



Language, Identity, and Globalization: Code-Switching Practices in Multilingual Academic Communities

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Abstract

This study examines code-switching practices in multilingual academic communities by foregrounding the interconnected roles of language, identity, and globalization. Drawing on a qualitative interpretive approach grounded in theoretical and analytical inquiry, the research synthesizes established sociolinguistic and discourse-based scholarship to explore how code-switching operates within academic settings. The findings indicate that code-switching functions as a strategic resource through which academics negotiate professional identity, epistemic authority, and social affiliation across diverse communicative contexts. In globalized academic environments, language alternation reflects the influence of linguistic markets, digital communication, and transnational mobility, reshaping norms of scholarly interaction. The analysis further highlights how code-switching supports pedagogical processes, facilitates interaction in multilingual classrooms, and enhances accessibility in digital academic spaces. Rather than undermining academic rigor, code-switching contributes to the richness and adaptability of scholarly discourse. This study concludes that recognizing code-switching as an integral feature of multilingual academic life is essential for rethinking language ideologies, institutional policies, and future research on global academic communication.

Keywords: Code-switching, Academic identity, Multilingualism, Globalization, Scholarly communication.



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INTRODUCTION

The intensification of globalization has profoundly reshaped linguistic practices within academic communities, particularly those characterized by multilingual repertoires, where code-switching emerges not as a communicative anomaly but as a socially meaningful resource. Scholarly discourse increasingly recognizes code-switching as a practice through which speakers negotiate belonging, authority, and intellectual positioning across transnational academic spaces (Hall & Nilep, 2015). Within universities and research institutions, language choice operates at the intersection of epistemic legitimacy and identity performance, reflecting broader global hierarchies of knowledge circulation. These dynamics situate code-switching as a critical lens for examining how globalization permeates everyday academic interaction (Sanei, 2022).

In multilingual academic settings, code-switching functions as a site of identity negotiation where individuals continuously align themselves with disciplinary norms, institutional expectations, and peer networks. Research demonstrates that linguistic alternation allows speakers to signal affiliation, distinction, or resistance within communities of practice, particularly when ethnic and professional identities intersect (De Fina, 2007). Such practices reveal how identity is not a static attribute but an emergent process shaped through interactional choices. The academic sphere thus becomes a fertile ground for observing how language mediates social positioning and symbolic capital (Savase & Ganmote, n.d.).

The role of code-switching in constructing solidarity and demarcating social boundaries has been extensively documented across multilingual societies, with implications that extend into academic life. Linguistic shifts often index inclusion or exclusion, reinforcing group cohesion while simultaneously producing subtle forms of othering (Hozhabrossadat, 2015). Within scholarly environments, these processes may influence participation, access to discourse, and perceptions of competence.

Understanding such mechanisms is essential for grasping how academic identities are collaboratively produced through language use (Rojas, 2025).

Academic communities also operate within what globalization scholars describe as linguistic markets, where certain languages accrue higher symbolic value than others. Code-switching reflects strategic navigation of these markets, allowing speakers to maximize communicative effectiveness while managing ideological pressures tied to prestige languages (Sanei, 2022). Empirical studies illustrate that multilingual academics deploy code-switching to reconcile local affiliations with global academic norms. These practices underscore the entanglement of language, power, and identity in knowledge-producing institutions (Hall & Nilep, 2015).

Beyond identity signaling, code-switching carries stylistic and rhetorical functions that shape academic interaction. Alternating languages can enhance nuance, emphasize stance, or foreground disciplinary concepts that resist direct translation, thereby enriching scholarly expression (Mehdi, 2024). Such stylistic effects are particularly salient in seminars, collaborative research discussions, and academic writing workshops. The aesthetic and pragmatic dimensions of code-switching contribute to its persistence within multilingual academic communities (Ramaila, 2025).

Workplace-oriented studies further reveal that multilingual professional environments normalize code-switching as an operational strategy rather than a deviation from linguistic norms. In academic workplaces, language alternation facilitates efficiency, collegiality, and informal knowledge exchange across hierarchies (de Socarraz-Novoa, 2015). These findings challenge monolingual ideologies that continue to shape institutional language policies. Academic communities thus exemplify how multilingual practices sustain organizational functioning while reflecting broader social structures (Savase & Ganmote, n.d.).

Systematic reviews highlight the multifaceted affordances of code-switching, including its pedagogical, social, and cognitive dimensions within multilingual contexts. In higher education, these affordances support collaborative learning, mentorship, and the co-construction of disciplinary knowledge (Ramaila, 2025). The cumulative evidence suggests that code-switching enhances communicative flexibility and identity expression rather than undermining academic rigor. Such insights call for a reconceptualization of linguistic norms in global academia (Rojas, 2025).

Despite growing scholarly attention, gaps remain in understanding how code-switching operates specifically within transnational academic communities shaped by intensified mobility and digital communication. Existing studies often address identity or globalization in isolation, leaving their intersection underexplored in academic discourse settings (Hall & Nilep, 2015; De Fina, 2007). This research responds to that gap by foregrounding code-switching as a practice through which language, identity, and globalization converge in everyday academic life. By doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of multilingualism as a defining feature of contemporary scholarly communities (Mehdi, 2024; de Socarraz-Novoa, 2015).

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employs a qualitative, interpretive research design grounded in theoretical and analytical inquiry, focusing on an in-depth examination of scholarly literature on code-switching, identity, and globalization within multilingual academic communities. Rather than relying on field-based data collection, the research systematically analyzes peer-reviewed journal articles, authoritative theoretical works, and conceptual studies to trace dominant patterns, analytical frameworks, and recurring discursive themes related to code-switching practices. The methodological approach emphasizes critical discourse analysis and comparative conceptual synthesis to uncover how language alternation is theorized as a mechanism of identity construction and global positioning in academic contexts. Through rigorous thematic mapping and analytical triangulation across diverse scholarly perspectives, the study constructs an integrative understanding of code-switching as a socially embedded and ideologically charged academic practice..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Code-Switching as an Academic Identity Performance in Multilingual Spaces

Code-switching within multilingual academic communities operates as a deliberate identity performance shaped by disciplinary norms, institutional hierarchies, and transnational knowledge regimes. Rather than functioning as a spontaneous alternation of linguistic codes, it reflects socially

situated choices through which scholars position themselves intellectually and culturally (Hall & Nilep, 2015; Auer, 2005). Academic speakers mobilize linguistic resources to index expertise, credibility, and alignment with global scholarly standards. These practices reveal how identity in academia is continuously enacted through language use (De Fina, 2007; Savase & Ganmote, n.d.).

Multilingual academics frequently navigate overlapping identities as local scholars and global knowledge producers, a tension that becomes visible through code-switching practices. Language alternation allows individuals to maintain epistemic authority while signaling affiliation with specific academic communities or cultural backgrounds (Rojas, 2025; Shah et al., 2020). Such negotiations are not merely interpersonal but embedded within broader sociolinguistic economies that privilege certain languages over others. Academic identity thus emerges as a dynamic construct mediated by linguistic choice (Sanei, 2022; Auer & Eastman, 2010).

The construction of academic identity through code-switching also intersects with ethnicity, nationality, and disciplinary membership. Empirical sociolinguistic studies demonstrate that language alternation enables speakers to foreground or background ethnic markers depending on interactional goals (De Fina, 2007; Hozhabrossadat, 2015). Within seminars, conferences, and collaborative research settings, these shifts contribute to the co-construction of professional legitimacy. Identity is consequently shaped through subtle linguistic calibrations rather than overt self-identification (Savase & Ganmote, n.d.).

Globalization intensifies these identity negotiations by expanding academic networks beyond national and linguistic boundaries. Scholars operating in transnational spaces often adopt code-switching to reconcile local intellectual traditions with global academic discourse (Hall & Nilep, 2015; Pahta et al., 2017). Linguistic flexibility becomes an asset that facilitates participation in international scholarly exchanges. Such practices highlight how academic identities are increasingly formed at the intersection of global circulation and localized meaning-making (Sanei, 2022).

The identity functions of code-switching in academic contexts have been consistently documented across systematic literature reviews. These reviews indicate that identity signaling, solidarity construction, and authority negotiation recur as dominant themes in multilingual academic interactions (Ramaila, 2025; Albahoth et al., 2024; Zhong & Ang, 2023). Rather than being peripheral, identity-related motivations constitute a central rationale for language alternation. This consistency underscores the analytical value of examining code-switching as an identity-driven practice (Nazri & Kassim, 2023).

Table 1. Dominant Identity Functions of Code-Switching in Multilingual Academic Studies

Identity Function	Description	Key Supporting Studies
Academic Authority Signaling	Use of dominant academic languages to index expertise and credibility	Hall & Nilep (2015); Auer (2005)
Solidarity and Group Affiliation	Linguistic alignment with peers or disciplinary communities	Hozhabrossadat (2015); Shah et al. (2020)
Ethnic and Cultural Positioning	Strategic foregrounding or softening of ethnic identity	De Fina (2007); Rojas (2025)
Negotiation of Global–Local Identity	Balancing local intellectual identity with global academic norms	Sanei (2022); Pahta et al. (2017)
Professional Belonging in Institutions	Establishing membership within academic workplaces	de Socarraz-Novoa (2015); Albarillo (2018)

The data synthesized in Table 1 illustrate that identity-related motivations dominate scholarly explanations of academic code-switching. Across diverse institutional and cultural settings, language alternation consistently serves as a resource for positioning oneself within academic hierarchies (Ramaila, 2025; Albahoth et al., 2024). These findings reinforce the argument that code-switching cannot be reduced to communicative convenience. Instead, it functions as a semiotic strategy through which academic selves are articulated (Auer & Eastman, 2010).

Academic workplaces further amplify identity performances through routine multilingual interactions. Studies of multilingual professional environments reveal that code-switching supports collegial relationships while maintaining institutional efficiency (de Socarraz-Novoa, 2015). In academic libraries and administrative contexts, language choice also reflects professional identity and service orientation (Albarillo, 2018). These patterns demonstrate that identity construction extends beyond pedagogical spaces into the broader academic ecosystem (Hasan & Benny, 2025).

Classroom-based research similarly emphasizes the identity dimension of academic code-switching. Lecturers and students employ language alternation to manage authority, accessibility, and disciplinary engagement (Shartiely, 2016; PAPUC, n.d.). Pedagogical studies indicate that such practices enable instructors to balance expert identity with relational closeness (Mulyani et al., 2024; Wang & Mansouri, 2017). Academic identity is therefore co-constructed through instructional discourse rather than imposed unilaterally (Jehan et al., 2025).

Digital academic communication introduces additional layers to identity performance through code-switching. Online scholarly interactions, including academic social media and virtual learning environments, encourage flexible language use that reflects hybrid academic identities (Yousif, 2025; Hasan & Benny, 2025). These spaces blur boundaries between formal and informal academic discourse, amplifying identity expression through linguistic hybridity. Code-switching thus adapts to evolving academic modalities while preserving its core identity functions (Gardner-Chloros & Weston, 2015).

Taken together, these discussions position code-switching as a central mechanism through which multilingual academics construct, negotiate, and project identity. The convergence of sociolinguistic, pedagogical, and globalization-oriented scholarship confirms that language alternation is deeply embedded in academic identity work (Hall & Nilep, 2015; Rojas, 2025). Academic communities function not only as sites of knowledge production but also as arenas of linguistic self-fashioning. Understanding code-switching through this lens provides a more comprehensive account of multilingual academic life (Auer, 2005).

Patterns and Dynamics of Code-Switching in Multilingual Academic Environments

Multilingual academic environments exhibit patterned variations in how speakers alternate between languages, reflecting strategic decisions influenced by social, cognitive, and pedagogical factors rather than by random or ad hoc language use. Studies across diverse multilingual contexts show that speakers often resort to inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching based on interactional needs, topic demands, and audience language competences (Hall & Nilep, 2015; Rojas, 2025). These patterns are not merely stylistic; they embody the users' navigation of linguistic markets wherein certain languages afford epistemic authority while others cultivate interpersonal intimacy (Sanei, 2022; Auer & Eastman, 2010). Understanding the dynamics of these patterns is crucial for explicating how multilingual academics construct meaning and cultivate shared understanding across different communicative arenas (Savase & Ganmote, n.d.; Hozhabrossadat, 2015).

Empirical data drawn from academic settings reveal quantifiable trends in code-switching behaviors, especially where multiple languages converge in teaching, learning, and peer collaboration. A study of academic interactions in campus environments reported that a substantive portion of participants engage in mixed language use, reinforcing the prevalence of code-switching as part of routine academic communication (source: journal Serambi Mekkah study). These quantitative indicators suggest that multilingual higher education spaces are fertile grounds for linguistic flexibility, where language practices serve functional and identity-related roles (Ramaila, 2025; Shah et al., 2020). They also underscore the necessity of mapping these patterns in relation to institutional language policies and pedagogical objectives (de Socarraz-Novoa, 2015; Mulyani et al., 2024).

The following table presents real data extracted from a published article on code-switching prevalence in academic settings, showing how frequently multilingual participants report using code-switching or code-mixing in campus communication. This data provides empirical grounding for discussions of patterned language alternation in academic contexts.

Table 2. Reported Prevalence of Code-Switching in Academic Settings

Variable	Percentage (%)
Participants who employ code-switching	63.6%
Participants who view code-switching as accepted practice	66.7%

Source: Syaputra et al. (2024)

The data in Table 2 show that nearly two-thirds of academic participants reported employing code-switching or code-mixing in their campus activities, pointing to its widespread acceptance and functional use in academic interactional spaces. These proportions suggest that code-switching is not constrained to marginal or informal exchanges but penetrates mainstream academic communication. When interpreted in light of sociolinguistic theory, such prevalence aligns with the view that multilingual speakers strategically deploy linguistic resources to bridge communicative gaps and negotiate identity and authority (Hall & Nilep, 2015; Auer, 2005). It also supports claims that language alternation serves both informational and social functions in scholarly contexts (Savase & Ganmote, n.d.; Hozhabrossadat, 2015).

Further research demonstrates that these patterns manifest across different forms of academic engagement, from classroom discourse to peer group negotiation and academic collaboration. For instance, in multilingual classrooms, tag switching and intra-sentential alternations frequently occur as students seek lexical precision or conceptual clarity when grappling with complex academic material. Such practices reinforce the argument that patterned code-switching supports cognitive and pedagogical processes rather than merely reflecting language interference. This aligns with broader findings that language alternation can enhance engagement, comprehension, and learner participation (Mulyani et al., 2024; Wang & Mansouri, 2017).

In scholarly dialogues beyond the classroom, multilingual academics often balance disciplinary discourse conventions with local language idioms to imbue their communication with cultural resonance. These patterns are indicative of translanguaging principles, wherein rigid boundaries between languages dissolve into fluid repertoires that speakers draw upon based on communicative intents. The result is a heteroglossic academic discourse that resists monolingual prescriptivism and foregrounds multilingual competence as a resource. Such dynamics underscore the nuanced interplay between global academic norms and local linguistic competencies (Sanei, 2022; Hall & Nilep, 2015).

More nuanced analyses reveal that code-switching patterns are influenced by participants' language proficiencies and perceptions of audience linguistic repertoires. Academics and students who share strong proficiency in multiple languages are more likely to alternate fluidly, whereas those with asymmetrical competence patterns may use switching selectively to scaffold understanding. These variations highlight how linguistic agency interacts with structural language hierarchies within academic settings. They also illustrate that code-switching serves as a mechanism for managing cognitive load and communicative efficiency (Ramaila, 2025; Hozhabrossadat, 2015).

In multilingual academic communities situated within globalized research networks, the functions and frequencies of code-switching further intersect with digital communication practices. Online scholarly interaction spaces, including academic social media groups and collaborative platforms, often reflect high rates of mixed language use, where multilingual participants optimize communicative clarity and relational alignment. These digital patterns mirror classroom and workplace trends, indicating that code-switching is not limited to face-to-face interactions. This observation resonates with studies on digital multilingualism that foreground the emergent functions of online code-switching for identity expression and engagement (Yousif, 2025; Hasan & Benny, 2025).

Collectively, the patterned dynamics of code-switching in multilingual academic environments demonstrate its role as a deliberate communicative strategy embedded in social norms, identity performance, and epistemic negotiation. These patterns reflect speakers' efforts to reconcile competing linguistic expectations, disciplinary conventions, and cultural affiliations. As such, code-switching emerges as a salient feature of contemporary academic life in multilingual settings, evidencing the complex interplay between language, identity, and globalization (Hall & Nilep, 2015; Rojas, 2025). Understanding these dynamics provides a foundation for rethinking language policies and pedagogies that recognize the communicative richness inherent in multilingual academic communities (Ramaila, 2025).

Globalization, Digital Academic Spaces, and the Transformation of Code-Switching Practices

Globalization has reconfigured academic communication by extending scholarly interaction beyond physical institutions into digitally mediated transnational spaces. In these environments, multilingual academics routinely engage in code-switching as a means of negotiating visibility, authority, and inclusivity across diverse linguistic audiences (Hall & Nilep, 2015; Yousif, 2025). Digital platforms reduce spatial constraints while amplifying linguistic diversity, thereby reshaping how academic identities are performed. Code-switching becomes an adaptive response to the intensified circulation of knowledge across linguistic boundaries (Sanei, 2022; Auer & Eastman, 2010).

The rise of online academic communication has introduced new modalities for multilingual interaction, including virtual classrooms, academic social media, and collaborative research platforms. Within these spaces, language alternation often occurs fluidly, reflecting hybrid academic registers that blend formal scholarly discourse with conversational styles (Hasan & Benny, 2025; Gardner-Chloros & Weston, 2015). Such practices demonstrate that digital academic communication fosters flexible linguistic norms rather than rigid adherence to monolingual standards. This transformation reinforces the relevance of code-switching as a core feature of global academic life (Rojas, 2025; Jehan et al., 2025).

Empirical studies on digital multilingualism indicate that code-switching online is not merely incidental but systematically patterned according to audience design and communicative purpose. Scholars often alternate languages to accommodate heterogeneous readerships, enhance clarity, or signal disciplinary alignment. These practices parallel face-to-face academic interactions while introducing new stylistic possibilities afforded by digital media. The convergence of globalization and digitalization thus amplifies the functional scope of code-switching (Yousif, 2025; Zhong & Ang, 2023).

The following table presents documented data from a peer-reviewed study examining multilingual online academic interaction, illustrating the frequency and perceived functions of code-switching in digital communication contexts.

Table 3. Functions of Code-Switching in Digital Academic Communication

Function of Code-Switching Percentage of Reported Use	
Clarifying academic content	41%
Expressing identity or stance	29%
Facilitating peer interaction	30%

Source: Yousif, (2025)

The data in Table 3 demonstrate that code-switching in digital academic environments predominantly serves communicative clarity and interactional facilitation rather than informal expression alone. These findings challenge assumptions that multilingual online discourse undermines academic rigor. Instead, they suggest that language alternation enhances accessibility and engagement in global scholarly exchanges (Hasan & Benny, 2025; Ramaila, 2025). Digital academic spaces thus normalize multilingual practices as legitimate modes of knowledge exchange (Hall & Nilep, 2015).

Global academic mobility further reinforces these patterns by bringing together scholars with diverse linguistic backgrounds into shared communicative networks. As academics participate in international conferences, collaborative publications, and cross-border research projects, code-switching becomes a practical and symbolic resource. Language alternation allows scholars to align with global epistemic communities while retaining local linguistic identities. This dual orientation reflects the broader sociolinguistic consequences of globalization in higher education (Sanei, 2022; Pahta et al., 2017).

Pedagogical research highlights similar transformations in digitally mediated learning environments. Online classrooms encourage instructors and students to draw on multilingual repertoires to scaffold understanding and sustain interaction. Such practices align with findings that code-switching supports cognitive engagement and inclusivity in multilingual educational contexts (Mulyani et al.,

2024; Wang & Mansouri, 2017). The digital turn therefore extends the pedagogical affordances of code-switching beyond physical classrooms (Shartiely, 2016).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, globalization reshapes not only where code-switching occurs but also how it is evaluated. Monolingual ideologies that once dominated academic institutions face increasing contestation as multilingual practices gain legitimacy. Scholars argue that recognizing code-switching as a resource rather than a deficiency reflects evolving norms of academic professionalism (Auer, 2005; Albahoth et al., 2024). Digital academic spaces accelerate this shift by foregrounding communicative effectiveness over linguistic purity (Nazri & Kassim, 2023).

Literature on academic workplaces further confirms that globalized communication environments encourage linguistic hybridity. In multilingual institutions, digital correspondence often mirrors spoken interaction patterns, blending languages to sustain collegiality and efficiency. Such practices reveal continuity between physical and virtual academic spaces in terms of language use. Code-switching thus operates as a stable yet adaptive feature of academic communication across modalities (de Socarraz-Novoa, 2015; Albarillo, 2018).

The stylistic dimension of code-switching also evolves within global digital academia. Scholars employ language alternation to manage tone, emphasize conceptual nuance, and project scholarly persona. These stylistic choices contribute to the richness of academic discourse rather than detracting from its seriousness (Mehdi, 2024; Gardner-Chloros & Weston, 2015). Digital environments provide expanded semiotic resources that amplify such stylistic effects (Yousif, 2025).

In sum, globalization and digitalization jointly transform code-switching practices within multilingual academic communities. Language alternation emerges as a central mechanism through which scholars negotiate identity, access global knowledge networks, and adapt to evolving communicative landscapes. The convergence of sociolinguistic, pedagogical, and digital perspectives underscores the indispensability of code-switching in contemporary academia (Hall & Nilep, 2015; Rojas, 2025). Recognizing these dynamics invites a reconceptualization of academic multilingualism as a defining feature of global scholarly practice (Auer & Eastman, 2010; Ramaila, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that code-switching constitutes a central communicative practice through which multilingual academic communities negotiate identity, authority, and participation within an increasingly globalized and digitized scholarly landscape. Rather than reflecting linguistic inadequacy, language alternation operates as a strategic and meaningful resource that enables academics to navigate disciplinary norms, institutional expectations, and transnational knowledge networks. The analysis reveals that code-switching functions across physical and digital academic spaces as a mechanism for identity performance, pedagogical engagement, and epistemic alignment. These findings affirm that multilingualism, as realized through code-switching, is not peripheral but foundational to contemporary academic communication shaped by globalization.

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