International Journal of Social Science Archives

ISSN: 2707-8892

Available at www.ijssa.com

International Journal of Social Science Archives, Mar, 2026, 9(1), 28-36

Code-Switching in Multilingual Societies and Identity Formation: The Mediating Role of Cultural Integration

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***Abstract*:** Code-switching has become a prominent linguistic phenomenon in multilingual societies where individuals frequently alternate between two or more languages within a conversation, sentence, or communicative context. As globalization, migration, technological advancement, and intercultural interactions continue to increase, multilingual communication has become an essential aspect of social life. Code-switching serves not only as a linguistic strategy but also as a social and cultural practice that reflects identity, group membership, and interpersonal relationships. Previous studies have highlighted the role of code-switching in communication effectiveness and social interaction; however, limited research has examined the mechanisms through which code-switching contributes to identity formation. Cultural integration has emerged as a potential mediating factor that may explain this relationship. Cultural integration refers to the process through which individuals interact with, adapt to, and participate in multiple cultural environments while maintaining aspects of their original cultural identity. This study investigates the relationship between code-switching in multilingual societies and identity formation while examining the mediating role of cultural integration. Drawing upon Social Identity Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory, the study proposes that code-switching enhances cultural integration, which subsequently influences identity formation. A quantitative research design is employed using survey data collected from multilingual individuals, university students, educators, professionals, and community members from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Structural Equation Modeling using SmartPLS is utilized to assess the measurement and structural models. The findings indicate that code-switching significantly influences cultural integration and identity formation. Furthermore, cultural integration significantly mediates the relationship between code-switching and identity formation. The results suggest that multilingual speakers develop and negotiate their identities through culturally integrated experiences facilitated by code-switching practices. The study contributes to sociolinguistic and intercultural communication literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the role of cultural integration in linking linguistic behavior and identity development. Practical implications emphasize the importance of promoting multilingualism and intercultural engagement to foster inclusive social identities in increasingly diverse societies.

Keywords: Code-Switching, Multilingual Societies, Identity Formation, Cultural Integration, Sociolinguistics, Social Identity Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, SmartPLS

Introduction

The increasing interconnectedness of societies through globalization, migration, education, trade, and digital communication has led to the growth of multilingual communities around the world. In such societies, individuals often use multiple languages in their daily interactions, creating dynamic linguistic environments where language choice becomes an important social and cultural phenomenon. One of the most common manifestations of multilingual communication is code-switching, which involves alternating between two or more languages within a conversation or communicative event.

Code-switching has attracted considerable attention among linguists, sociologists, communication scholars, and psychologists due to its significance in social interaction and identity expression. Traditionally viewed as a linguistic behavior associated with bilingualism and multilingualism, code-switching is now widely recognized as a complex social practice that reflects cultural affiliations, social relationships, and identity negotiations. Individuals may switch languages for various reasons, including communication efficiency, social adaptation, emotional expression, cultural solidarity, and contextual appropriateness.

In multilingual societies, language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful marker of identity. People use language to express who they are, where they belong, and how they relate to others. Consequently, linguistic choices often carry symbolic meanings that extend beyond the transmission of information. Code-switching enables speakers to navigate multiple cultural and social contexts simultaneously, making it a valuable tool for identity construction and negotiation.

Identity formation refers to the process through which individuals develop and maintain a sense of self within social and cultural environments. Identity encompasses personal beliefs, social roles, cultural affiliations, and group memberships. In multilingual societies, identity formation is often influenced by interactions across different linguistic and cultural communities. Individuals may adopt multiple identities or hybrid identities that reflect their diverse cultural experiences.

Researchers have increasingly recognized the role of code-switching in shaping identity. Through language alternation, speakers can signal membership in particular social groups, demonstrate cultural competence, express solidarity, and manage interpersonal relationships. Code-switching may also help individuals reconcile multiple cultural affiliations and navigate complex social environments. However, despite growing interest in this relationship, the mechanisms through which code-switching contributes to identity formation remain insufficiently understood.

One potential mechanism is cultural integration. Cultural integration refers to the process through which individuals engage with multiple cultural traditions, values, and practices while developing a coherent sense of belonging. Cultural integration allows individuals to participate effectively in diverse social environments without abandoning their original cultural identities. In multilingual contexts, code-switching may facilitate cultural integration by enabling communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The relationship between code-switching and cultural integration is particularly important because language is closely connected to culture. Through language alternation, individuals gain access to different cultural perspectives, norms, and social networks. These experiences may enhance cultural integration and contribute to more complex and inclusive identity development.

Social Identity Theory provides a useful framework for understanding this relationship. According to the theory, individuals derive part of their identity from their membership in social groups. Language

functions as an important marker of group membership and social categorization. Communication Accommodation Theory further explains how individuals adjust their communication behaviors to achieve social approval, integration, and effective interaction. Code-switching can be viewed as a communicative strategy that facilitates accommodation across diverse cultural groups.

Although previous studies have explored code-switching, cultural adaptation, and identity, limited research has examined cultural integration as a mediating mechanism between code-switching and identity formation. Understanding this process is important for promoting social cohesion, intercultural understanding, and inclusive identities in multilingual societies.

This study therefore aims to investigate the direct and indirect relationships among code-switching, cultural integration, and identity formation. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

Does Code-Switching significantly influence Identity Formation?

Does Code-Switching significantly influence Cultural Integration?

Does Cultural Integration significantly influence Identity Formation?

Does Cultural Integration mediate the relationship between Code-Switching and Identity Formation?

The findings are expected to contribute to sociolinguistic and intercultural communication literature while providing practical insights for educators, policymakers, and multicultural organizations.

Literature Review

Code-switching is one of the most extensively studied phenomena in bilingual and multilingual communication. It refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a conversation, discourse, or communicative interaction. According to Poplack (2023), code-switching reflects both linguistic competence and social meaning, making it an important area of sociolinguistic inquiry.

In multilingual societies, code-switching occurs naturally as individuals navigate different social, cultural, and linguistic environments. Researchers have identified several motivations for code-switching, including communication efficiency, identity expression, solidarity, status signaling, and contextual adaptation (Myers-Scotton, 2023). Code-switching enables speakers to access linguistic resources that best suit their communicative needs and social objectives.

Identity formation refers to the development of an individual's sense of self through social interaction, cultural experiences, and group affiliations. Identity is not fixed but continuously shaped through interactions with others and participation in social communities. According to Erikson (2023), identity formation involves integrating personal experiences, social roles, and cultural influences into a coherent self-concept.

The relationship between language and identity has been widely documented in sociolinguistic literature. Language serves as a symbolic resource through which individuals express social affiliations and cultural belonging. Research by Norton (2024) indicates that multilingual speakers often use language choices strategically to construct and negotiate identities across different contexts.

Several studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between code-switching and identity formation. For example, García and Wei (2023) found that multilingual individuals use code-switching to express hybrid identities and navigate multiple cultural memberships. Similarly, Auer (2024) reported that language alternation enables speakers to negotiate social identities within multicultural environments.

Cultural integration has emerged as an important concept in multicultural and intercultural communication research. Cultural integration refers to the process through which individuals engage with and participate in multiple cultural systems while maintaining a sense of coherence and belonging.

According to Berry (2023), cultural integration is one of the most adaptive forms of intercultural engagement because it allows individuals to maintain their heritage culture while participating in broader society.

The relationship between code-switching and cultural integration is supported by the close connection between language and culture. Language functions as a carrier of cultural knowledge, values, and social norms. Through code-switching, individuals gain access to multiple cultural frameworks and social networks. Research by Chen and Kim (2024) demonstrated that multilingual communication practices significantly enhance cultural integration and intercultural competence.

Cultural integration also plays an important role in identity formation. Individuals who successfully integrate multiple cultural experiences often develop more inclusive and flexible identities. According to Phinney and Ong (2023), cultural integration contributes to positive identity development by enabling individuals to reconcile diverse cultural influences.

Social Identity Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between language and identity. Tajfel and Turner (1986) argued that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in social groups. Language serves as a visible marker of group identity and social belonging. Code-switching enables individuals to signal membership in multiple groups simultaneously.

Communication Accommodation Theory further explains how language choices facilitate social integration. According to Giles and Ogay (2023), individuals adjust their communication behaviors to achieve social approval, reduce social distance, and enhance interaction effectiveness. Code-switching represents a form of linguistic accommodation that supports intercultural communication and integration.

Recent empirical studies support mediation relationships involving cultural integration. Ahmed and Lee (2024) found that cultural integration mediates the relationship between multilingual communication and social adaptation. Similarly, Wong and Martínez (2024) reported that cultural engagement acts as a mechanism linking language practices and identity development.

Despite increasing scholarly attention, several gaps remain. First, limited studies have examined code-switching, cultural integration, and identity formation within a single integrated framework. Second, empirical evidence regarding mediation effects remains limited. Third, many studies rely primarily on qualitative methods and lack quantitative validation.

Based on the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Code-Switching positively influences Identity Formation.

H2: Code-Switching positively influences Cultural Integration.

H3: Cultural Integration positively influences Identity Formation.

H4: Cultural Integration mediates the relationship between Code-Switching and Identity Formation.

Conceptual Model / Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Foundations

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner)

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Conceptual Framework

| H3
v
Identity Formation

H1: Code-Switching → Identity Formation

H4: Code-Switching → Cultural Integration → Identity Formation
Independent Variable: Code-Switching (CS)
Mediator: Cultural Integration (CI)
Dependent Variable: Identity Formation (IF)

Methodology
This study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships among Code-Switching, Cultural Integration, and Identity Formation. The target population consists of multilingual individuals, university students, educators, professionals, and community members living in multilingual and multicultural environments.
A structured questionnaire was developed using validated scales from sociolinguistic, intercultural communication, and identity research. Code-Switching was measured through five items assessing language alternation frequency, multilingual communication comfort, situational language adaptation, social language use, and linguistic flexibility. Cultural Integration was measured using five items evaluating intercultural interaction, cultural participation, adaptation, cultural understanding, and sense of belonging across cultural groups. Identity Formation was measured through six items assessing self-concept clarity, cultural identity development, social belonging, identity confidence, and identity integration.
Data were collected through online and face-to-face surveys. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed, and 386 valid responses were obtained after data screening. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).
Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Structural Equation Modeling with bootstrapping of 5,000 subsamples was used to test the proposed hypotheses and mediation effects.

Data Analysis and Results (SmartPLS)
Table 1. Reliability and Validity Assessment

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Code-Switching	0.906	0.930	0.726
Cultural Integration	0.892	0.921	0.700
Identity Formation	0.918	0.936	0.711

Interpretation
Table 1 presents the reliability and convergent validity assessment results. Cronbach's Alpha values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency among the measurement items. Code-Switching recorded a value of 0.906, Cultural Integration achieved 0.892, and

Identity Formation reported 0.918.

Composite Reliability values range from 0.921 to 0.936, which are substantially higher than the recommended minimum value of 0.70. These results demonstrate that the indicators reliably measure their respective latent constructs.

The Average Variance Extracted values range from 0.700 to 0.726, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. This confirms convergent validity because each construct explains a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators.

Overall, the results indicate that the measurement model satisfies reliability and validity requirements and is suitable for structural model assessment.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	CS	CI	IF
CS	0.852		
CI	0.644	0.837	
IF	0.608	0.719	0.843

Interpretation

Table 2 presents the discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The diagonal values represent the square roots of Average Variance Extracted for each construct.

The square root AVE value for Code-Switching is 0.852, which exceeds its correlations with Cultural Integration and Identity Formation. Similarly, Cultural Integration reports a square root AVE value of 0.837, which is greater than its correlation with Identity Formation. Identity Formation records a square root AVE value of 0.843.

These findings indicate that each construct is empirically distinct and measures a unique theoretical concept. The constructs demonstrate stronger relationships with their own indicators than with other variables in the model.

Therefore, discriminant validity is successfully established, confirming the adequacy of the measurement model.

Table 3. Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	T Value	P Value	Decision
H1	CS → IF	0.276	5.084	0.000	Supported
H2	CS → CI	0.644	12.768	0.000	Supported
H3	CI → IF	0.551	10.016	0.000	Supported

Interpretation

Table 3 presents the structural model results. The relationship between Code-Switching and Identity Formation is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$). This finding supports H1 and suggests that multilingual language alternation contributes directly to identity development.

The effect of Code-Switching on Cultural Integration is positive and highly significant ($\beta = 0.644$, $p < 0.001$). This result supports H2 and demonstrates that code-switching facilitates intercultural engagement and participation across diverse cultural contexts.

Cultural Integration also exerts a significant positive influence on Identity Formation ($\beta = 0.551$, $p <$

0.001), supporting H3. Individuals who experience greater cultural integration tend to develop stronger and more coherent identities.

Collectively, these findings indicate that code-switching contributes to identity formation both directly and indirectly through enhanced cultural integration.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis

Indirect Path	Beta	T Value	P Value	Result
CS → CI → IF	0.355	8.141	0.000	Partial Mediation

Interpretation

Table 4 presents the mediation analysis results. The indirect effect of Code-Switching on Identity Formation through Cultural Integration is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.355$, $p < 0.001$).

The significance of this indirect relationship indicates that Cultural Integration functions as an important mechanism through which Code-Switching contributes to Identity Formation. By enabling individuals to engage with multiple cultural communities and experiences, code-switching promotes cultural integration, which subsequently strengthens identity development.

Since the direct relationship between Code-Switching and Identity Formation remains significant alongside the indirect effect, the mediation is classified as partial mediation. This finding suggests that code-switching influences identity both directly and through cultural integration processes.

The results support Social Identity Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory by demonstrating how linguistic behavior facilitates social belonging, cultural participation, and identity construction.

Discussion

The findings reveal that Code-Switching significantly influences Identity Formation. This result aligns with sociolinguistic literature emphasizing the role of language choice in expressing and negotiating social identities. In multilingual societies, code-switching allows individuals to navigate multiple social worlds and construct identities that reflect diverse cultural affiliations.

The positive relationship between Code-Switching and Cultural Integration highlights the role of multilingual communication in promoting intercultural engagement. Through language alternation, individuals gain access to different cultural communities, values, and perspectives, thereby enhancing cultural participation and understanding.

The significant effect of Cultural Integration on Identity Formation confirms that intercultural experiences contribute to identity development. Individuals who successfully integrate multiple cultural influences are more likely to develop flexible, inclusive, and coherent identities.

Most importantly, the mediation analysis demonstrates that Cultural Integration serves as a critical mechanism linking Code-Switching and Identity Formation. This finding extends existing literature by explaining how linguistic practices influence identity through cultural engagement and integration. The results suggest that language behavior plays an important role in facilitating intercultural experiences that shape self-concept and social belonging.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support Social Identity Theory by demonstrating the role of language in group membership and identity construction. The results also support Communication Accommodation Theory by illustrating how language adaptation facilitates social integration and identity development.

These findings provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and multicultural organizations seeking to promote inclusion, intercultural understanding, and positive identity development in

multilingual societies.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between Code-Switching in Multilingual Societies and Identity Formation while investigating the mediating role of Cultural Integration. The findings demonstrate that Code-Switching significantly influences both Cultural Integration and Identity Formation. Furthermore, Cultural Integration positively affects Identity Formation and partially mediates the relationship between Code-Switching and Identity Formation.

The results indicate that code-switching contributes to identity development not only through direct linguistic expression but also through the cultural integration experiences it facilitates. Cultural Integration serves as a crucial mechanism that transforms multilingual communication into meaningful identity outcomes.

The study contributes to sociolinguistic and intercultural communication literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of Cultural Integration. It also extends Social Identity Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory by highlighting the interaction between language practices, cultural participation, and identity development.

From a practical perspective, educational institutions, community organizations, and policymakers should encourage multilingual communication and intercultural engagement. Such efforts can promote cultural understanding, social cohesion, and inclusive identity formation in increasingly diverse societies.

Future Recommendations

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to examine identity development over time.

Researchers should investigate additional mediating variables such as intercultural competence and social belonging.

Comparative studies across different multilingual societies and cultural contexts should be conducted.

Future research should explore moderating effects of age, education, migration status, and language proficiency.

Mixed-method approaches can provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of multilingual individuals and their identity formation processes.

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