

Code-Switching Among Croatian Immigrants in Canada

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Ilijana Lukač

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Zadar, 2024.



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Zadar, 2024.

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1. Introduction

With the continuous migration of Croats to countries abroad, the number of Croatian bilinguals is rising. This is also the case with Croatian immigrants in Canada. Becoming a citizen in a country that is not one's motherland requires acquirement of that country's language, culture and lifestyle. Most Croats who emigrate to Canada are bilingual, with levels of fluency in English and Croatian (Petrović, 2018). A sociolinguistic phenomenon that is quite common for bilinguals and multilinguals is code-switching. It can be described as alternating between two or more languages in conversation. This phenomenon has been approached from the aspect of syntax, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. From a sociolinguistic point of view, code-switching is thought to be a conversational tactic with several social and practical applications. For instance, promoting dialogue, getting past linguistic obstacles, avoiding hesitancy, making up for a weakness or lack of proficiency in one of the two languages, and improved communication and interaction are said to be the main benefits of code-switching. Other social objectives that code-switching might fulfill include exhibiting language proficiency, demonstrating social class and prestige, and avoiding errors. This undergraduate thesis' primary goal is to examine and portray Croatian immigrants' habits of code-switching, as well as their reasons for doing so and perspectives on the practice as a whole.

Before introducing our research, we will present a theoretical framework including the terminology and definitions of bilingualism, code-switching, the approach to code-switching from a sociolinguistic perspective, and previous research related to this phenomenon. The following chapters will show the relationship between English and Croatian and how they are accepted and used in the country where they are foreign languages. One chapter of the theoretical framework is dedicated to the speaker's perception and attitudes towards code-switching. The last section will present some cases of code-switching between different languages in Canada. Then we will present the study conducted among Croatian immigrants in Canada which is based on the theory of code-switching. The purpose is to offer an understanding of the interaction between English and Croatian in immigrant communities in Canada as well as the code-switching habits of bilinguals in Canada who speak both English and Croatian.

2. Bilingualism

Many people are unsure of what being bilingual entails and what it actually means. Some frequently asked questions were listed by Steiner & Hayes (2008), including: “Is a child bilingual if he understands a language but won't speak it? If a child excels in one language more than the other, is he considered bilingual? Is it necessary for a bilingual child to be equally proficient in both languages to be considered bilingual?” They also go on to say that there aren't many people who are so-called “balanced bilinguals” – that is, who are equally proficient in both languages. Most bilingual people favour one language over the other when speaking. Numerous individual characteristics that differ from person to person can influence whether or not someone is bilingual. According to Macnamara (1969), speaking more than one language fluently and being able to comprehend other languages is not the same thing. When assessing a bilingual speaker, it is important to keep in mind that it is a combination of several skills. It is critical to choose which of the skills should be evaluated. Kremin and Byers-Heinlein stated that “when measuring bilingualism, researchers often rely on a combination of observable indicators, such as language proficiency and exposure to determine an individual’s bilingual status” (2021, p. 5).

Without a doubt, being bilingual is a useful skill in the modern world. Parents choose to integrate foreign languages into their children's daily lives because they value language proficiency more and more every day. Being bilingual has many advantages, according to Demirci and Güven, who believe “foreign language education is a very challenging and long process, so it can be considered a great advantage for individuals to be raised bilingually by certain methods, immediately after birth or starting from a young age, thus gaining a second language apart from their mother tongue” (2020, p. 116). All people naturally acquire language, and it happens swiftly in the earlier childhood. During this phase, children can be exposed to numerous languages either naturally or purposefully so they can acquire them at the same time.

Steiner and Hayes (2008) assert that encouraging bilingualism is beneficial for children, and they provide the following justifications: “knowing another language is an advantage when one is applying for a job; it contributes to a deeper understanding of other countries, as well as other cultures; and, the most important one, evidence shows that learning another language early in life is accompanied by some advantages for brain development, such as an improved ability to handle distractions, with proficiency in one language, it is easier to master a third language,

attention, spatial intelligence, as well as memory are enhanced when one gets older, and one can use language more creatively” (Steiner and Hayes, 2008, as cited in Posavec, 2023).

According to Rosenberg, “Language proficiency can be evaluated in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing. You could also add a fifth area of speech and language, in which a person is able to use one or both languages for reasoning, to your definition of bilingualism. A person may speak only one language but have listening comprehension in two languages. Another may listen and speak in two languages but reading and writing ability in only one.” (1996, p. 1). Two concepts – balanced bilingualism and semilingualism – can be used to explain this. Balanced bilingualism, according to Rosenberg (1996), is the capacity for fluent use of both languages, while semilingualism is the absence of such capacity in both languages. Semilingualism can cause a number of deficiencies, including a poorer vocabulary, grammatical mistakes, trouble thinking or expressing one's emotions, etc. Balanced bilingualism is rare because one language is usually more dominant than the other.

3. Code-switching

What will be presented in this section is a theoretical framework of the sociolinguistic phenomenon called code-switching. We will explain the definition of the said term, the difference between code-switching and code-mixing, define different code-switching types and illustrate the approach to this phenomenon in terms of sociolinguistics. Lastly, we will introduce some previous research about code-switching.

3.1. Code-switching: terminology

A person's language or dialect choice in every instance of communication is called their "code". A speaker is not likely to know or employ a single code or communication system. The majority of speakers are proficient in multiple varieties of the languages they speak and bilingualism and multilingualism are more common than monolingualism. Bilingual and multilingual speakers are individuals who are proficient in two or more languages or codes of communication. Bilingual speakers can switch from one language to another depending on the context, the person they are speaking to, and the subject matter of the conversation. This is called code-switching.

Terms such as *code-mixing* and *language mixing* are sometimes used to describe this linguistic phenomenon. Some authors, such as Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) and Wardhaugh (2006), claimed that the difference is that the former term is intra-sentential while the latter term is inter-sentential. Spolsky connects code-switching to borrowing, saying that it occurs "when the new word becomes more or less integrated into the second language" (1998, p. 49). Most sociolinguists state that all types of switches in conversation should be referred to as code-switching. Due to the complexity of this phenomenon, many linguists have different definitions and approaches to code-switching. Wei provides what is arguably the most concise definition of this linguistic phenomenon and defines it as "changes from one language to another in the course of conversation" (2007, p. 14).

3.2. Types of code-switching

As was mentioned above, many authors claim code-switching to be inter-sentential and code-mixing to be intra-sentential alternation. On the other hand, Myers-Scotton (1989) argues that both of those alternations can occur in cases of both code-switching and code-mixing. She

explains that a switch between two languages may occur mid-sentence or at the end, depending on what the speaker is trying to achieve and depending on the context of the conversation. For the purpose of this thesis, we will talk about intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching.

“Intra-sentential code-switching” can be defined as “switching within meaningful sentences” (Van Hell et al., 2015, p. 4). Van Hell also claims that “when processing a meaningful sentence, bilinguals seek to integrate individual words into a coherent semantic and syntactic structure” (2015, p. 21). This means that bilingual speakers take into consideration the semantic and syntactic rules of a particular language while connecting different words within sentences. This requires a certain level of proficiency as the speaker must not only know the meanings of particular words, but also how to fit together those words. Intra-sentential code-switching can be explained through the correlation between cognates and triggering. Cognates are words related by derivation, borrowing or descent (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Within a sentence, cognates serve as trigger words for code-switching.

Inter-sentential code-switching “is characterized by a switch from one language variety to another outside the sentence or the clause level” (Koban, 2013, p. 1175). In this case, two different languages are used to express two different clauses or sentences. Another example of code-switching is tag-switching. That is used as a sentence filler or an interjection, and as such has no influence on the rest of the sentence (Poplack, 1980). It can occur at any point in the sentence and serves to express a strong reaction or confirmation.

Myers-Scotton (1989) suggested a difference between unmarked language and marked language. Unmarked language represents the expected language while marked language represents the language that is unexpected. In other words, marked language is used to emphasize something in a certain social situation, or to better explain the meaning of something within the conversation. There are several motivations for code-switching (Myers-Scotton, 1989). The first motivation refers to switching from one unmarked language to another in situations when a new participant or topic occurs. Another motivation for switching between two unmarked languages is when the communication is held by fluent bilingual speakers. In that case, switching does not require changes in topic, participants or setting. The third motivation is using code-switching as a marked choice in order to show solidarity or social distance. The final motivation is switching codes to establish a way of communicating between speakers who are, for example, meeting for the first time and, therefore, are not familiar with each other’s identity.

3.3. Code-switching as a sociolinguistic phenomenon

Sociolinguists who have investigated this phenomenon recognized its connection to social motivation. Wardhaugh (2006) suggests that motivation is what influences the speaker to choose between two different varieties of a language or between two different languages. This motivation can include many elements such as “solidarity, accommodation to listeners, choice of topic, and perceived social and cultural distance” (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 104). Also, motivation can be completely subconscious, as many speakers are unaware that they have made a switch from one variety of language to another or from one language to another, whether it is between or within utterances.

When talking about switching from one language to another, we can differentiate two types of code-switching: situational and metaphorical (Wardhaugh, 2006). Situational code-switching does not require a topic change. It occurs “when the languages used change according to the situations in which the conversants find themselves: they speak one language in one situation and another in a different one” (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 104). On the other hand, metaphorical code-switching requires a change of topic. Since some topics can be discussed in either language, sociolinguists have found it quite challenging to determine when and why code-switching occurs. Cases of situational code-switching are typically easier to categorise. Different varieties are used in different sets of situations. Some situations, such as ceremonial or religious occasions, are socially prescribed, and switching from one variety to another may be instant. Wardhaugh (2006) defines a difference between this type of code-switching and diglossia. He explains that “a diglossic situation exists in a society when it has two distinct codes which show clear functional separation; that is, one code is employed in one set of circumstances and the other in an entirely different set” (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 89). The main distinctions are that diglossia empowers differences, while code-switching reduces them, and that in the instance of diglossia, people are conscious of switching, whereas code-switching is often subconscious.

With that said, the norms of code-switching are not universal. They may vary even within a single community. Due to the complexity of code-switching, many possibilities are available, so the choice depends on the speaker’s intent and the social context (Gumperz, 1982, as cited in Wardhaugh, 2006). Gal (1988, p. 247) says that “code-switching is a conversational strategy

used to establish, cross or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations.”

The phenomenon of language loyalty is often mentioned when talking about code-switching. It is described as the speaker’s effort to resist the influence of more powerful languages in order to protect and maintain their own language (Spolsky, 1998). Romaine (2000) claims that the causes of linguistic extinction and language death are often bilingualism and code-switching. Some aspects of the speaker’s motivation in regard to code-switching will be investigated in this research study.

3.4. Code-switching: prior research

Code-switching has been investigated by numerous linguists since the 1950s and the current globalization is raising more interest in this concept (Malechova, 2016). As has been noted previously, there are many different approaches and interpretations of the code-switching phenomenon, so various linguists have expressed different interests in their research.

Petrović (2021) presented features of Croatian spoken by Croatian-Canadians in Toronto. In her research, she applied the notion of unequal bilingualism, because although English is the dominant language in Croatian immigrant communities in Canada, it is “not the linguistically dominant variety for all speakers in this bilingual community” (Petrović, 2021, p. 447). Petrović made a distinction between first-generation speakers and second-generation speakers, recognizing that second-generation speakers are linguistically more proficient in English than those who immigrated to Canada as adolescents or adults. The interpretation of code-switching used in Petrović’s research is that which divides it into three categories: “intra-clausal switching, inter-clausal switching, and extra-clausal switching” (Petrović, 2021, p. 456). Results suggest that intra-clausal code-switching is the most common, which means that most informants switched from Croatian to English within a single clause. The second most often used type of code-switching is extra-clausal, referring to the “switching of discourse-specific elements” (Hlavac, 2003, p. 47, as cited in Petrović, 2021). The least common type is inter-clausal switching. The data also show that the younger or second-generation Croatian immigrants engage in code-switching more often than the first-generation immigrants.

Hlavac (2012) suggests that code-switching reflects the speakers' desired linguistic choices that they can connect to different discourse contexts. He interviewed 100 young adult Croatian-Australians and confirmed his theory that code-switching, or as he defined it "presence of lexemes contributed by two languages in one utterance" (Hlavac, 2012, p. 50), is a very common phenomenon among his informants. Unlike the data from the previous research presented, Hlavac found that the most prevalent category of code-switching is extra-clausal, followed by intra-clausal and inter-clausal code-switching. It is also demonstrated that only 3% of informants' code-switching was influenced by their lack of proficiency in the Croatian language. It is more frequently accompanied by metalinguistic features, referring to "overt features, (e.g., explicit warnings, apologies) that a change in language has just happened or will happen" (Hlavac, 2012, p. 52). This type of code-switching is often described as 'introduced' or 'justified'.

Holmes (2013) focused her research on the speaker's motivation for code-switching. She indicates several reasons why speakers switch codes: within a specific domain or social situation, as a sign of group membership, to show solidarity or social distance, to establish status relations between speakers, or because of the change in the topic of conversation (Holmes, 2013).

Some linguists focused their research on the causes and motivations for code-switching, while others focused on the speakers' perception of this phenomenon and its connection to their identity and emotions. Medved Krajnović and Juraga (2008) conducted a questionnaire-based study in which they wanted to investigate the connection between learning or speaking a foreign language and changes in the speaker's personality. They found that the most prevalent opinion is that foreign language learning does not influence changes in personality traits or the development of completely different personalities (Medved Krajnović & Juraga, 2008).

Motivation is another aspect which is closely related to code-switching. Wardhaugh (2006) says that speakers often subconsciously choose what they want to say and how they want to say it in order to achieve a certain impression. Switching from one code to another enables them to use a wider variety of language behaviours, and therefore are able to "assert power; declare solidarity; maintain a certain neutrality when both codes are used; express identity; and so on" (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 110). Another reason for code-switching is that speakers frequently attempt to live up to the expectations other people have of them. One way that this can be

achieved is through accommodation, or by minimising the differences in their speech. This is defined as convergence behaviour. On the other hand, divergence behaviour causes more negative opinions of that person. In speech, this is recognized by emphasizing the differences in accents, dialects, or languages (Wardhaugh, 2006).

3.4.1. Code-switching in Canada

English and French are recognized as the official languages of Canada; however, Canada has always been a multilingual and multicultural nation. French is the primary language spoken by 22% of the 36 million people who call Canada home. For 59% of them, English is their first language (Fleming, 2016). The remaining 19% identify as native speakers of a third language. One of the greatest causes of the number of people speaking a third language is immigration. Because Canada is such a multilingual country, we will now present some other examples of code-switching between different languages in Canada.

A study conducted by Al-Daher in 2020 examines the socio-pragmatic purposes of Arabic-English code-switching among immigrants from Jordan, Canada. Eleven adult Jordanian immigrants – eight male and three female – are the study's subjects. They are all fluent in English and native speakers of Jordanian Arabic (Al-Daher, 2020). However, depending on their occupation, educational background, and period of stay in Canada, their English proficiency differs. The examination of nearly eighteen hours of genuine, spontaneous encounters recorded, forms the basis of this research. The two methods used were semi-structured interviews and audio recordings. The data analysis of the Jordanian immigrants' daily interactions showed a significant frequency of English switches. It was discovered that people switch to English for particular sociopragmatic, linguistic, and communicative goals. In the everyday speech of Jordanian immigrants, the researchers found six reasons for such switches: “filling lexical needs, integrating into the Canadian culture and lifestyle, qualifying a message, mitigating embarrassment and negative connotations, quoting the exact words of somebody, and creating humorous or ironic effect” (Al-Daher, 2020, p. 494).

Redouane undertook a study in 2005 among Moroccan Arabic-French bilingual speakers living in Canada to investigate and identify different types of switching patterns in a bilingual situation and to address difficulties affecting the syntactic features of code-switching. The syntactic

elements of intra-sentential code-switching are examined in this study. This study involved four adult Moroccan participants. These four participants speak Standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic, their mother tongue, with fluency. They also speak French. These Moroccan Arabic speakers' conversations were recorded on tape in two distinct locations: firstly, these four informants were recorded in the Centre for Learning Languages, where they are employed, which is a formal setting. The informants were given the issue of "immigration" to address in this formal context, and they were instructed to do so in light of their own experiences. This discussion went on for an hour. The second setting was informal and consisted of a 30-minute phone chat between the informants.

About 249 switches were produced by the data (154 cases of switching in the formal setting and 95 during the phone calls). Switches happened in both directions in both settings: from Arabic to French and from French to Arabic, with the former occurring more frequently. The Moroccan Arabic speakers used a variety of code-switching techniques, ranging from the usage of single French or Arabic words to longer word sequences in single sentences. The data showed different examples of switching in noun phrases. The study's most startling conclusion is that these Moroccan speakers more often switched smaller constituents than larger ones, such as adjectives, adverbs, determiners, nouns, and verbs (Redouane, 2005). More significantly, among smaller elements, nouns were the most frequently switched syntactic category. Sentences in Arabic or French become grammatically incorrect when there are instances of switching that take place despite the syntactic differences between these two languages.

The term "code-switching," which refers to the verbal technique used by multilingual speakers to shift linguistic codes during a conversation as a symbol of cultural identity and solidarity or distance, is the main topic of the study conducted by Konidaris in 2010. Three trilingual individuals who lived and worked in Montreal were the subjects of this study. The three languages in which they were proficient were English, French, and Greek. The study was conducted in a private, non-controlled environment. The researcher invited participants in two discussion sessions who were acquaintances of hers. Since there were no pre-established guidelines, the discussions were neither directed nor controlled. Participants in the study were allowed to choose the language and discussion subjects at their discretion. It was discovered that the trilingual speakers taking part in the case study did employ code-switching. This occurrence happened in particular circumstances, which are as follows: regardless of the subjects being discussed, the English language predominated; conversely, the French language

was mostly used in sociopolitical and professional contexts; and the Greek language was used in conversations about family, food, Greece, and religion (Konidaris, 2010). Therefore, the questions of "if", "where" and "when" the switching occurs were clarified by this study.

3.5. Perception and attitudes towards code-switching

The challenges that come with being bilingual in a society that has historically been monolingual are similar to those that many minorities encounter. The attitudes of the society in which a person lives inevitably have an impact on how they perceive themselves. Bilinguals were frequently viewed negatively in societies that had historically been monolingual (Pavlenko, 2006). An example of such a society is Croatian society, where foreign languages are usually used only in certain environments, such as schools, universities, or businesses. Bilinguals themselves can have a negative perception of code-switching because of society's opinions. Bhatia and Ritchie claim that bilinguals sometimes view code-switching as a "sign of laziness... and potential danger to their own linguistic performance" (2004, p. 389). While the mother tongue is perceived as more emotional, it is not necessarily used when speakers come across an emotional situation (Pavlenko, 2006). This may be because the speaker's attitudes towards a certain language can influence whether it is more favored or not.

Wardhaugh (2006) states that some speakers of numerous languages have strong resistance to code-switching in the sense that they do not approve of their interlocutors using it, even if it means that the communication could come across some obstacles. Some English-speaking countries find it difficult to accept different "exotic" languages that immigrants use and believe that multilingualism can sometimes be problematic. We can also come across some derogatory terms such as "*Franglais* (French and English in Quebec), *FragnoI* (French and Spanish in Argentina), *Spanglish* (Cuban Spanish and English in the USA), and *Tex-Mex* (English and Mexican Spanish in Texas)" (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 109), which show that sometimes code-switching can be completely dismissed as a linguistic phenomenon.

4. Croatian and English in Croatia and Canada

4.1. *The English language in Croatia*

English has not held the same status or significance in Croatian history as it does now. Up to the year 1945 English occurred only occasionally (Vilke, 2007). By the end of the 20th century, the presence of English was more evident. Croatian children started learning it from an early age, it was present in schools, on TV, and in the 21st century, on social media. This caused a great difference in English understanding and proficiency between different generations in Croatia.

Research conducted by Cindrić and Narančić Kovač (2005) established that English is the most important language for the Croatian adult population. Croatian adults expressed that they recognized the necessity of English both in their private and professional lives and, therefore, have a positive attitude towards the use of the English language.

Apart from institutionalized learning, English can be also acquired through the media, such as the Internet, TV and music. This type of exposure to a language can lead to incidental learning. Mihaljević Djigunović and Geld (2002-2003) investigated the case of Croatian speakers' incidental learning of English vocabulary. The data they collected show many different factors that influence this phenomenon, such as: "age, level of education, background knowledge of the world and of English, length of learning English, interest and motivation, frequency of the item in the input, word pronounceability, availability of contextual cues" (Mihaljević Djigunović & Geld, 2002-2003, p. 348). This is why English is necessary in all aspects of modern life (Mihaljević Djigunović & Geld, 2002-2003). With that said, the opinions of the younger and older generations of Croats are still divided, as younger generations accept and embrace the use of the English language, while older generations view it as an annoyance and, more seriously, a threat to the purity and survival of the Croatian language.

4.2. Croatian language in Canadian immigrant communities

In the chapter above we focused on the English language in Croatia, but now we will focus on the Croatian language in Canada, or more specifically, on the use of the Croatian language in Croatian immigrant communities in Canada. Over the past two decades, the number of Canadian citizens who claim to have Croatian ancestry has grown continuously (Petrović, 2021). With the rise of Croatian immigrant communities, the percentage of Croatian immigrants who speak Croatian has been decreasing. The reason for this is the fact that the “use of Croatian is generally restricted to the home/family, friendship, leisure and religious domains” (Petrović, 2021, p. 451). First-generation speakers are more proficient in Croatian and perceive it as the dominant and preferred language, especially in private aspects of life. Second-generation speakers mainly use Croatian in family interactions and with older generations and English with their peers (Petrović, 2021).

From the interviews conducted in her research, Petrović (2021) identified features of Croatian spoken in Canada that are different from the features of standard Croatian. Those features include lexical, semantic and morpho-syntactic features. Lexical features include “the presence of English-origin lexical transfers” (Petrović, 2021, p. 482) in most grammatical categories. Morpho-syntactic changes can be recognized in the occasions of case marking, word order, the lack of reflexive particle *se*, and the use of reflexive possessive pronouns (Petrović, 2021). Semantic features include the incorrect use of prepositions, loan translations (especially in collocations and idiomatic expressions) and the use of the adjective *jedan* before noun phrases, reflecting the function of an indefinite article in English (Petrović, 2021). Second-generation speakers are more susceptible to the features presented above than first-generation speakers. All of this can influence the greater use of Croatian-English code-switching due to the feeling of lower proficiency in Croatian.

5. Study

5.1. Aims

This study intends to investigate the practices of code-switching between Croatian and English among Croatian immigrants in Canada and their perception and attitudes towards this sociolinguistic phenomenon. The results of this study could bring a more detailed insight into the use of code-switching among this particular group of people, the reasons behind using it on different occasions and the overall opinion about the phenomenon.

The following hypotheses will be addressed in the study:

1. Code-switching is mostly believed to be a common tool used in the bilinguals' conversation.
2. Croatian immigrants in Canada code-switch primarily in informal settings.
3. When speaking with other Croats in Canada, they usually code-switch from English to Croatian to express their identity and sense of belonging.
4. Croatian immigrants in Canada mostly feel that code-switching from English to Croatian makes them appear to be more proficient in their mother tongue.
5. Attitudes of Croatian immigrants in Canada about the influence of English on the linguistic purity of Croatian are mostly negative.
6. Croatian immigrants in Canada mostly feel uncomfortable switching from Croatian to English in the presence of people in Croatia.

5.2. Methodology

A questionnaire was created for this study. This questionnaire was designed via Google Forms specifically for this study and it consisted of 21 questions. All of the questions were designed to be answered by using the Likert-type scale from 1 to 5. The participants were requested to fill in some data including age, the duration of their residence in Croatia and the duration of their residence in Canada.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part included 5 questions referring to the general participants' practice of code-switching and their view of other bilingual speakers'

usage of this concept. The second section of questions focused on the participants' practice and opinion of code-switching when having a conversation with other Croats living in Canada. This part consisted of 7 questions. The final part consisted of 9 questions about their use of code-switching when talking to Croats in Croatia and their attitudes towards the preservation of their mother tongue.

Due to the fact that the participants of this study lived in Canada, the questionnaire made in Google Forms was sent via email. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the study's aims and a brief definition of the sociolinguistic phenomenon in question were presented. The participants were informed that taking part in this study was completely anonymous and voluntary. The answers were analysed using descriptive statistics in the JASP program.

5.3. Participants

This research was conducted online on a sample of 37 adult Croats living in Canada. The age range of this sample of the participants was from 18 to 80 years old. Only 1 participant was between 18 and 24 years old, the majority of the participants (33) were between 25 and 64, and 3 of them were over 65 years old (this age range was defined by Statistics Canada¹) This makes the average age (M) of the participants to be 46 years old.

The sample included Croats who spent a certain amount of time living in Croatia – first-generation immigrants – and those who have lived only in Canada, but whose ancestors emigrated from Croatia – second-generation immigrants. 9 out of 37 participants lived in Croatia before emigrating to Canada and the number of years they spent living in Croatia ranges from 3 to 34 years. The average (M) number of years the participants spent living in Croatia is 3.81, while the number of years they spent living in Canada ranges from 12 to 69, with the mean (M) being 42.41.

The socio-demographic data shown in table 1 will not be a part of the statistical analysis. This data was collected solely to ensure a wide range of individuals taking part in our research.

¹ <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=252430>

Table 1

Socio-demographic data of the participants

	How long have you lived in Croatia?	How long have you been living in Canada?
Valid	37	37
Mean	3.811	42.405
Minimum	0.000	12.000
Maximum	34.000	69.000

6. Results

What will be presented now are the analysed results of our questionnaire. The analysis was divided into three parts, following the three sections of the questionnaire.

The questions (1-5) at the beginning of the questionnaire apply to the hypotheses: that code-switching is believed to be a common tool used in bilinguals' conversation and that Croatian immigrants in Canada code-switch more often in informal settings.

Table 2

Code-switching habits based on the environment

	1. I code-switch between English and Croatian in informal conversations (e.g., among family and friends).	2. I think code-switching is very common among Croatian immigrants in Canada.
Valid	37	37
Mean	4.243	4.595
Std. Deviation	0.955	0.599

The answers to question number 1 were largely positive, with an average of 4.24 on a 1-5 Lykert-type scale and an SD of 0.96. This proves our hypothesis that Croatian immigrants in Canada code-switch more often in informal conversations. It also proves what Petrović (2021) said about Croatian being used mostly in family domains within immigrant communities. For the second question, the mean of 4.60 clearly confirms that the participants agreed that code-switching is often used in the conversations of Croatian immigrants in Canada.

In table 3 we show the answers to questions 3-5 from the first part of the questionnaire. These questions will answer the first hypothesis, that code-switching is believed to be a common tool used in bilinguals' conversations.

Table 3

The participants' general opinion on code-switching

	3. I think it is normal for bilinguals to code-switch between their mother tongue and second language.	4. I think code-switching shows a lack of proficiency in both languages.	5. I avoid code-switching in formal settings (e.g., workplace).
Valid	37	37	37
Mean	4.405	2.027	3.378
Std. Deviation	0.725	1.301	1.552

As we can see, the participants also agree that code-switching is common for bilinguals in general. With the mean of 4.41, this answer confirms the hypothesis that code-switching is a recognized tool that bilinguals use in their speech. When asked whether code-switching shows a lack of proficiency in languages, the average answer is “disagree”. With the standard deviation of a little over 1, we cannot say that this opinion was completely shared by the majority in the sample. This goes against the findings of Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) that bilinguals believe code-switching is detrimental to their language proficiency. The mean for question number 5 – *I avoid code-switching in formal settings (e.g., workplace)* – is 3.38 and the SD is fairly high, which tells us that the participants shared different opinions of code-switching in formal environments.

The second part of the questionnaire, with questions 1-7, refers to the participants' practices and opinions of code-switching within the conversations they share with other Croats living in Canada. These questions relate to the next two hypotheses: when speaking with other Croats in Canada, they usually code-switch from English to Croatian to express their identity and sense of belonging; Croatian immigrants in Canada feel that code-switching from English to Croatian makes them appear to be more proficient in their mother tongue.

Table 4

Code-switching habits when speaking with Croats in Canada

	1. I code-switch from Croatian to English more often when speaking to Croats in Canada.	2. I code-switch from English to Croatian more often when speaking to Croats in Canada.
Valid	37	37
Mean	3.541	3.676
Std. Deviation	1.406	1.226

Based on these results, we may notice that the participants offered a wide range of answers when it comes to switching between both languages. With the means (3.54 and 3.68) being closer to “agree”, it can be concluded that when they did code-switch in conversations with other Croats in Canada, the switching occurred both ways, from English to Croatian and from Croatian to English.

Table 5

Participants' attitudes towards code-switching

	3. I feel less self-conscious about my code-switching if I hear other people code-switch.	4. I try to avoid code-switching from Croatian to English among my Croatian family and friends in Canada.	5. I code-switch only when I can't remember the word or phrase in the language of the conversation.
Valid	37	37	37
Mean	3.865	2.541	3.811
Std. Deviation	1.058	1.304	1.126

As the results in table 5 confirm, the impression that hearing other people code-switch makes the participants feel less self-conscious and worried about their own switching was progressing more toward the answer “agree”, with the average of 3.87. To answer the fourth question, Croatian immigrants mostly disagreed or were undecided, which means that they overall did not withdraw from switching to English in conversations with their Croatian family and friends in Canada. This could be due to a lack of vocabulary or just for the sake of communicating more easily and effortlessly. These assumptions can be supported by the answers to the fifth question, which says that code-switching is usually present when the speaker cannot remember a certain word or phrase in the language they are speaking.

Table 6

Participants' reasons for switching from English to Croatian

	6. Code-switching from English to Croatian when talking to Croats in Canada makes me feel more proficient in the Croatian language.	7. I code-switch from English to Croatian to express my identity.
Valid	37	37
Mean	3.135	3.000
Std. Deviation	1.084	1.130

With the mean of 3.14 for question number 6 and 3.00 for question number 7, we cannot confirm the hypotheses that switching from English to Croatian makes the speakers feel more proficient in Croatian and that the reason for such switching is to express their identity and Croatian heritage. The standard deviation for both questions is a little over 1 so it is clear that the individual answers slightly differ from each other.

Finally, the third section of the questionnaire includes 9 questions about the participants' habits and reasons for code-switching when speaking with Croats living in Croatia and their opinion about their mother tongue and Croatian heritage.

Table 7

Participants' views on switching from Croatian to English

	1. I try to avoid code-switching from Croatian to English when speaking to people who live in Croatia to show solidarity.	2. I feel bad if I code-switch from Croatian to English when talking to people who live in Croatia.
Valid	37	37
Mean	3.514	3.324
Std. Deviation	1.283	1.313

As we can see in table 7, the response to the effort of the participants to avoid switching to English when having a conversation with people in Croatia is closer to "agree" than "undecided", as the mean of 3.51 shows us. Many sociolinguists, including Wardhaugh (2006) point out the motive of solidarity when talking about code-switching. The answers to the question of whether or not they feel bad for switching from Croatian to English were predominantly "undecided".

Table 8

Participants' opinions regarding the Croatian language

	3. Preserving the Croatian language is important to me.	4. I think that English is detrimental to Croatian linguistic purism.	5. I think that most Croats do not approve of code-switching.
Valid	37	37	37
Mean	4.757	2.811	3.162
Std. Deviation	0.723	1.126	1.167

When it comes to the third question in this section of the questionnaire, the agreement is clear on the importance of preserving and protecting the Croatian language. The mean of 4.76 and the standard derivation of 0.72 show that the majority shared a similar view, which is that preserving the Croatian language is important. However, the question of English being detrimental to the purity of Croatian brings about a different perspective as most of the answers suggest disagreement or uncertainty. As was mentioned before, language preservation and purity have been one of the greatest questions among bilinguals (Spolsky, 1998). Therefore, the hypothesis that Croats living in Canada would think that English is destructive to Croatian linguistic purity has not been proven. Question 5 displays that the majority was “undecided” when asked whether they believed that Croats disapproved of code-switching.

Table 9

Participants' views on speaking English and switching from Croatian to English

	6. I feel more confident speaking English than Croatian.	7. Code-switching from Croatian to English when talking to people who live in Croatia makes me feel more dominant.	8. I feel embarrassed when I code-switch from Croatian to English because I can't remember a specific word or phrase.	9. When speaking in Croatian I often use English pause-fillers (e.g., Okay, So, You know) if I need some time to think about what I want to say.
Valid	37	37	37	37
Mean	4.135	1.757	3.216	3.486
Std. Deviation	1.294	0.983	1.315	1.216

With the knowledge that most participants have lived in Canada for the majority of their lives, the mean of 4.14 for question 6 is somewhat expected. An agreement was also reached when the participants were asked whether switching from Croatian to English made them feel

superior to Croats living in Croatia. As the mean of 1.76 implies, they claimed that this statement is not representative of them. Questions 8 and 9 had an average of 3.22 and 3.49 respectively, therefore we established that the embarrassment for code-switching in cases when speakers cannot think of a specific word is undetermined and that many participants agreed that they used English for pause-filling. Due to the participants' uncertainty about questions 2, *I feel bad if I code-switch from Croatian to English when talking to people who live in Croatia*, and 8, *I feel embarrassed when I code-switch from Croatian to English because I can't remember a specific word or phrase*, the last hypothesis that Croats living in Canada feel uncomfortable when switching from Croatian to English in the presence of people living in Croatia cannot be confirmed.

7. Discussion

As was mentioned before, some of the hypotheses were proven by the results and some weren't. The first two hypotheses – *Code-switching is mostly believed to be a common tool used in the bilinguals' conversation* and *Croatian immigrants in Canada code-switch primarily in informal settings* – were confirmed. The participants agreed that code-switching is a recognized tool in bilinguals' conversations and stated that they code-switch mostly in informal settings (among family and friends). Just like Petrović (2021) recognized, Croatian immigrants in Canada usually code-switch when speaking with their family and friends and try to avoid it in more formal settings. The fact that the participants strongly agree that code-switching is a conversational tool often used by bilinguals, proves why many sociolinguists, such as Wardhaugh (2006), Hlavac (2012), Holmes (2013) and Petrović (2021), have been so passionate about investigating this phenomenon among different bilingual speakers.

Different from the findings of Wardhaugh (2006), Gal (1988) and Holmes (2013), the results of the second part of the questionnaire didn't prove the two hypotheses that Croatian immigrants in Canada code-switch from English to Croatian to prove their identity and proficiency in the Croatian language. The participants stated that they code-switch between both languages and mainly when they couldn't remember a certain word or phrase in the language they were speaking.

Although preserving the Croatian language is very important to Croatian immigrants in Canada, they did not agree that English is detrimental in any way to the purity of the Croatian language. With that said, the fifth hypothesis couldn't be accepted. This finding goes against what many sociolinguists, like Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) and Wardhaugh (2006), have stated regarding the bilinguals' attitude toward preserving the purity of their mother tongue. The participants agreed that they felt more confident speaking English than Croatian, but they were mostly "undecided" when asked if they felt embarrassed about switching from Croatian to English. With these results, the last hypothesis also couldn't be accepted.

With all this said, the participants often code-switched from English to Croatian and the other way around, their main motivation for it was not being able to remember a specific word, and they did not feel ashamed for it as they did not believe that code-switching shows lack of proficiency and that it is detrimental to their mother tongue.

8. Conclusion

The main intention of this undergraduate thesis was to present and demonstrate the sociolinguistic phenomenon called code-switching and its presence in the speech of bilinguals and, more specifically, Croatian bilingual immigrants in Canada. Although code-switching has been extensively studied, there is still a lot to learn about bilingualism and language acquisition. Intra- and inter-sentential code-switching are the two main types, with tag-switching being another option. Being able to switch between languages with ease requires vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Over the years, sociolinguists have proven the social effect of code-switching, as it can be used to express solidarity, adaptation to listeners, as well as social and cultural distance. Code-switching is a common behaviour in bilingual speakers, with minority languages experiencing more frequent code-switching than majority languages. This suggests that code-switching patterns vary depending on sociocultural settings. Attitudes toward code-switching are different in many countries and communities. Some believe it represents multicultural richness, while others claim that it is a sign of laziness and that it can be detrimental to heritage purity.

This study investigated the participants' habits of code-switching and their opinions toward the general idea of code-switching. What was discovered is that Croatian immigrants in Canada who participated in the study often code-switched in informal settings, both from English to Croatian and vice-versa; that they predominantly believed that code-switching was a common communication tool used by bilinguals, and that they mostly cared about preserving the Croatian heritage. They also stated that they code-switched mostly when they could not remember a specific word or phrase they wanted to say. On the other hand, they predominantly did not feel that English was detrimental to Croatian purity, they mostly did not feel embarrassed when they switched from Croatian to English, and they mostly did not code-switch from English to Croatian in order to prove their identity. Also, they predominantly did not think that code-switching showed a lack of proficiency in any language.

Due to the restricted opportunities for data interpretation, we avoided generalizations when representing the responses of our sample of the participants. There is no denying the societal importance of code-switching in bilingual speech, and many opportunities for further study of this extremely complex linguistic phenomenon.

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10. Code-Switching Among Croatian Immigrants in Canada: Summary and key words

This paper focuses on presenting a theoretical framework of the sociolinguistic phenomenon called code-switching, bilinguals' habits of using that speech tool in their communication, and their opinions regarding the phenomenon. It also provides an insight into previous research on this topic. For the purpose of writing this undergraduate thesis, a small-scale study was conducted to discover more about code-switching within a specific group, Croatian immigrants in Canada. With this study, attention was drawn to the participants' personal experiences with code-switching and their attitudes towards the use of this phenomenon. It was found that the study's participants, Croatian immigrants living in Canada, frequently switched between languages in casual contexts, mostly thought that bilinguals frequently employed code-switching as a communication strategy, and were predominantly concerned about maintaining their cultural heritage. However, they mostly did not believe that English was a threat to the integrity of the Croatian language, nor did they predominantly feel uncomfortable when they communicated in English instead of Croatian.

Key words: bilingualism, code-switching, Croatian immigrants, Canada

11. Prebacivanje kodova među hrvatskim doseljenicima u Kanadi: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Ovaj se rad usredotočuje na predstavljanje teorijskog okvira vezanog uz sociolingvistički fenomen prebacivanja kodova, na navike korištenja ovog govornog sredstva u razgovoru kod dvojezičnih osoba te na njihovo mišljenje o navedenom fenomenu. U radu se također daje uvid u dosadašnja istraživanja na ovu temu. Za potrebe pisanja ovog završnog rada, provedeno je istraživanje manjeg opsega kako bi se otkrilo više o prebacivanju kodova unutar specifične skupine, hrvatskih doseljenika u Kanadi. Ovim se istraživanjem skreće pozornost na osobna iskustva ispitanika s prebacivanjem kodova i njihove stavove prema korištenju navedenog fenomena. Utvrđeno je da su sudionici istraživanja, hrvatski doseljenici koji žive u Kanadi, često prebacivali kodove u neformalnim kontekstima, smatrali da dvojezični ljudi često koriste prebacivanje kodova kao komunikacijsku strategiju te su bili zabrinuti za očuvanje svoje kulturne baštine. Međutim, nisu smatrali da je engleski jezik prijetnja integritetu hrvatskog jezika, niti su većinski osjećali neugodu kada su razgovarali na engleskom umjesto na hrvatskom.

Ključne riječi: dvojezičnost, prebacivanje kodova, hrvatski doseljenici, Kanada