

Code-Switching

Languages

Alternating between languages, and why it is a skill rather than a lapse.

Alternating between two or more languages within a conversation, often within a single sentence, in ways that follow systematic constraints rather than occurring at random.

RULE-GOVERNED

yes

SIGN OF DEFICIT

no

- Switches occur at points where both grammars allow a boundary.
- It requires fluency in both languages, not partial command of either.
- It can mark identity, audience, topic or emphasis.
- Distinct from borrowing, which is settled vocabulary.
- Long stigmatised, now well established as rule-governed.
- Children raised bilingually code-switch systematically from early on.

LOOK FOR IT

Spanglish switches follow consistent syntactic constraints; ungrammatical switch points are avoided.

It signals competence in two systems at once, not confusion between them.