that is the word they expect in the office." Translation: "With the customer I explain in English, but I use presupuesto because that is the word they expect in the office."

The switch marked lexical precision and located Spanish as a secondary workplace resource within an English-dominant interaction.

Extract 5 (P33/T33:L091-L097, interview-occurring switch, student): "I can say feedback in English, but when my mother asks, I say comme un conseil, like advice, because it sounds less formal." Translation: "I can say feedback in English, but when my mother asks, I say like advice because it sounds less formal."

The participant used French to reframe an academic term as a family-understandable category, showing that lexical precision can also be relationally adjusted.

Extract 6 (P12/T12:L173-L180, contrasting case, university student): "Sometimes people put a Spanish word in the middle, and it does not add meaning; it is just style."

The contrasting case shows that not all switches carried lexical necessity or identity significance. Peers interpreted some as stylistic display rather than communicative need.

### *4. THEME 3: RELATIONAL ACCOMMODATION AND INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURE*

The third theme showed that audience and power shaped accommodation. Participants reported shifting toward an interlocutor's stronger or preferred language to facilitate understanding, display politeness, or reduce distance. However, participants did not always experience accommodation as voluntary solidarity. In university and service encounters, some speakers described switching because one language appeared more legitimate, professional, or safe. This finding answered RQ4 by distinguishing cooperative convergence from pressured compliance.

Extract 7 (P31/T31:L119-L126, reconstructed switch, administrative staff): "I start in English because the form is in English, mais si l'étudiant préfère le français, I explain the important part in French." Translation: "I start in English because the form is in English, but if the student prefers French, I explain the important part in French."

The extract illustrates a split between English as the institutional default and French as a secondary resource for interpersonal accommodation.

Extract 8 (P44/T44:L066-L072, reported switch, community professional): "If the client begins in Spanish, I answer in Spanish for the greeting, but the legal details stay in English."

This case shows partial convergence rather than full language shift. Accommodation operated within the limits of institutional accountability.

Extract 9 (P09/T09:L189-L196, negative case, university student): "I do not switch when the lecturer expects English; even if another student asks in Spanish, I answer in English because I do not want to look informal."

The participant maintained English to protect academic legitimacy. The case shows that perceived institutional judgment can constrain accommodation.

### *5. THEME 4: IDENTITY POSITIONING ACROSS ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS*

The fourth theme concerned identity construction. Participants did not present languages as fixed identity containers. Instead, they described language choice as a way of making particular roles more or less visible: family membership, professional competence, educational status, peer solidarity, community belonging, or transnational orientation. This finding answered RQ3 by showing that identity meanings emerged from the relationship among switch form, topic, interlocutor, and participant evaluation.

Extract 10 (P14/T14:L211-L219, reported identity account, postgraduate student): "English is the language I use most at university and work; French connects me to family memories, and Spanish helps me in community spaces; I am not three people, but each language opens a different door."

The participant rejected an essentialist view of separate selves while linking English, French, and Spanish to differently situated identity resources.

Extract 11 (P27/T27:L088-L095, reconstructed switch, community adult): "When my aunt says mija, I answer in Spanish first, then return to English because the children are listening." Translation: "When my aunt says my daughter, I answer in Spanish first, then return to English because the children are listening."

The switch indexed kinship and intergenerational belonging while also showing sensitivity to a mixed audience.

Extract 12 (P56/T56:L132-L139, negative case, university staff): "French is part of my history, but I do not use it to prove identity. At work it is usually just a tool."

This case prevents overgeneralization. For this participant, secondary-language use did not automatically operate as identity display.

### *6. THEME 5: IDEOLOGICAL AMBIVALENCE TOWARD MIXED SPEECH*

The fifth theme captured ambivalent evaluation of code-switching. Participants described mixed speech as efficient, humorous, intimate, and normal among peers, but also criticized it as artificial, elitist, careless, or exclusionary. This ambivalence was strongest in public and institutional settings, where language choice could be judged as evidence of education, loyalty, politeness, or social distance. The theme answered RQ3 and RQ5 by showing that code-switching enabled identity expression while exposing speakers to competing language ideologies.

Extract 13 (P40/T40:L101-L108, reported evaluation, community adult): "With friends we speak English, but sometimes we add Spanish like tranquilo, nobody cares; in formal meetings they say it sounds too casual." Translation: "With friends we speak English, but sometimes we add Spanish expressions such as tranquilo; nobody cares, but in formal meetings people say it sounds too casual."

The evaluation depended on audience, formality, and expectations about English-dominant professional speech.

Extract 14 (P06/T06:L156-L164, reconstructed evaluation, university student): "When someone says voilà in class, some people laugh because it sounds educated; others say it is showing off." Translation: "When someone says there it is in class, some people laugh because it sounds educated; others say it is showing off."

The same French item was heard as playful competence by some and elitist display by others, showing ideology at the level of micro-evaluation.

Extract 15 (P60/T60:L077-L083, contrasting case, community professional): "In my office mixed language is normal because everyone has clients from different backgrounds; the problem is not mixing, it is excluding someone who cannot follow."

This case reframed the issue from linguistic purity to access. Mixed speech was acceptable when it supported participation and problematic when it restricted it.

## VIII. DISCUSSION

The findings show that code-switching in the English-primary corpus cannot be reduced to a stable speaker habit or to a simple sign of multilingual competence. In response to RQ1, participants' accounts showed that family, peer, university, workplace, and public-service domains organized different norms of language choice. English provided the dominant institutional and professional base, but French and Spanish became socially meaningful when participants oriented to family memory, cultural affiliation, professional terminology, community participation, or interpersonal warmth. This pattern supports research on intra- and inter-individual variation in multilingual switching [18] and attitudes toward switching [19], but it also adds a stronger domain-based explanation: the meaning of a switch depended on the interactional and evaluative conditions in which it occurred.

In response to RQ2, the findings showed that interactional functions overlapped rather than occurred as isolated categories. Lexical precision, quotation, repair, humor, emphasis, and stance could operate within the same episode. This is consistent with classical functional and interactional accounts of code-switching [1]-[5], but the present analysis adds an evidence-control element. We did not interpret a switch as professional identity, solidarity, or prestige unless the episode included contextual support and participant

evaluation. For example, Extract 4 treated Spanish not merely as a symbolic community marker but as a workplace term interlocutors expected. This interpretation is compatible with English-Spanish research showing that switching is shaped by structural integration, discourse position, and community expectations [21]-[23].

In response to RQ3, identity appeared as situated positioning rather than as a fixed relationship between one language and one social group. Participants associated English with institutional competence and everyday communicative reach, French with family memory and cultural distinction, and Spanish with community affiliation and interpersonal warmth. These associations were not universal. Some participants described secondary-language use as intimate and authentic, while others associated the same practices with risks of formality, exclusion, or being perceived as showing off. The analysis therefore supports sociocultural linguistic approaches to identity [6]-[8], but it resists a celebratory account in which all multilingual mixing is automatically empowering. Identity meanings were strongest when speakers explicitly evaluated a switch and linked it to a concrete domain, relation, or consequence.

In response to RQ4, both relational care and institutional pressure shaped accommodation. Participants converged toward an interlocutor's preferred language to support comprehension, reduce distance, or display politeness. Yet convergence did not always mean solidarity. In formal settings, English often carried institutional authority, and shifting away from it could be framed as supportive, risky, or unnecessary depending on the audience. This finding refines Communication Accommodation Theory [14], [15] by emphasizing perceived choice. The same shift from English into French or Spanish could mean warmth, efficiency, compliance, or self-protection. Maintenance of English could likewise signal professionalism in one setting and exclusion in another.

In response to RQ5, university-linked participants tended to frame switching through academic vocabulary, assessment, professional aspiration, and institutional legitimacy, whereas community participants more often emphasized intergenerational relations, public interaction, service encounters, and local evaluations of respect. The contrast was not absolute. Students also used French or Spanish to construct intimacy and cultural affiliation, and community professionals often treated English as the safest professional base. The value of the university-community comparison lies in showing how different domains make different linguistic meanings available without dividing participants into fixed groups. This finding is consistent with research on French-English and Spanish-English bilingual practices, where switching patterns are shaped by dominance, proficiency, social context, and community norms [20]-[23].

The corpus's contradictions are central to the theoretical contribution. Some participants valued mixed speech as efficient, intimate, and expressive, while others reported that the same practice could sound casual, elitist, or exclusionary. These contradictions clarify when a switch becomes identity-relevant and when it remains primarily interactional. A switch became identity-relevant when it was attached to explicit participant evaluation, domain-based expectations, audience response, or a recognizable social category. It remained primarily interactional when it served lexical precision, repair, quotation, or topic management without participant orientation to belonging, status, or group distinction. The evidence hierarchy therefore offers a methodological contribution: it prevents analysts from reading identity directly from language labels while still allowing identity to be analyzed when the evidence supports it.

The study also bridges structural, interactional, and qualitative traditions. Structural studies of English-French and English-Spanish switching show that mixed speech is linguistically patterned [20]-[23]. Interactional scholarship shows that switches acquire meaning through sequential placement and participant orientation [1], [3], [10], [11]. Identity and accommodation theories explain why some language choices become linked to belonging, distance, professional legitimacy, or institutional pressure [6], [14]-[17]. This study connects these perspectives through traceable qualitative evidence: extract, line reference, evidence type, domain, participant interpretation, and cross-case theme. This strengthens the analytical rigor of sociolinguistic research on multilingual identity.

## IX. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The first contribution explicitly connects interactional evidence with thematic interpretation. Episode coding preserved the linguistic and sequential organization of particular switches, while reflexive thematic

analysis identified patterns across biographies and domains. This combination addresses the common separation between structurally oriented and identity-oriented code-switching studies.

The second contribution is a domain-sensitive account of multilingual identity in an English-primary setting. We did not assign languages stable identities in advance. We examined family roles, professional positions, generational relations, institutional expectations, and community affiliations as contextually available identity resources.

The third contribution is a power-sensitive interpretation of accommodation. Convergence, maintenance, and divergence were related to participants' perceived freedom to choose and to the consequences they attributed to the interaction. This distinction separated cooperative adjustment from pressured compliance and identity affirmation from communicative exclusion.

Finally, the study formalizes an evidence hierarchy for identity claims. The study treats direct participant evaluation, detailed reconstructed incidents, interview-occurring sequences, and patterned cross-case inference as different forms of support. Making these distinctions explicit improves theoretical precision and reduces the risk of reading identity directly from language labels.

## X. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The principal limitation is that the study relies on interview-based accounts and reconstructed switching episodes rather than continuous naturalistic recordings of everyday interaction. Participants' accounts provide access to remembered practices and social meanings, but they do not establish precise frequencies or reproduce the full sequential detail of ordinary conversation.

Purposive maximum-variation sampling supports analytical comparison rather than statistical representativeness. The expanded sample strengthened cross-domain comparison, but it did not eliminate differences in educational opportunity, mobility, or linguistic confidence. Transferability therefore depends on thick description of the local language ecology, participant profiles, and institutional settings.

Translation introduces interpretive risk because humor, politeness, stance, and identity terms may not have direct English equivalents. Retaining original wording, reviewing central extracts, and documenting translation decisions improve transparency but do not make translation neutral. Future research could combine this interview design with ethnographic observation, recorded natural interaction, linguistic-landscape analysis, or longitudinal follow-up.

## XI. CONCLUSION

This study examined code-switching as both an interactional practice and a resource for social positioning in an English-primary multilingual setting where French and Spanish operated as secondary languages. Across family, friendship, university, workplace, and community domains, language alternation was not a single habit or a simple sign of proficiency. It was a domain-sensitive practice through which participants managed discourse, signaled lexical precision, accommodated interlocutors, positioned identities, and negotiated competing evaluations of mixed speech. English generally served as the dominant academic, administrative, and professional base, while French and Spanish gained meaning through cultural memory, family history, interpersonal warmth, community participation, and topic-specific precision.

The study's theoretical value lies in integrating three perspectives without collapsing them into one explanation. Interactional Sociolinguistics clarified the local discourse work of alternation. Social Identity Theory explained how language choices made particular memberships, roles, and values salient. Communication Accommodation Theory interpreted convergence, maintenance, and divergence in relation to audience, status, and perceived choice. Applying the theories in this order prevented the analysis from treating every switch as primarily an identity act and allowed the study to distinguish immediate discourse functions from broader social interpretations.

The precise contribution is methodological as well as theoretical. The study shows how qualitative sociolinguistic research can support identity claims by linking switch form, transcript location, social domain, participant account, accommodation patterns, and cross-case recurrence. This hierarchy offers a disciplined route from multilingual interview evidence to cautious interpretation. Its value lies less in

confirming that code-switching has multiple functions than in specifying the conditions under which those functions acquire identity significance, institutional force, or ideological tension. For sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, the study strengthens the evidential basis of multilingual identity analysis by preserving linguistic detail, participant interpretation, domain comparison, and theoretical restraint.

## Author Contributions

The author conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, analyzed the data, conducted the investigation, wrote and revised the manuscript, and approved the final version.

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## Data Availability

The dataset will be available from the author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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