

Code-Switching Practices in the Nile Delta: A Comparative Study of Linguistic Fluidity Among Gen Z and Gen X EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study investigates code-switching as a form of linguistic fluidity among Egyptian EFL learners, focusing on how language practices are shaped by proficiency level, socio-cultural background, and generational positioning. Drawing on a convergent mixed-methods design, the research combines survey data from 154 participants with semi-structured interviews conducted with speakers from Generation Z and Generation X. Rather than treating code-switching as a random or deficient practice, the study situates it within established sociolinguistic theories that view language choice as socially meaningful, ideologically loaded, and deeply connected to identity construction. The findings reveal that advanced learners, particularly younger urban speakers, tend to use code-switching as a strategic and expressive resource aligned with cosmopolitan identities and digital culture. In contrast, intermediate learners from rural or semi-rural backgrounds employ code-switching primarily as a functional scaffold to facilitate comprehension and communication. Generational differences further shape these patterns, with Generation Z embracing linguistic hybridity and translanguaging, while Generation X prioritizes linguistic restraint and cultural continuity. The study argues that code-switching among Egyptian EFL learners reflects broader social transformations related to globalization, mobility, and shifting notions of belonging. The paper concludes by discussing pedagogical and theoretical implications for sociolinguistics and EFL education in diglossic and postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: *Code-switching, Egyptian EFL learners, Linguistic Fluidity, Situational contexts, Social Identity*

1. Introduction

Code-switching (CS), broadly defined as the alternation between two or more linguistic codes within a single interaction, is one of the most visible and contested features of bilingual and multilingual speech. For much of the twentieth century, code-switching was framed as evidence of linguistic deficiency, incomplete competence, or interference between languages. Early pedagogical and structuralist perspectives often treated it as a deviation from idealized monolingual norms within formal educational contexts. However, decades of sociolinguistic research have demonstrated that such views are both empirically inaccurate and theoretically limiting. Rather than being random or chaotic, code-switching is a highly systematic practice governed by grammatical constraints, pragmatic intentions, and social meanings (Poplack, 1980; Gardner-Chloros, 2025).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, code-switching functions as a communicative resource through which speakers manage interpersonal relationships, negotiate power, and perform social identities (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). Speakers draw on their full linguistic repertoires to respond to changing interactional contexts, audience expectations, and ideological pressures. As Auer (1998) argues, code-switching is best understood not as a mechanical alternation between languages but as a contextualized conversational practice embedded in social action. In this sense, linguistic fluidity—the flexible and dynamic deployment of linguistic resources—constitutes an essential dimension of bilingual competence rather than a sign of linguistic instability.

The theoretical shift from structural explanations of code-switching to socially grounded interpretations has had significant implications for how bilingualism is understood across disciplines. Interactional approaches, particularly those developed by Gumperz (1982), emphasize that language choice operates as a contextualization cue, signaling how utterances should be interpreted in relation to social roles, relationships, and communicative intentions. Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model further conceptualizes code choice as a rational and socially motivated decision through which speakers index expected or unexpected social relations. These frameworks converge on the idea that code-switching is a meaningful social act shaped by ideology, identity, and access to linguistic capital.

The relationship between language and identity is especially salient in postcolonial and globalized contexts, where languages are unequally valued and symbolically charged. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals construct their identities through affiliation with social groups and that language serves as one of the most powerful markers of group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Giles & Johnson, 1987). In such contexts, switching languages is never a neutral act; it indexes alignment, aspiration, resistance, or exclusion. English, in particular, often functions as a form of symbolic capital associated with education, modernity, and global mobility, while local languages and varieties index authenticity, intimacy, and cultural continuity (Bourdieu, 1991; Pennycook, 2017).

Egypt provides a compelling site for examining these dynamics. The Egyptian linguistic landscape is shaped by a complex interplay between Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA), and English. Arabic itself operates within a classic diglossic configuration, where MSA is associated with formality, education, and institutional authority, while ECA governs everyday interaction (Ferguson, 1959). English, introduced through colonial history and reinforced by globalization, occupies a powerful symbolic position tied to higher education, professional advancement, and participation in global culture (Bassiouny, 2020). As a result, Egyptian speakers routinely navigate multiple linguistic systems, each carrying distinct social meanings and ideological weight (Yaseen et al., 2026).

Despite growing scholarly interest in Arabic-English code-switching, research on Egypt remains relatively fragmented. Existing studies often focus on isolated variables such as gender, proficiency, or classroom practices, with limited attention to how multiple social dimensions intersect in shaping language use (Haeri, 1996; Bassiouney, 2020; Holmes & Wilson, 2022). In particular, generational differences in language attitudes and practices remain underexplored, despite profound social changes brought about by digital media, globalization, and shifting educational trajectories.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how Egyptian EFL learners use code-switching across three primary domains—home, education, and work—and how these practices are shaped by proficiency level, socio-cultural background, and generational positioning. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the study aims to provide a nuanced account of linguistic fluidity as a socially embedded, identity-driven phenomenon.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Structural and Interactional Approaches to Code-Switching

Early research on code-switching was primarily concerned with identifying the grammatical constraints governing language alternation. Poplack's (1980) seminal study demonstrated that bilingual speakers adhere to systematic syntactic rules when switching languages, challenging the notion that code-switching reflects linguistic confusion. Her typology of intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching remains foundational, as it highlights the relationship between grammatical integration and bilingual competence.

Subsequent scholarship moved beyond structural explanations to explore the pragmatic and interactional dimensions of code-switching. Gumperz's (1982) work marked a critical turning point by framing code-switching as a contextualization cue through which speakers signal shifts in footing, topic, or social alignment. Within this framework, language choice becomes a resource for meaning-making rather than a mere reflection of linguistic ability. This perspective has proven particularly influential in studies of multilingual interaction, where speakers strategically deploy linguistic resources to manage complex social relationships.

Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model further elaborates on the social motivations underlying code choice. According to this model, speakers select linguistic codes based on perceived norms governing rights and obligations within a given interaction. Unmarked choices reinforce expected social relations, while marked choices challenge or renegotiate them. Together, these approaches underscore that code-switching is best understood as a socially situated practice shaped by norms, expectations, and power relations.

2.2 Language, Identity, and Symbolic Capital

The connection between language and identity has been extensively theorized within Social Identity Theory, which emphasizes that individuals derive a sense of self from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Language functions as a primary marker of such membership, enabling speakers to signal affiliation, distinction, or aspiration (Giles & Johnson, 1987). In multilingual settings, code-switching allows speakers to navigate multiple identities simultaneously, drawing on different linguistic resources to index shifting alignments.

Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital provides a critical lens for understanding how languages are differentially valued within social markets. Access to prestigious linguistic varieties affords symbolic power and social mobility, while other varieties may be stigmatized or marginalized. In many postcolonial contexts, English operates as a form of high-value capital, shaping speakers' aspirations and language practices (Pennycook, 2017). Code-switching thus

reflects not only communicative needs but also broader struggles over legitimacy, authority, and recognition.

2.3 Social Networks and Language Use

Social Network Theory bridges macro-level social structures and micro-level linguistic behavior. Milroy & Milroy (1992) argue that dense, multiplex networks exert strong normative pressure, promoting linguistic stability and resistance to change, whereas loose networks facilitate innovation and variation. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding urban-rural differences in code-switching practices. In rural communities, strong network ties often reinforce local linguistic norms and discourage extensive use of foreign languages. In contrast, urban environments characterized by mobility and diversity tend to normalize multilingualism and frequent language mixing (Haeri, 1996; Bassiouney, 2020).

Looking into CS from a socio-economic perspective, Amin (2018) found a correlation between Egyptians' social networks and the frequency of CS by members from lower and upper socioeconomic classes in the TV series. The main character used less CS when her social network changed to include more members of her lower social class family and friends. Changes in social networks directly influence an individual's linguistic stance, with the direction of change dependent on the social class associated with the new network. The stark contrast between the two groups suggests that the effectiveness of CS in the workplace or educational contexts is contingent on linguistic competence and contextual adaptability.

2.4 Generations, Digital Culture, and Linguistic Change

Generational analysis draws on Mannheim's (1928) concept of social generations, which emphasizes shared historical experiences rather than chronological age. In Egypt, Generation X and Generation Z have come of age under markedly different socio-political and technological conditions. Generation X experienced education and identity formation in a largely Arabic-centric system prior to widespread internet access. Generation Z, by contrast, are digital natives whose social lives are deeply intertwined with global media, social networking platforms, and transnational cultural flows (Prensky, 2001). In Yaseen et al. (2026), the use of colloquial speech by Gen Z Jordanians on social media platforms showed that their integration of global linguistic resources in their speech has resulted in the emerging digital Arabic sociolect. This sociolect is considered a challenge for users from different generations because it involves frequent CS, new norms of online language, and hybrid cultural expressions in communication and navigating generational differences in language use.

Code-switching practices have also been investigated among Generation Z users on Chinese English social media platforms (Zhang & Yang, 2025). Globalization and digitalization have been shown to influence the contemporary linguistic behavior of younger speakers. The results suggest the erosion of clear linguistic boundaries because of the increased use of global communication via social media platforms. And this has encouraged a fluid language mixing. The study highlights that code-switching is not random but largely shaped by the forces of globalization and the affordances of digital media, reflecting evolving patterns of identity construction and communication among Gen Z users.

These differences have profound implications for language attitudes and practices. Digital communication environments often encourage linguistic hybridity, informality, and creative mixing, fostering what García & Wei (2014) describe as translanguaging—the flexible deployment of linguistic resources beyond rigid language boundaries. Understanding generational differences in

code-switching thus requires situating language practices within broader shifts in media, mobility, and identity formation.

2.5. Precedent studies as per social contexts

This section sheds light on prior and recent studies that have investigated perceptions of CS use in different social contexts, including EFL classrooms, familial interactions, and professional settings. The studies reviewed span the period from 2015 to 2024, focusing on research conducted in Egypt and the wider Arab world. In Egypt, limited research investigated CS in teaching practices, and few examined young learners' practices of CS based on their social background and language proficiency (Hamouda, 2015). In Hafez (2015), CS practice among undergraduates and employees was mainly influenced by their education, socioeconomic class, and gender. Younger generations exposed to English in their studies and on social media platforms often perceived CS as a marker of social identity and a demonstration of their proficiency in foreign languages, yet the study did not compare students' behaviors to those of older generations. Similar findings were shown by Książ & Zawrotna (2021), who also analyzed patterns of CS among AUC undergraduates and found that fluency in L2 (second language) and exposure to social interactions in English impacted CS patterns. In Hamed et al. (2022), women code-switched more than men; age and educational level were also two significant predictors of CS, especially among young Egyptians whose ages ranged between 20s and 30s, unlike older participants.

In the EFL classroom, CS has been a controversial topic. Most recent studies view its functions positively despite the claims about its overuse impact on the development of the foreign language. Bilingual educators often leverage CS to reformulate complex ideas, instructions, or concepts for students (Nichols & Colon, 2000). In South Africa, for instance, Setati et al. (2002) documented how teachers employed CS in science and mathematics classrooms to clarify challenging content. CS can bridge the gap between students' existing linguistic abilities and the formal academic language needed for success in educational settings (Dooly & Bakri, 2024). Likewise, Daquila (2024) noted that Emirati Gen Z integrated more English words and phrases into their daily conversations, highlighting the key role of bilingual education and exposure to social media in shaping attitudes toward the strategic use of CS. Moreover, in familial contexts, CS often reflects EFL learners' education, socioeconomic class, and sense of identity. Hout (2022) found that family members frequently use CS to express intimacy and solidarity or to address sensitive topics that may require nuanced communication. Additionally, in Hamouda (2015), parental attitudes toward CS have been found to significantly influence children's language acquisition and development. Thus, parents who encouraged CS promoted their children's bilingualism and positively shaped their children's self-concept.

In formal settings, CS was found to serve as a mechanism to establish solidarity and reinforce shared identity among colleagues from diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds (Habyarimana et al., 2017). Carstens & Ang (2019) highlighted the role of CS in conveying subtleties that may be difficult to express in a single language. Individuals aligned with the linguistic preferences of their colleagues, promoting group cohesion. In Khalid & Khan (2022), the migrant Pashto speakers constitute their hybrid, local, ethnic, and global bilingual identities through their codeswitching according to the wide-ranging contexts and situations. They take their identity development as a course of action where they not only struggle to maintain their own native identity but also make efforts to align themselves with the mainstream society and the global world. Their CS works as a resource for them to construct their multi-layered bilingual identity. Therefore, in formal and professional settings, CS can reflect underlying power dynamics in which a dominant language can convey authority, status, or negotiate power relationships, and may sometimes cause misunderstanding (Ben Nafa, 2015; Khalid & Khan, 2022).

In light of the previous theories, this research aims to contribute to recent literature by investigating Egyptian perceptions of CS in diverse situational contexts and how their perceptions interact with urban-rural disparities, social networks, and language proficiency levels, revealing significant functions and motivations of CS (Amin, 2018; Bassiouney, 2020; Daquila, 2024). The findings of this research can also inform pedagogical approaches to language instruction in diverse classrooms. As Egypt continues to navigate its complex multilingual landscape, further exploration of CS's nuances and its implications for language learning and identity formation is warranted (Amin, 2018). The following are the research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Egyptians with intermediate-level English proficiency regarding code-switching at home, in the workplace, and in the classroom?
2. What are the perceptions of Egyptians with advanced-level English proficiency regarding code-switching at home, in the workplace, and in the classroom?
3. Are there significant differences in the frequent use of code-switching among younger and older Egyptian participants from Gen Z and Gen X?
4. How does the social identity of Egyptian speakers influence their perspectives and use of CS in different contexts?

3. Research Methods

The Research Methods section describes in detail how the study was conducted. In this section, the research design, sample of population, and data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods design; it combines quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive account of code-switching practices (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The design is grounded in a pragmatic epistemology that prioritizes research questions over methodological allegiance. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and integrated during interpretation.

The survey was disseminated via social media platforms of cohort groups associated with a public and a private university in Egypt. The first section included three questions that aimed at collecting demographic data from the participants; The second section contained 11 closed-ended questions designed to collect data about participants' language use and code-switching behavior; the final section had four open-ended questions, allowing participants to articulate their viewpoints and experiences in their own words. Interviews were conducted with a limited number of participants from different age groups from Generation X and Generation Z.

3.2. Sample of Population

A total of 154 Egyptian EFL speakers participated in the study: 143 EFL learners responded to a semi-structured questionnaire, and 11 participants were interviewed. The quantitative sample consisted of 143 Egyptian EFL learners recruited from two universities representing distinct socio-educational contexts: a private international university in Cairo (n = 59) and a public university in a semi-rural Nile Delta governorate (n = 84). Participants self-identified as either advanced or intermediate English users based on educational background and self-reported proficiency. The qualitative sample included 11 participants selected through snowball sampling to represent Generation Z (ages 21-29) and Generation X (ages 48-65), with varying proficiency levels.

Almost all the participants of the private university were Cairenes from the middle or upper-middle socioeconomic classes who could afford the expensive fees of international private universities. The criteria of social class are based on Labov's index of socioeconomic class:

education, occupation, income, and neighborhood. (Labov, 2006). They graduated from American/ British schools or Language high schools in Egypt. On the other hand, most of the ILs are graduates of public schools in the governorates in the countryside. The participants' ages ranged from 16 to 35 years old. A consent form was collected from the sample population via email upon their approval to participate in the study.

The 11 participants who were interviewed were from the researcher's acquaintance for reasons of practicality and convenience, which could be one of the limitations. They represented two different age groups (21-29 and 48- 65); there were six female participants and five male participants. Interviews with the participants took from 7-10 minutes and were recorded. They were not informed about the topic of the research and were asked general questions about their favorite TV shows, movies, or travel destinations during holidays to avoid the observer's paradox (Labov, 2006). They were asked directly about their perceptions of the English culture versus the Arabic culture (see Table 14). Ethical approval was obtained to conduct the study, and a consent form was collected via email to respond to the survey. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous.

Participants identified their English proficiency levels in the questionnaire. The sample included 59 ALs and 84 ILs. Convenient sampling procedures were followed to collect the data on Google Forms via social media platforms of cohorts in both universities (Cohen et al., 2011). The survey's key themes included language proficiency, frequency of CS, perceived advantages and disadvantages, and attitudes toward code-switching in distinct situational contexts. The mixed methodological framework allowed for a comprehensive understanding of participants' attitudes and behaviors related to code-switching (Cohen et al., 2011).

The majority of participants (Groups) were distributed between two primary categories: Intermediate EFL learners, comprising 58.7% of the sample, and Advanced EFL learners, accounting for 41.3%. The distribution of ALs revealed that the majority (64.4%) were younger than 26 years, whereas 35.6% were aged 26 years or older. In contrast, ILs showed more participants under the age of 26, representing 90.5% of that cohort, while only 9.5% were 26 years or older. The variable Education classified participants into three categories: high school students, undergraduate students, and those pursuing graduate or postgraduate education (See Figure 1).

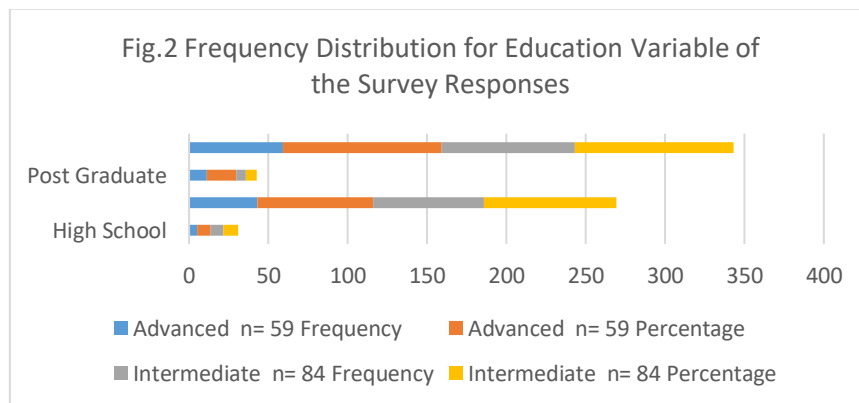


Figure 1: Distribution of education variables of the survey responses

In the advanced group, most participants were undergraduates or graduates, comprising 72.9% of the responses, followed by postgraduates at 18.6%, and high school students at 8.5%. In the intermediate group, the most responses came from undergraduates or graduates (83.3%) High school students represented 9.5%, while postgraduates were 7.1% of the responses.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and open-ended survey responses. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically following Braun & Clarke’s (2006) framework. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and instances of code-switching were analyzed using Poplack’s typology. Google Forms was used to create the questionnaire, which was then distributed through social media platforms or piloted among a small group before being distributed via social media. Its key themes include language proficiency, frequency of CS, perceived advantages and disadvantages, and attitudes toward CS in distinct situational contexts. The mixed methodological framework allowed for the triangulation of findings and ensured a comprehensive understanding of participants' attitudes and behaviors related to CS (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

The internal consistency and reliability of the responses to the questions were assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha Test. Descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS (Version 21), including frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and measures of relative importance. In Table 1, the results of the stability test (Cronbach's Alpha coefficient Test) for all the questionnaire questions are presented. The accepted values for the Cronbach Alpha coefficient are about 70%. (See Table 1). For ALs, the computed coefficient assessing the alignment of the sample responses with the questionnaire’s main dimensions was determined to be 0.836. This reflects notable consistency within the study sample, which positively influenced the validity of the responses, reflected in a self-honesty coefficient of 0.914. Similarly, for ILs, the consistency coefficient reached 0.812, indicating a high level of reliability in the participants’ responses, with a valid score of 0.901. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient values for all the questionnaire dimensions exceeded 70%. This shows a strong level of internal consistency across the survey items. This internal stability validates the reliability of the questionnaire and ensures that the measures facilitate accurate analysis of the results.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity of the Total Participants’ Responses Using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

Dimensions	Advanced n= 59		Intermediate n= 84	
	Reliability	Validity	Reliability	Validity
Total Sample’s Responses	0.836	0.914	0.812	0.901

The Mann-Whitney Z-test was conducted to identify significant differences between ALs and ILs groups regarding their perceptions and behaviors. Responses of ALs to the frequency of CS revealed a general tendency towards the categories "Sometimes" and "Very often," with 78% of participants selecting these options. The intermediate group exhibited a similar pattern, with 78% of respondents selecting "Sometimes" and "Very often." However, the mean score for this group was slightly lower at 2.90, with a standard deviation of 0.65, and the relative importance was 72.50%. In Table 2, there is a quick evaluation of the 4-likert scale used in the study:

Table 2. Criteria for the 4-Likert scale used in the Study

Scale	Interval
1 - 1.52	Never
1.53 - 2.46	Rarely
2.47- 3.53	Occasionally (sometimes)
3.54 - 4	Frequently (very often)

4. Results

In this section, significant research findings are analysed for the close-ended and open-ended questions.

4.1. Analysis of the Questionnaire's Closed-ended Questions:

In Table 3, responses of ALs to the frequency of CS revealed a general tendency towards the categories "Sometimes" and "Very often," with 78% of participants selecting these options. The intermediate group exhibited a similar pattern, with 78% of respondents selecting "Sometimes" and "Very often." However, the mean score for this group was slightly lower at 2.90, with a standard deviation of 0.65, and the relative importance was 72.50%.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of CS to English at home

Category	Advanced n= 59		Intermediate n= 84	
	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage
Never	2	3.4	1	1.2
Rarely	11	18.6	19	22.6
Sometimes	25	42.4	51	60.7
Very often	21	35.6	13	15.5
-	Mean =3.10 Std. deviation = 0.82 Relative importance =77.50%		Mean =2.90 Std. deviation =0.65 Relative importance =72.50%	

Table 4 presents participants' reasons for engaging in code-switching during daily conversations. ALs' CS in daily conversations indicated that (39%) and (22%) were for "I use this expression more in the foreign language" and "To make myself understood," respectively. In contrast, the least frequently cited reasons were "Your Arabic or first language is weak" and "No equivalent in Arabic," which garnered 8.5% and 6.8%, respectively. Statement 1 and 3 with 34.5% and 32.1% respectively were the least frequent reasons, "No equivalent in Arabic" and "Your Arabic or first language is weak," with 13.1 and 2.4%, respectively.

Table 4. Frequency distribution for the general reasons for CS between English and the first language

No.	Statements	Advanced			Intermediate		
		Frequency	%	Rank	Frequency	%	Rank
1	I use this expression more in the foreign language	23	39	1	29	34.5	1
2	No equivalent in Arabic	4	6.8	4	11	13.1	3
3	To make myself understood	13	22	2	27	32.1	2
4	Your Arabic or First language is weak	5	8.5	3	2	2.4	4
Total		59	100	-	84	100	-

In Table 5, ALs' responses reveal that 71.2% agreed that code-switching (CS) is necessary, while 28.8% disagreed. In contrast, ILs exhibited a notably higher agreement rate, with 94% responding "Yes" and only 6% expressing disagreement.

Table 5. Frequency distribution for the perception of the necessity of CS

No.	Responses	Advanced		Intermediate	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Yes	42	71.2	79	94
2	No	17	28.8	5	6
Total		59	100	84	100

Table 6 compares ALs and ILs on whether CS is necessary in *specific situational contexts*. The Z-test results indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups $Z = 3.55, p = 0.01$. Interestingly, ILs showed a higher percentage of agreement 56.8% compared to ALs 37.7%, suggesting that ILs perceive CS as more contextually necessary despite their lower proficiency level.

Table 6. Comparison between ALs and ILs groups using Z-test for CS in social interactions

Survey Questions	Advanced		Intermediate		Z Value	p-value	Result
	N=53	%	N=84	%			
Do you think code-switching to a foreign language is necessary in specific situational contexts?	20	37.7	50	56.8	3.55	0.01*	Sig.

**Significant at the (0.01) level

In Table 7, the overall trend for ALs' responses to the frequency of CS at home shows a preference for "Occasionally" and "Frequently", with (68%) selecting these options. In contrast, the ILs exhibit a trend toward "Occasionally" and "Rarely," with (77.4%) choosing these responses.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics for the ALs and ILs perception of their friends/family CS

Category	Advanced n= 59		Intermediate n= 84	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Never	5	8.5	6	7.1
Rarely	14	23.7	26	31.0
Occasionally	17	28.8	39	46.4
Frequently	23	39.0	13	15.5
-	Mean =2.98 Std. deviation =0.99 Relative importance = 74.50%		Mean =2.70 Std. deviation =0.81 Relative importance = 67.50%	

The overall trend for ALs using CS among friends and family regarding the statement indicates a preference for being "Very Comfortable," with 42.4% of responses in Table 8. However, ILs showed a more mixed response, with the combined trend 79.8% indicating either "Comfortable" or "Neutral."

Table 8. Descriptive statistics for the groups' perceptions of their friends and family members' CS

Category	Advanced n= 59		Intermediate n= 84	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Uncomfortable	5	8.5	6	7.1
Neutral	17	28.8	32	38.1
Comfortable	12	20.3	35	41.7
Very Comfortable	25	42.4	11	13.1
-	Mean =2.97 Std. deviation =1.03 Relative importance =74.25%		Mean =2.61 Std. deviation =0.80 Relative importance =65.25%	

Table 9 illustrates the significant disparities between the ALs and ILs using the Mann-Whitney Test. In Question 4, the Z-value 5.042, at p-level below 0.01, indicates a notable disparity for the benefit of ALs. Question #5 revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The Z-value of 1.909 at p-level level below 0.05 again showed an advantage for the ALs.

However, there were no statistically significant differences between ALs and ILs in their responses to Question 8, as indicated by a Z-value of 1.306 and a p-value greater than 0.05. In contrast, Question 10 revealed a significant statistical difference. ILs reported that code-switching to a foreign language could positively influence their proficiency in English or the foreign language, with a Z-value of 2.014 and a p-value less than 0.05. Question 11, which inquired about the frequency of code-switching between the first language and a foreign language showed a significant difference in favor of ALs with a Z-value 1.991, and a p-value less than 0.05. In question 12, a statistically significant difference was found in favor of the ALs regarding their feelings when CS in conversations with friends and family. The Z-value was 2.322, with a p-value less than 0.02.

In Question 13, the Z-value was 1.910 with a p-value less than 0.05 in favor of ALs regarding the frequency of CS at home, in the workplace, or at school/university. Yet, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups in their responses to Question14 in their perceptions of CS in the workplace; the Z-value was 0.487, and the significance level was greater than 0.05.

Table 9. Comparison between ALs’ and ILs’ perceptions of CS in diverse contexts using Mann-Whitney Test

Survey’s Questions	Advanced		Intermediate		Z-value	P-value	Result
	No.	Mean rank	No.	Mean rank			
4. How proficient are you in English or any other foreign or second language that you speak?	59	92.05	84	57.92	5.042	0.01**	H.Sig.
5. How often do you speak English or a foreign Language at home?	59	78.84	84	67.20	1.909	0.05*	Sig.
8. How do you feel about people when they code-switch to English or a foreign language in their informal conversations?	59	77.07	84	68.44	1.306	0.19	Non. Sig.
10. Do you believe that code-switching between your first language and English language can positively influence proficiency in English?	59	64.37	84	77.36	2.014	0.04*	Sig.
11. In your conversations with friends and family members at home, how often do you code-switch to English or a foreign language?	59	79.81	84	66.51	1.991	0.04*	Sig.
12. How comfortable do you feel when your friends and family members code-switch between Arabic and English in conversations?	59	81.14	84	65.58	2.322	0.02*	Sig.
13. In your daily interactions, how often do you code-switch to a foreign language at your workplace, school, or university?	59	79.37	84	66.82	1.910	0.05*	Sig.
14. How do you feel when colleagues in the workplace code-switch to English or a foreign language?	59	73.91	84	70.66	0.487	0.62	Non. Sig

** Significant at the (0.01) level

* Significant at the (0.05) level

4.2. Analysis of the four open-ended questions

The analysis of the 4 open-ended questions is presented in this section after coding and analyzing the responses of the sample. According to Table 11, ALs identified helping students understand concepts (#2, 71.2%) and explaining word meaning (#1, 52.5%) as the most common reasons for instructors’ use of CS.” The least selected reason was statement #6 (25.4%), while statements #3 and #5 were selected by 42.4% each. For ILs, the important reasons were Statements 2, 1, and 5, at (64.3%), (33.3%), and (28.6%), respectively. The least significant reasons were for Statements 4 and 3 at (15.5%) and (19%), respectively, based on the participants' responses.

Table 10. Frequency distribution of reasons for CS by instructors to the first language

No	Statements	Advanced n= 9			Intermediate n=84		
		Frequency	%	Rank	Frequency	%	Rank
1	Explain word meaning	31	52.5	2	28	33.3	2
2	Help understand concepts	42	71.2	1	54	64.3	1
3	Give instructions	25	42.4	3	16	19	5
4	Ease the situation for the students	31	52.5	2	13	15.5	6
5	Check Understanding	25	42.4	3	24	28.6	3
6	Discuss tasks and Assessments	15	25.4	4	21	25	4

Table 11 showed that Statements 1, 2 and 3 with (52.5%), (47.5%), and 39%, respectively were the main reasons for instructors’ CS “feeling at ease; understand concepts; benefit from useful information”. The least significant were Statements 5 and 6 of 20.3% and 11.9% respectively. For ILs, the most significant responses were for Statements 2, 1, and #3 of 53.6%, 35.7%, and 20.2%, respectively. The least significant responses were for 5 and 6, at 15.5% and 13.1%, respectively.

Table 11. Frequency distribution for how students perceive their instructors’ CS to the first language

No.	Statements	Advanced n= 59			Intermediate n= 84		
		Frequency	%	Rank	Frequency	%	Rank
1	I feel relaxed using L1 and L2	31	52.5	1	30	35.7	2
2	I understand concepts better	28	47.5	2	45	53.6	1
3	I benefit from useful information	23	39	3	17	20.2	3
4	I like the class	14	23.7	4	11	13.1	5
5	I participate more in class	12	20.3	5	13	15.5	4
6	Continue to code-switch	7	11.9	6	11	13.1	5

According to Table 12, the most common reasons for CS among ALs were understanding concepts (57.6%) and realizing misunderstandings (35.6%).” In contrast, the least significant reasons were #5 and #4 at (25.4%) and (20.3%), respectively. For the intermediate group, the most

significant reasons for code-switching were #1 and #3, with (51.2%) and (42.9%), respectively. The least important reasons included statements #2, #4, and #5, at 26.2% and 10.7%, respectively.

Table 12. Frequency distribution for reasons of CS to English with family and friends

No.	Statements	Advanced n=59			Intermediate n=84		
		Frequency	%	Rank	Frequency	%	Rank
1	I understand the explanation of concepts	34	57.6	1	43	51.2	1
2	I realize my misunderstanding and mistakes	21	35.6	2	22	26.2	3
3	I gain more vocabulary	21	35.6	2	36	42.9	2
4	My academic performance and language improve	12	20.3	4	22	26.2	3
5	It does not help much	15	25.4	3	9	10.7	4

Table 13 reveals the primary motivations for code-switching in workplaces or educational settings. For ALs, the most important reasons were 1, 3, and 5 with *percentage of respondents selecting each reason* 54.2%, 20.3%, and 18.6%, respectively. The least reasons included 2, and 4 with 5.1% and 3.4%, respectively. The ILs group considered statements 1 and 3 as the main reasons with 59.5% and 14.3%, respectively. The least significant reasons were 4, 2 and 5 with 13.1%, 7.1% and 7.1%, respectively.

Table 13. Frequency distribution for reasons of CS at the workplace/ educational institutions

No.	Statements	Advanced n= 59			Intermediate n= 84		
		Frequency	%	Rank	Frequency	%	Rank
1	To help students understand the concepts	32	54.2	1	50	59.5	1
2	They are asked by students	3	5.1	4	6	7.1	4
3	To check students' understanding	12	20.3	2	12	14.3	2
4	They are not proficient in the foreign language or L2	2	3.4	5	11	13.1	3
5	They are used to say specific expressions either in L1 or L2	11	18.6	3	6	7.1	5

Table 14 illustrates data collected from distinct patterns of CS based on age and proficiency level during the interviews. Participants who are 24 years old or younger displayed a higher frequency of CS compared to older participants above 45. ALs had the highest percentages of CS, with Participants #1, #3, and #4 recording percentages of (4.71%), (2.99%), and (3.01%), respectively.

ILs' participants showed lower percentages, with Participant #5 at (1.8%), and some (e.g., Participant #7 and Participant #10) not code-switching at all. CS of older participants was significantly lower. Advanced older participants, such as Participants #1 and #2, exhibited percentages of (0.53%) and (0.67%), while intermediate Participant #3 recorded even lower frequencies, with negligible code-switching. Thus, younger ALs are more comfortable with CS to enhance their communication, while older learners employ CS sparingly; they code-switch for specific functions.

Table 14. Frequency of CS to English during semi-structured interviews

Participant age/gender	Occupation	Wordcount of speech	Number of code-switched words to English	Percentage
Speaker 1 (29 years - female participant) Advanced	Dentist	424	20	4.71
Speaker 2 (28 years - male participant) Intermediate	Accountant	136	0	0
Speaker 3 (22 years - male participant) Advanced	Architect	501	15	2.99
Speaker 4 (24 years - female participant) Advanced	Physician	531	16	3.01
Speaker 5 (25 years - male participant) Intermediate	Pharmacist	442	8	1.80
Speaker 6 (24 years - male participant) Intermediate	Engineer	1440	37	2.56
Speaker 7 (65 years - female participant)	Retired Science teacher	19	0	0
Speaker 8 (55 years - male participant) Advanced	Bank manager	1488	8	0.53
Speaker 9 (53 years - male participant) Advanced	Engineer	593	4	0.67
Speaker 10 (60 years - female participant) Intermediate	Teacher of Social sciences	197	0	0
Speaker 11 (48 years - female participant) Intermediate	Administrative staff	469	3	0.63

Trudgill (2000) argued that speakers use CS as a strategic tool to “manipulate” or “define” a specific situation and to clarify nuanced interpretations or personal intentions (p. 105). Analysis of the recorded informal conversations with the 11 participants provides further insights into generational and proficiency-based differences among Egyptian speakers. The six younger

participants code-switched frequently to overcome language limitations or gaps, whereas the five older participants code-switched for specific purposes, such as saying foreign terms or the need to explain certain ideas in English.

Both social and cultural elements influenced the CS phenomenon during the conversation with the younger and older generations. Older adults appreciated the Arabic culture; using Arabic is significantly related to their personal and social identity and have linguistic pride in using the native language. Their code-switching is not as frequent as the younger participants. This may be because their social networks are of the same age, Generation X, who were born between (1965-1980). Gen X adheres more to using Arabic; the Arabic language is a marker for their national identity and local heritage. They use the foreign language for functional purposes in professional settings (Holes, 2011). In informal settings, CS to the foreign language much might be perceived as a marker of elitism.

Younger participants, on the other hand, use CS more than Gen X. It is a marker of their identity. They are from Gen Z, who were born between (1996-2010). This generation is born in an era of globalization, technological evolution, and linguistic hybridity. Many are educated in bilingual educational institutions. CS between Arabic and foreign languages in their speech reveals their unique social identity that has been developing in cosmopolitan, modern cities (Morsi, 2023; Daquila, 2024).

Unlike Gen X, Gen Z views CS as a flexible means to mingle with different social groups and show a hybrid linguistic identity that embraces globalization and demonstrates cultural openness rather than adherence to traditions and cultural roots. (Morsi, 2025). While older participants were reserved in CS to English in their speech, younger learners tended to switch more in their speech as they discussed different topics and global issues. They have intensive exposure to the foreign language; and in this digital era they participate on the various social media platforms (Morsi et al., 2024). These findings were supported in Daquila (2024) as Emirati Gen Z used more English expressions in their daily conversation and particularly on social media. ILs are Gen Z as well, but their close-knit communities, social norms, and proficiency levels limit their perception and practice of CS. In Książ & Zawrotna (2021), their findings showed that 85% of young learners (18-25) frequently incorporated embedded English verbs into their speech, reflecting their comfort with blending languages in informal contexts. In contrast, only 55% of older learners (40-55) reported similar usage, which suggests a generational divide in CS practices. There are other social factors, such as the addressee, the context, and the formality of the situation that control their CS behavior; so ILs tend to code-switch with close friends in the classroom more than acquaintances of their local communities (Holmes, 2000). This supports Poplack's (1980) and Finn's (2014) assertions that CS is a marker of bilingual proficiency and cultural integration.

The following are excerpts from four speakers - two older and two young speakers. They were discussing trips they had enjoyed. Speaker 9 only used scientific terms in English "Egyptology" and "Egyptomania" (Nonce borrowing), while the younger speaker 3 used CS frequently in which complete sentences were code-switched. Speaker 7, a retired Science teacher, did not code-switch at all during the interview. Speaker 4, a young participant, expressed his appreciation for the English culture because of values, such as democracy and freedom. In particular, they encourage their children to be responsible and decide on their future careers. These results are confirmed in Hamed et al. (2022). Although most of the participants in the interview of this study were young Egyptians, the researcher adopted a comparative approach and selected older participants to examine and show contrasts in their CS behavior. These findings highlight how social identity and cultural background shape CS practices in Egypt, with generational differences reflecting broader societal changes.

Speaker 9 (53 years old - Professor):
 انبسطنا اوي في لقصر و اسوان
 عجبنا الاثار اوي اصل انا بحب اقرا كثير في ال
 Egyptomania و الEgyptology
 بالنسبة ليا كانت رحلة ممتعة اما الولاد عايزين بحر و مولات

Speaker 3 (22 years old - Physician):
 رحلة السخنة كانت تحفة
 I really enjoyed my time.
 It was fun.
 و ال Views تجنن
 قبل ما تسافري عشان متديسيش Check reviews about hotels

Speaker 4 (24 years old - Physician):
 I do like the English culture.
 في عندهم ديمقراطية و حرية تعبير عن الراي
 open-minded يعني مثلا بيسيوا ولادهم يعتمدوا علي نفسهم
 and decide whether to join college or not

Speaker 7 (65 years old - Retired science teacher):
 احنا مسافرناش خالص السنة دي
 السنة اللي فاتت رحنا كالمعتاد الساحل
 بنقضي اليوم علي البحر او البسين و بلبل نتمشي في السوق و نتعشي فطير
 احيانا بنزل اسكندرية ناكل سمك

In summary, the age of participants has been a significant factor that influences Egyptian EFL learners' CS behaviors. Gen Z, participants are more likely to embrace and adapt to blended linguistic practices than the older generation, Gen X whose limited use of CS reflects their pride in their national identity and their traditional ties to Arabic. They perceive CS as functional rather than social. In contrast, Gen Z's frequent CS underscores their cosmopolitan identity, embracing linguistic hybridity in response to globalization and technological influences. Thus, CS becomes not merely a linguistic tool but a marker of evolving social and cultural identities, mirroring societal shifts in a rapidly modernizing world.

5. Discussion

This study highlights significant differences in the perceptions and practices of CS between Egyptian ALs and ILs EFL learners in various contexts, namely at home, classrooms, and workplaces. These differences have revealed how linguistic proficiency shapes the motivations, frequency, and attitudes toward CS and aligns with sociolinguistic theories - Gumperz situational contexts, social network, and social identity - and recent empirical findings. The results of this study align with Gumperz's (1982) framework of situational CS in which language choice is influenced by contextual factors, such as interlocutor relationships and communicative goals, Milroy's social network theory (Milroy & Milroy, 1992), and Tajfel & John Turner's (1979) social identity theory. ALs used CS frequently and strategically in different contexts, as shown in Table 6 for questions #5, #12, and #13. This echoed their ability to manipulate these dynamics effectively, while ILs' lower frequency of CS showed their limited proficiency in the foreign language and the fewer opportunities to engage in CS in their social networks (See Table 13, Questions #11, #12 and #13). It also reflected their struggle to adapt to varying sociolinguistic contexts, such as expressing their apprehension about using a foreign language at work in order not to make mistakes that embarrass them or cause misunderstandings (Mabule, 2015).

5.1. Attitudes to CS in familial contexts

While more ALs were very comfortable with CS with family and friends, ILs were less comfortable or neutral (Z-value=2.322, p-value less than 0.02) for the benefit of ALs. This reveals

the influence of the urban-versus-rural background, socioeconomic class, and cultural background on the participants' performance (Bassiouney, 2020). This probably reflects the students' educational and socioeconomic class, and their affiliation with the norms of their local community (World Bank, 2022; Morsi & Rezk, 2025). They would rather align with the language preferences of their speakers to probably avoid being perceived as offending the interlocutor, causing miscommunication, or implying divergence (Holmes, 2000). Laitinen et al. (2020) confirm the above findings. Their theoretical study explored how social network theory and historical linguistics can determine language evolution. The researchers used a hybrid of digital and geographic landscapes, comparing the United Kingdom and the United States, and categorized these settings based on their socio-geographic characteristics. Using longitudinal meta-analysis and modern sociolinguistic sampling, the participants were categorized by their "network density," ranging from residents of isolated rural communities to mobile individuals in sprawling metropolitan areas. Dense networks were found to act as a conservative force that resists linguistic change to preserve community identity, while loose networks serve as the primary engine for linguistic innovation. This critical framework affirms that urban diversity facilitates the rapid adoption of new linguistic forms and code-switching patterns that would otherwise be rejected in traditional settings.

On the other hand, ALs' perceptions of CS confirm Hout's (2022) results which showed that CS fosters cultural intimacy and solidarity. Most of the ALs live in urban areas, gated communities in Cairo, in which there is a diversity of cultures and languages. Most ALs graduated from international or language schools; they are used to speaking English and foreign languages in social and academic contexts. Both ALs and ILs understand that practicing English can have a positive impact on their future career and networking (Morsi, 2023; Morsi & Rezk, 2025). While ALs demonstrated a micro-level understanding of CS, using it to manage interpersonal relationships by expressing themselves, and clarifying misunderstandings, ILs - because of their limited proficiency and probably limited exposure - exhibited a macro-level reliance, driven by broader social norms and educational practices. For ALs, CS to the foreign language reveals a significant aspect of their social identity and dense/open social networks in the urban city of Cairo.

These findings are confirmed in Eckert's (2018) case study, in which immigrant students adopted a hybrid linguistic style to align with their peers while using language features from their L1, Spanish. Similarly, Al-Wer et al. (2025) found that exposure to English in social media has impacted young Arab learners who code-switched significantly more than older ones, reflecting a shift in social identity and cultural integration and illustrating that exposure to social media, where English is used globally, significantly impacts young Arab learners.

Further research by Hasan & Benny (2025) and Al-Khatib (2003) has also supported these findings. Both studies examined the strategic nature of CS by Arab bilinguals. Al-Khatib (2003) focused on the face-to-face interactions of Arabic-English bilingual youth in the UK; the study asserted that language shift is a tool for constructing social realities and marking identity within multicultural communities. Hasan and Benny (2025) extended this investigation into the digital realm. They found that in computer-mediated communication, CS serves critical pragmatic functions, such as negotiating power and solidarity, even in the absence of physical cues. Both studies suggest that in physical or virtual spaces, bilingualism is not merely a linguistic trait but a sophisticated sociolinguistic performance. Al-Khatib (2003) highlights the grammatical and social competence required for these shifts, while Hasan & Benny (2025) emphasize how digital affordances like hashtags and character limits further refine these communicative strategies.

This shows that social media platforms shape urban participants' CS practices and attitudes, emphasizing CS as a strategy for communication and identity development (Morsi, 2023). This dual perspective of ILs clarifies how proficiency in English shapes, social community norms, and social

networks can affect the practical use of language and change one's social identity over time (Shah et al., 2019).

5.2. Attitudes toward CS in the EFL Classroom

In the classroom context, both ALs and ILs perceived CS as necessary for the comprehension of complex concepts, understanding word meaning, and checking understanding. However, ALs allocated a higher percentage of frequency (52%) to "ease the situation for students," which showed their awareness that shifting to L1 can sometimes be an effective tactic employed by instructors or students to create emotional comfort and reduce anxiety to facilitate understanding and foster a relaxing learning environment. El Deen et al. (2025) affirmed these findings as the Saudi EFL university sample highly perceived CS as a positive communicative technique that facilitates the comprehension of complex grammatical structures and abstract concepts. They view CS as a strategic means to reduce classroom anxiety and enhance their overall academic performance. Interestingly, the research revealed that these positive perceptions remained consistent across different gender groups and GPA levels, suggesting a universal student preference for "judicious" code-switching in the Saudi higher education context.

This demonstrates how translanguaging functions as a bridge rather than a barrier. By embracing the full linguistic toolkit of both teachers and students, it moves beyond simple CS to treat all forms of speech as one unified resource (García & Otheguy, 2024). This approach effectively dismantles the rigid walls between formal academic language and the home dialects students use every day, making the classroom a more inclusive space." By validating the entirety of a student's linguistic repertoire, educators can effectively lower the "affective filter," significantly reducing the anxiety and tension often associated with strict monolingual environments. This fluid approach not only clarifies complex concepts but also fosters a sense of cognitive safety, enabling students to engage more deeply with the curriculum. Ultimately, it transforms the classroom into a space of mutual respect where linguistic diversity is viewed as a cognitive asset rather than a deficit.

Ultimately, the findings showed that participants in the study perceived CS as a marker of in-group shared identity and linguistic experiences. ILs reported that CS in a foreign language could positively influence their proficiency in English. This is probably because CS provides constant, low-stakes exposure to the target language in everyday contexts (Morsi & Rezk, 2025). By inserting English words or phrases into daily communication, learners increase their frequency of use, which strengthens vocabulary retention and automatization. CS reinforces recall and contextual understanding. This process supports noticing, a key mechanism in language acquisition, as learners become more aware of differences between linguistic systems (Yassen et al., 2026). In addition, frequent CS with peers in the classroom can boost students' confidence though its effectiveness depends heavily on proficiency in L2 or other foreign languages (Hakim et al., 2019; Kohi & Lakishimi, 2020; Dooly & Bakri, 2024).

5.3. Attitudes toward CS in Professional Contexts

In formal settings, ALs viewed CS as a tool to display and construct their social bilingual identities strategically. This has been confirmed in de Socarraz-Novoas (2015) in which college students code-switched between English and Spanish in a multilingual context. CS has contributed to the creation of Gen Z in-group and out-group dynamics. A dominant language can imply greater authority and establish a tone of power, while a less dominant one is one way to emphasize sharing power and create an inclusive environment (de Socarraz-Novoas, 2015). Similarly, Lestari et al. (2025) has affirmed the direct link between translanguaging with the habits of Gen Z. The study explored how Indonesian Gen Z EFL learners negotiated their identities on social media. It argues that for this generation, moving between languages is not just a "switch" but a habitual way of

asserting their personal voice and digital identity. ILs learners had the highest percentage for understanding concepts or checking understanding in the same context. On the other hand, ALs had a higher frequency of distribution than ILs in CS as they would CS to express their desires and achieve personal and professional influences. From a sociolinguistic perspective, ALs use CS to signal social affiliation, cultural hybridity and context-dependent identities. This has been emphasized in Savase & Ganmote (2025) who argue that language alternation has been recognized since the middle of the twentieth century because of its importance as dynamic mechanism of identity construction and social practice. Speakers use CS to align themselves with specific social groups. ALs findings to this question has also been confirmed in Trudgill (2000), Holmes & Wilson (2022) and Habyarimana et al. (2017) in which CS is essential to convey “nuance of meaning” and “personal intention” (p. 105).

In further studies that explored motivations to CS in formal and informal discourse, it was found that Responses to the survey and interview questions revealed that young Arab bilingual speakers code-switch to express social status and affirming identity, as well as signaling membership in specific social groups (Altalqani et al., 2024). For instance in Daquila (2024), it was found that the social identity of Gen Z Emirati students has been shaped in an era of the growing influence of globalization that is reflected in their use of English. Similarly, in Puspita & Ardianto (2024), CS is highly dependent on interactions in various situational contexts. The results indicate that language alternation serves important social functions among young professionals who use Indonesian and English, particularly in expressing personal identity among peers and family members and fostering a sense of belonging. In the present study, CS and slang are strategically adapted by Gen Z to different social environments and to negotiate their identities within diverse communicative contexts.

The divergent linguistic attitudes across generations offer a compelling insight into how language serves as a vehicle for identity construction in modern Egypt. For Generation X, linguistic practices are deeply anchored in cultural preservation; for this cohort, Arabic remains the primary pillar of social and national identity. While English is acknowledged for its pragmatic utility in professional or academic contexts, it is viewed as a secondary tool that does not encroach upon the cultural primacy of the mother tongue. These findings are supported by Yahiaoui et al. (2021) which explored CS's sociocultural attitudes in dubbing; 78% of the participants appreciated CS for enhancing cultural relevance, and 65% acknowledged its role in engagement. In their findings, it was found that younger viewers aged 18-25 were more receptive to CS; for them it makes the conversation more relatable. Thus, CS aligns with the social identity theory, suggesting that workplace CS's effectiveness depends on linguistic competence and context adaptability.

In contrast, Generation Z demonstrates a more fluid, transcultural orientation. This younger demographic increasingly cultivates identities that navigate the intersections of local heritage and global digital spheres. For them, the seamless movement between Arabic and English, often through translanguaging, is a sophisticated performance of a hybrid personality. Rather than viewing these languages as competing forces, Gen Z treats them as complementary resources within a single, integrated repertoire. This generational shift mirrors broader societal transformations in Egypt, including rapid urbanization and the pervasive influence of digital technology. Ultimately, the blending of linguistic codes is more than a communicative habit; it serves as the audible manifestation of a nation's ongoing cultural evolution.

In summary, the research questions have been answered in the view of the presented theoretical framework proposed by Poplack, Gumprez, Myhers-Scotten and Tajfel & Turner. Differential perspectives about CS in diverse situation contexts were revealed by Egyptian ALs and ILs learners. ALs regarded CS as a “strategic tool” to navigate across different contexts, whereas ILs

viewed CS as a “compensatory mechanism”. These findings affirm the social identity theory by showing how learners’ background and proficiency influence their CS behavior. Gen Z participants use CS more frequently than Gen X, highlighting generational shifts. The stark contrast between the two groups Gen Z and Gen X suggests that the effectiveness of CS in the workplace or educational contexts is contingent on linguistic competence, contextual adaptability and identity construction.

6. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that CS among Egyptian EFL learners is a socially meaningful practice shaped by proficiency, geography, and generation. Rather than representing linguistic deficiency, this fluidity reflects speakers’ efforts to navigate complex social worlds marked by inequality, mobility, and change. Recognizing code-switching as a legitimate and valuable resource has significant implications for sociolinguistic theory, language education, and policy in multilingual societies.

Although this study offers valuable insights, certain limitations provide a foundation for future scholarly inquiry. Primarily, the reliance on self-reported proficiency measures introduces a degree of subjectivity. Furthermore, the use of a non-probability sample may limit the generalizability of the findings across the broader Egyptian population. Regarding the urban-rural divide, the current study utilized university types as a proxy for cultural background; however, it did not account for the nuanced differences in specific governorates or population densities.

To strengthen the academic rigor of future research, several strategic approaches should be considered. First, employing methodological triangulation by combining self-reported data with standardized proficiency assessments would establish a more robust profile of learners’ actual linguistic abilities. Furthermore, a shift toward social network analysis could reveal how peer group dynamics and interpersonal connections actively shape individual switching habits. To capture the fluidity of these habits over time, longitudinal designs are essential; tracking the linguistic trajectories of individuals as they migrate between rural and urban centers would offer a far clearer picture of dialectal adaptation and change. Beyond physical migration, the role of virtual environments warrants closer inspection through digital ethnography. By including Millennials and Gen Z in studies of digital spaces, such as TikTok, WhatsApp, and YouTube, researchers can better illuminate how digital-native identities influence translanguaging practices. Finally, adopting a lens of intersectionality is crucial; exploring how code-switching intersects with variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, and regional identity would provide a more multidimensional and nuanced understanding of the evolving Egyptian linguistic landscape.

Recommendations from the findings include a critical need for greater empathy and pedagogical openness regarding linguistic fluidity in educational settings. Rather than framing code-switching as a deficit to be corrected, educators and policymakers should investigate the underlying motivations for these shifts. These linguistic choices are profound indicators of a learner’s lived experience, identity negotiation, and future aspirations. By acknowledging the unique linguistic assets students bring from the creative hybridity found in urban centers to the emerging bilingualism in rural regions, institutions can foster more inclusive and equitable environments. This paradigm shift supports the principles of educational justice by challenging the hegemony of idealized monolingual standards. Ultimately, validating code-switching honors the complex identities of learners as they navigate an increasingly interconnected global landscape.

In conclusion, future research should adopt larger, more representative and longitudinal designs, integrating sociolinguistic variables (e.g., gender, SES, digital exposure) and employing

validated, mixed-methods instruments to capture the dynamic nature of CS. Pedagogically, teacher training should explicitly incorporate translanguaging and strategic CS practices to support comprehension, reduce anxiety, and enhance participation across proficiency levels. Curriculum designers are encouraged to embed CS as a legitimate communicative resource aligned with real-world multilingual practices and digital communication trends. At the policy level, institutions should move toward inclusive language policies that legitimize linguistic hybridity while maintaining academic standards. Collectively, these directions advance equitable, context-sensitive EFL education in line with SDG 4 and SDG 10.

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