Code-Switching as Survival

A presentation based of Blair Imani's "Smarter in Seconds" TikTok Series

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What is Code-Switching?

Code-switching is the change from one language or way of speaking to another, depending on the social context or setting.

It is a common phenomenon for those who are bilingual, trilingual, or those who straddle multiple cultural or social contexts.

What is NOT code-switching?

Switching to a speaking style from a non-dominant group that they're not a part of - like a non-Black actor or Comedian using a "blaccent" to make money.
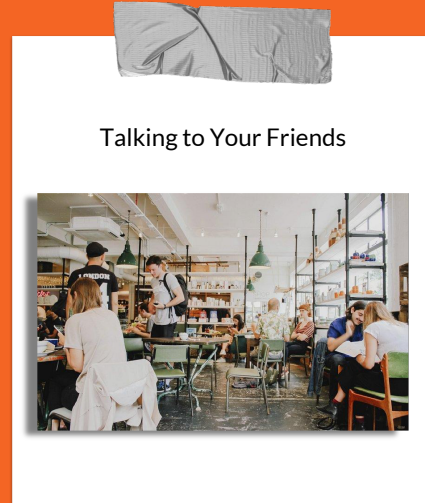
Code-switching does NOT:

- Make you fake
- Make you "white-washed"

Code-switching DOES:

- Make you ADAPTABLE

Social & Cultural Contexts

Below are two examples of environments where we may engage in code-switching.

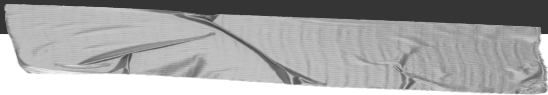Talking to a Professor or Boss

VS

Talking to Your Friends

Analyzing the Social & Cultural Contexts

What about the environments may drive someone to code-switch?

	Talking to a Professor or Boss	Talking to friends
Location	• Office • Conference Room • Private & Intentional	• Home • Party / Gathering • Public or Private
Attire / Appearance	• Formal and/or business casual • Presents as clean/ organized	• Informal / formal (context dependent) • Casual / laid back
Power Dynamic	• Student to Professor respectability - Professor is the lead • Employee to Boss respectability - Boss is the lead • Dominant culture with hierarchies (Manager, etc.)	• Dynamic leadership opportunities that play into individual strengths • Power dynamics shift informally

WHY code-switch?

- ★ **Gain credibility** - If I adapt to the dominant culture, they will assume I know what I'm talking about
- ★ **Form of translating** - Using different ways to describe the same thing when engaging with different social groups
- ★ **Build solidarity** - Relating to one-another and connecting
- ★ **Avoid classism** - Avoid feeling like you cannot relate because of your socioeconomic status
- ★ **Avoid racism and xenophobia** - Avoid feeling like an "other" because of your non-dominant cultural background

Code-switching is a skill.

This skill is acquired to navigate and survive in this world for those who are multilingual and/or those who straddle a variety of cultural and social settings.

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Assignment #4 (Part 2) - Multimodal Digital Genre Transformation

Code-switching is about survival and adaptability to the change in discourse community environments. For this assignment I chose to analyze a TikTok video posted by the Creator Blair Imani for their series called "Smarter in Seconds." In this video Blair, along with additional guests, take us through a 1 minute and 30 second crash course on what code-switching is, why some individuals may engage in it and why it's considered a skill for survival. I've reimagined this TikTok video by transforming it into a PowerPoint presentation that can be used by Teachers who are teaching multilingual/multicultural students about code-switching. Specifically intended to define code-switching, provide examples of what environments trigger this behavior and why individuals may engage in it.

The original TikTok video combines an interview/lecture style with static images and text that appear on the screen as they're speaking. There's a visual and audio element to the video. In my reiteration of this content, I've made it a static PowerPoint where it's a combination of images and text but there's no audio element to it. The audio element in this case will be the Teacher who is using the PowerPoint to lecture students. This makes the content unique to the Teacher's teaching style and is designed to be a flexible resource adaptable to a wide range of different age groups.

In this case, the target audience doesn't shift based on the digital platform. Both are intended to give insights into the concept of code-switching but the domain delivery changes the

intake process. The original video is informal in its approach mostly because of the platform

used whereas the PowerPoint takes on a formal identity because of where it will be used. In the

original version, the tone is celebratory and compassionate whereas the reimagined version takes

on a more candid tone. It's candid because it's straightforward and unreserved.

Both versions are making the same argument which is that code-switching is a necessary

behavior for survival. They both appeal to logos because the examples used in the content are

common scenarios intended to build a logical argument for why code-switching occurs. The

reimagined version has a greater appeal to ethos because the speaker in this case is the Teacher

so there's already a power dynamic where the student audience trusts the professional and what

they're saying.

Transforming the TikTok video into a PowerPoint presentation taught me that arguments

about code-switching can be adapted to a variety of platforms and audiences while keeping the

key messages in tact. It's important to diversify the message onto several platforms in order to

expand its reach. On a platform like TikTok, individuals must be intentional about looking up

such subjects in order to come across that type of video. In a school setting, however, it can be

adapted as part of the curriculum.

Works Cited

Imani, Blair [@blairimani]. "Code-switching isn't fake, it is survival. Code-switching is a skill

that helps us navigate different social contexts and situations. We all do it, but not for the

same reason. Learn more in this #SmarterInSeconds with @edenxluna and Crash."

TikTok, 15 April 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/t/ZT8UmJY1q/