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CODE-SWITCHING ON THE BATTLEFIELD: BENEFITS AND RISKS OF LANGUAGE SHIFTS

In modern warfare, where units from different regions of Ukraine and partner countries interact, linguistic communication plays a crucial role. Code-mixing, the blending of Ukrainian, English, military slang, or professional jargon, has become a common phenomenon in the combat environment. This phenomenon, known as *code-switching*, requires a conscious approach, as it can both enhance communication efficiency and create dangerous situations under the stressful conditions of battle.

The concept of *code-switching* refers to the alternation between two or more languages or communicative codes depending on the situation, the interlocutor's role, or the speaker's emotional state. In the military sphere, this may include switching between Ukrainian and English (especially during interaction with NATO partners); the use of jargon, call signs, abbreviations, and anglicisms within a unit; or the combination of formal command style and informal field communication.

In modern sociolinguistics, several main approaches have been developed to study the phenomenon of code-switching (CS) within specific communicative situations. The most significant among them are the following:

- Sociological approach. It focuses on the influence of sociodemographic, communicative, and other factors on the specifics of code-switching. Within this framework, based on J. Fishman's *domain* concept, the social context is viewed as a set of characteristics (place, topic, participants of communication) that determine the choice of language code or subcode.

- Psycholinguistic (or socio-psychological) approach. Its goal is to identify the regular patterns and mechanisms by which a bilingual perceives, stores, transforms, and transmits linguistic information from different systems [2, p. 150].

- Cultural-anthropological approach. It interprets every act of language choice as an important way of expressing the values of a particular sociocultural community or culture in general.

- Linguistic approach. It focuses on determining whether the process of code-switching follows certain regularities and to what extent these rules are universal or obligatory.

Interpretations of code-switching in scholarly literature vary. In a broad sense, CS is understood as the alternation of elements from two or more languages within a single communicative act. The vast majority of researchers define CS as the speaker's transition from one language (dialect, style) to another, depending on the communicative conditions [1, p. 8].

Sociolinguistics distinguishes two of the most common classifications of CS. The first, proposed by J. Fishman and J. Gumperz, differentiates between:

- Situational CS – the choice of a code or subcode depending on the type of situation (formal, informal, etc.);

- Metaphorical CS (according to J. Fishman) – not related to a complete change of situation, but to the alteration of its individual components (for instance, the topic of conversation) or the desire to overcome social-communicative barriers between interlocutors [3, p. 112].

Another classification belongs to C. Myers-Scotton – one of the most authoritative scholars in this field. She identifies the following types of CS considering the status of languages and the speaker's social position:

- Unmarked CS – occurs when the speaker adheres to the established norms of speech behavior in their community and switches according to the listener's expectations;

- Marked CS – occurs when the speaker deliberately violates usual communicative conventions, using another code to express a specific stance or emotional effect [2, p. 152].

Short English commands such as «*Contact left!*», «*Clear!*», «*Hold position!*» are often faster and clearer than their longer Ukrainian equivalents. This reduces the risk of delay at critical moments. Ukrainian soldiers are increasingly engaged in joint missions, training, and exercises at NATO training grounds. The use of mixed code facilitates communicative adaptation and enhances the effectiveness of international cooperation. Switching between formal language and informal slang helps foster a sense of unity and mutual support within a unit – a kind of «inner language» of brotherhood in arms.

A misunderstanding of terms or differences in the interpretation of commands can lead to disorganization. For instance, «*Clear!*» has different meanings in various command systems – «all clear» or «withdraw». Excessive language mixing may create confusion in internal documentation, reports, and radio communication. In standardized command systems, the unification of linguistic codes is essential. Soldiers who lack proficiency in English or certain slang expressions may feel isolated, which undermines cohesion and can negatively affect morale.

The optimal approach is to clearly define the contexts in which language switching is permitted:

- Official commands – in Ukrainian, according to the standards of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;

- International cooperation – in English, following NATO protocols;

- Informal communication – with acceptable elements of slang, as long as this does not affect discipline.

Thus, *code-switching* can serve as a tool of adaptation but requires linguistic awareness and proper regulation.

The phenomenon of *code-switching* in combat communication has a dual nature. On the one hand, it contributes to speed, international integration, and internal cohesion within the unit. On the other hand, it can cause dangerous misunderstandings at critical moments. Therefore, effective combat communication requires a combination of linguistic discipline, situational appropriateness, and psychological sensitivity to context.

Список використаних джерел

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