IJAAR PUBLISHING®

International Journal of Education and National Development | ISSN: 3027-0626
Vol. 4, Issue 2 (2026) | www.ijaar.org

CODE-SWITCHING AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AMONG HAUSA-ENGLISH-ARABIC TRILINGUAL SPEAKERS IN JIGAWA STATE: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study examined code-switching patterns and language attitudes among Hausa-English-Arabic trilingual speakers in Jigawa State, Nigeria, with a focus on sociolinguistic behaviour and educational implications. A mixed-methods design was adopted, integrating structured questionnaires (n = 120), semi-structured interviews (n = 20), classroom and community observations (48 sessions, 386 episodes documented), and document analysis. Participants were sampled across four institutional settings: a College of Education, senior secondary schools, Islamiyya and Quranic schools, and community gathering spaces. Findings from 386 observed code-switching episodes reveal that intra-sentential switching is the most common type (41%), that Hausa-English switching dominates in academic and community settings (54-71% of episodes), and that Hausa-Arabic switching is dominant in religious and Islamiyya settings (67-74%). Language attitude scores are positive toward all three languages across all participant groups (grand means: Hausa = 4.34, Arabic = 3.98, English = 3.58 on a 5-point scale), with Arabic receiving the highest scores among Quranic instructors (4.76) and Hausa receiving the highest overall endorsement. Religious identity (mean = 4.41) and domain of use (mean = 4.22) are the two strongest sociolinguistic motivating factors. Ninety-six percent of teachers and 88 percent of students endorse the need for professional training in multilingual classroom management. The study proposes a Multilingual Code Management Framework (MCMF) for Hausa-English-Arabic classroom instruction and offers evidence-based recommendations for language policy, curriculum design, and teacher education in Jigawa State.

Keywords: *Code-switching; language attitudes; trilingualism; Hausa; English; Arabic; multilingual education; Jigawa State; sociolinguistics; classroom interaction*

https://doi.org/10.46654/r7apdf67

1. INTRODUCTION

Jigawa State represents one of the most linguistically complex sociolinguistic environments in Nigeria, where three languages — Hausa, English, and Arabic — serve distinct but overlapping functions in the daily lives of millions of trilingual speakers. Hausa is the language of cultural identity and everyday solidarity; English is the language of formal education and socioeconomic advancement; and Arabic is the language of religious authority and Islamic scholarship. The coexistence of these three languages inevitably generates code-switching: the alternation between languages within communication that Myers-Scotton (1993) characterises as a pragmatic resource through which multilingual speakers signal relationships, identities, attitudes, and communicative intentions. Despite the prevalence and social significance of Hausa-English-Arabic code-switching in the region, empirical documentation of trilingual communication patterns and language attitudes in Jigawa State remains limited. Existing studies of code-switching in northern Nigeria focus predominantly on Hausa-English bilingual interaction, leaving a major gap in understanding how speakers manage all three languages simultaneously. This study fills that gap, generating the first systematic empirical dataset on Hausa-English-Arabic trilingual code-switching and language attitudes in Jigawa State and proposing a Multilingual Code Management Framework for classroom application.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Code-Switching: Theory and Functions

Code-switching is a sophisticated communicative practice through which multilingual speakers manage the complex demands of multilingual interaction. Myers-Scotton's (1993) Matrix Language Frame model distinguishes between the matrix language that provides grammatical structure and the embedded language contributing lexical items. Gumperz (1982) identified six conversational functions of code-switching: quotation, addressee specification, interjection, reiteration, message qualification, and personalisation. The present study extends this functional taxonomy to the trilingual Hausa-English-Arabic context, where the expression of religious quotation through Arabic constitutes a seventh major function not captured in Gumperz's original framework. Fishman's (1972) domain theory provides the complementary organisational framework, predicting that Arabic will dominate in religious settings, English in formal education, and Hausa across informal community settings — a prediction tested and confirmed by this study's data.

2.2 Language Attitudes and Multilingual Education

Gardner's (1985) social psychological model placed language attitudes at the centre of second language acquisition, distinguishing instrumental orientations (practical benefits) from integrative orientations (identification with speaker communities). Baker (2011) extended this analysis to multilingual contexts, showing that attitudes influence community-level patterns of language maintenance and shift. Ferguson (2003) and Setati et al. (2002) demonstrated that classroom code-switching, when purposefully managed, can facilitate comprehension, scaffold learning, and support participation without reducing target language development. The educational literature consistently identifies teacher training in multilingual classroom management as the critical missing ingredient between the potential of code-switching as a pedagogical resource and its effective deployment.

3. METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods research design was adopted, integrating quantitative questionnaires (DMLAQ, n = 120; Cronbach's alpha = .86), semi-structured interviews (n = 20), structured classroom and community observations (48 sessions; 386 episodes coded), and document analysis. Participants (N = 150) were selected through purposive and stratified sampling across four setting types: JSCELS Ringim (pre-service teachers and lecturers), senior secondary schools (students and teachers), Islamiyya and Quranic schools (instructors and students), and community gathering spaces (educated adults and general community members). Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (descriptive statistics; decision criterion: Mean 3.50 and above = positive attitude). Qualitative data underwent reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; inter-rater kappa = 0.84).

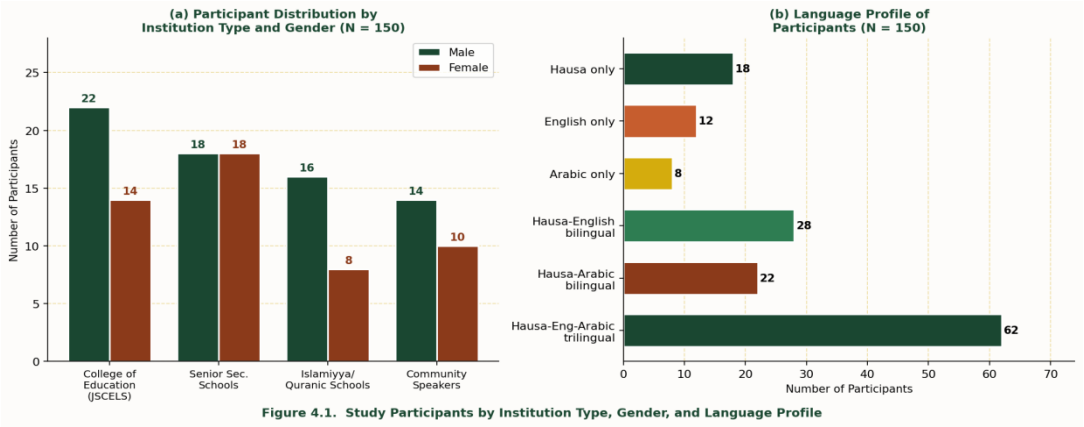


Figure 1. Participant distribution by institution type, gender, and language profile (N = 150).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Code-Switching Patterns (RQ1)

Figure 2 and Table 1 present the code-switching findings across 386 observed episodes.

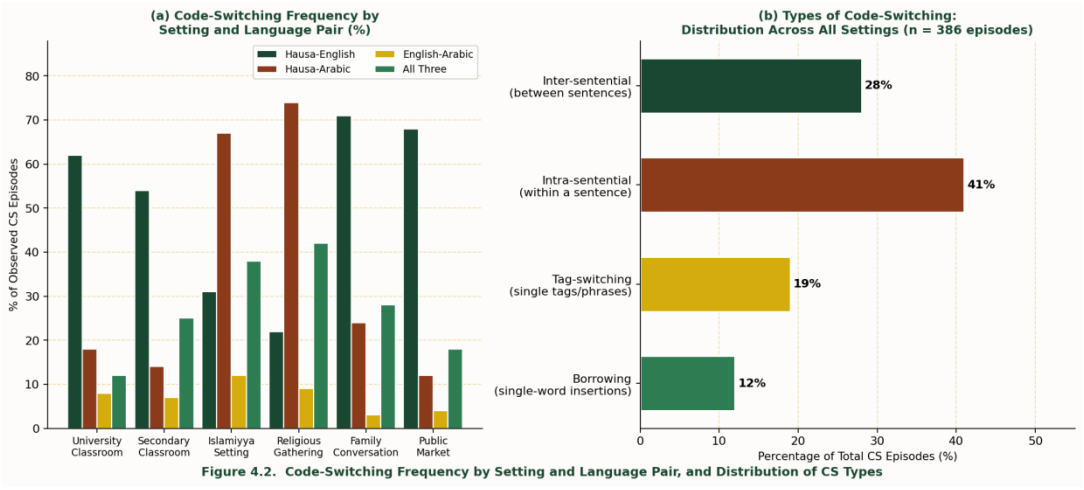


Figure 2. Code-switching frequency by setting and language pair (left); distribution of CS types (right).

Table 1 Types and Setting-Specific Patterns of Code-Switching (n = 386 observed episodes)

Category	n / %	Dominant setting	Dominant pair	Key finding
Intra-sentential switching	158 (41%)	Tertiary, secondary	Hausa-English	Most common type; requires highest multilingual competence
Inter-sentential switching	108 (28%)	All settings	Hausa-English	Structurally clearest type; common across formal and informal settings
Tag-switching	73 (19%)	Religious/Islamiyya	Hausa-Arabic	Arabic prayer formulae as tags in Hausa discourse; high in religious settings
Single-word borrowing	47 (12%)	All settings	Arabic into Hausa	Arabic religious and Islamic Studies vocabulary most commonly inserted

Note. Hausa-English switching dominates academic and community settings (54-71%). Hausa-Arabic switching dominates Islamiyya and religious settings (67-74%). All-three-language switching highest in religious gatherings (42%). Source: Observation records, 2025-2026.

The dominance of intra-sentential switching (41%) confirms that participants are genuinely trilingual: intra-sentential switching requires sufficient proficiency in two languages to combine their grammatical systems within a single sentence, the most demanding criterion of multilingual competence. The setting-specific language pair patterns confirm Fishman's (1972) domain theory: Hausa-English dominates secular educational and community settings whilst Hausa-Arabic dominates religious institutional settings. Crucially, the higher proportion of three-language switching in Islamiyya settings (38%) and religious gatherings (42%) compared to secular educational settings (12-25%) identifies these hybrid educational-religious spaces as the most linguistically complex in the study region, a finding with direct implications for teacher training at institutions serving both formal and Islamic educational traditions.

4.2 Language Attitudes (RQ2)

Figure 3 and Table 2 present the language attitude findings across participant groups.

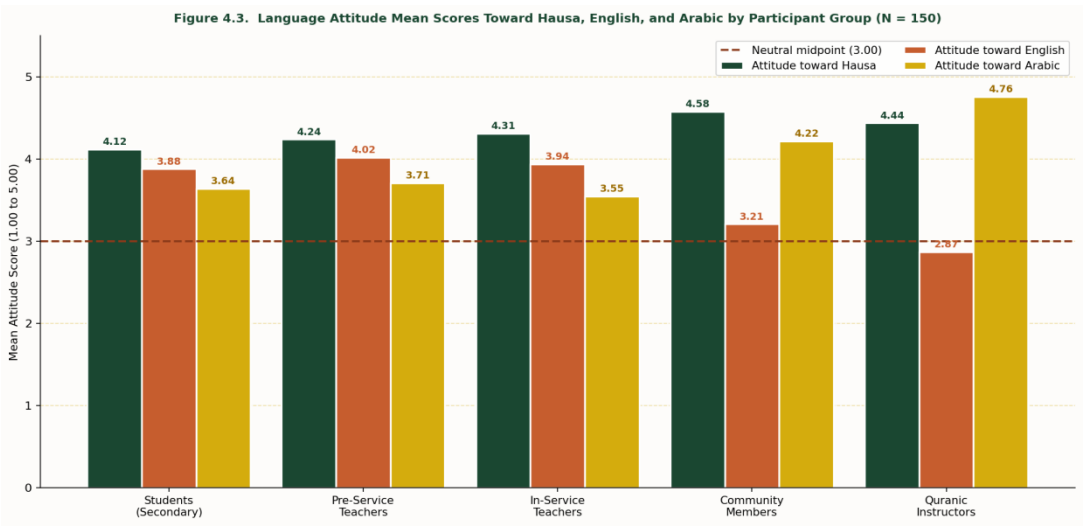


Figure 3. Language attitude mean scores toward Hausa, English, and Arabic by participant group (N = 150).

Table 2 Language Attitude Mean Scores by Participant Group (5-point Likert scale, N = 150)

Participant Group	Hausa	English	Arabic	Notable pattern
Secondary school students	4.12	3.88	3.64	All three positively endorsed; Hausa highest; Arabic via religious identity
Pre-service teachers	4.24	4.02	3.71	Highest English endorsement among all groups
In-service teachers	4.31	3.94	3.55	Experienced teachers show strongest overall Hausa endorsement
Community members	4.58	3.21	4.22	Strong Hausa and Arabic; lower English as less relevant to daily life
Quranic/Islamiyya instructors	4.44	2.87	4.76	Highest Arabic in full corpus; English approaches neutral threshold
Grand mean	4.34	3.58	3.98	All three positively endorsed across all groups; Hausa consistently highest

Note. Decision criterion: Mean 3.50 and above = positive attitude; 2.50-3.49 = neutral; below 2.50 = negative. All values above 2.50; no group holds a clearly negative attitude toward any language. Source: DMLAQ Section C, 2025-2026.

All participant groups hold clearly positive attitudes toward all three languages, a finding that provides an important attitudinal foundation for multilingual pedagogical development. The divergence between the Quranic instructors' exceptional Arabic endorsement (4.76) and their comparatively modest English endorsement (2.87 — the only score approaching the neutral threshold in the entire dataset) documents the religious-cultural prestige of Arabic in this group at a level that exceeds its instrumental value, consistent with Omoniyi's (2004) account

of identity-driven language valorisation in Nigerian religious communities. This finding extends Gardner's (1985) instrumental-integrative framework by identifying a third attitude dimension — religious-cultural prestige — that is particularly salient for Arabic in Muslim-majority multilingual communities. The near-universal positive endorsement of Hausa (grand mean 4.34, highest of the three languages) is consistent with its status as the primary marker of cultural identity and community solidarity across all participant groups, confirming Baker's (2011) argument that integrative attitudes toward a community's heritage language typically exceed its instrumental value ratings.

4.3 Sociolinguistic Factors and CS Functions (RQ3)

Figure 4 presents the functional and motivational findings.

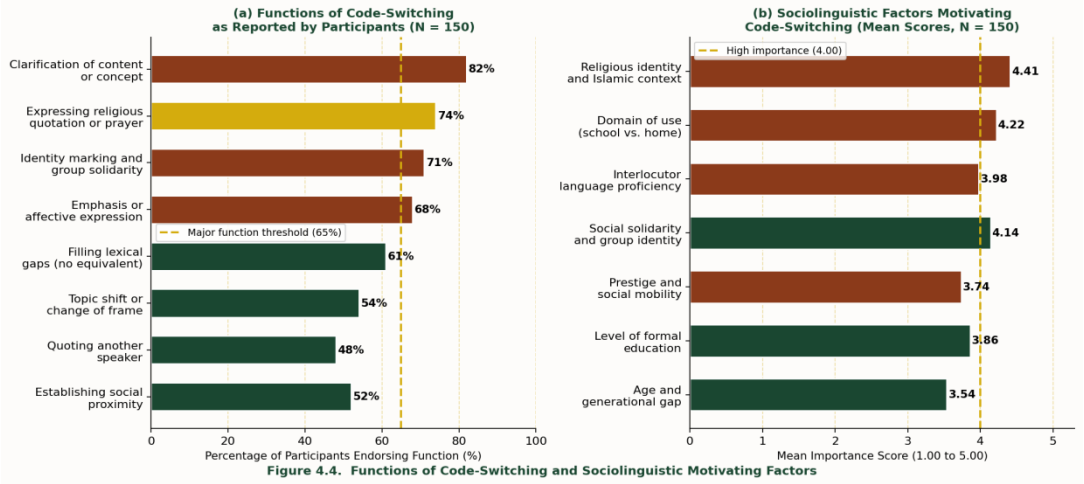


Figure 4. Functions of code-switching (left) and sociolinguistic motivating factors (right).

Religious identity and Islamic context (mean = 4.41) is the most powerful motivating factor, followed by domain of use (4.22) and social solidarity (4.14). The functions data confirm the theoretical primacy of content clarification (82%) and religious expression (74%) as the two principal purposes for which speakers switch codes. The high endorsement of religious expression as a code-switching function establishes Arabic not merely as one of three languages in a neutral trilingual repertoire but as the marked code for a specific and culturally indispensable communicative function — the authentic expression of Islamic identity, prayer, and scholarship — that has no equivalent in either Hausa or English. This finding has direct implications for the MCMF: any framework for classroom code management in Jigawa State must explicitly account for Arabic's religious-expressive function as a driver of code-switching that cannot be managed away through domain restriction or purposeful switching policy.

4.4 Educational Implications and the MCMF (RQ4)

Figure 5 presents the Multilingual Code Management Framework.

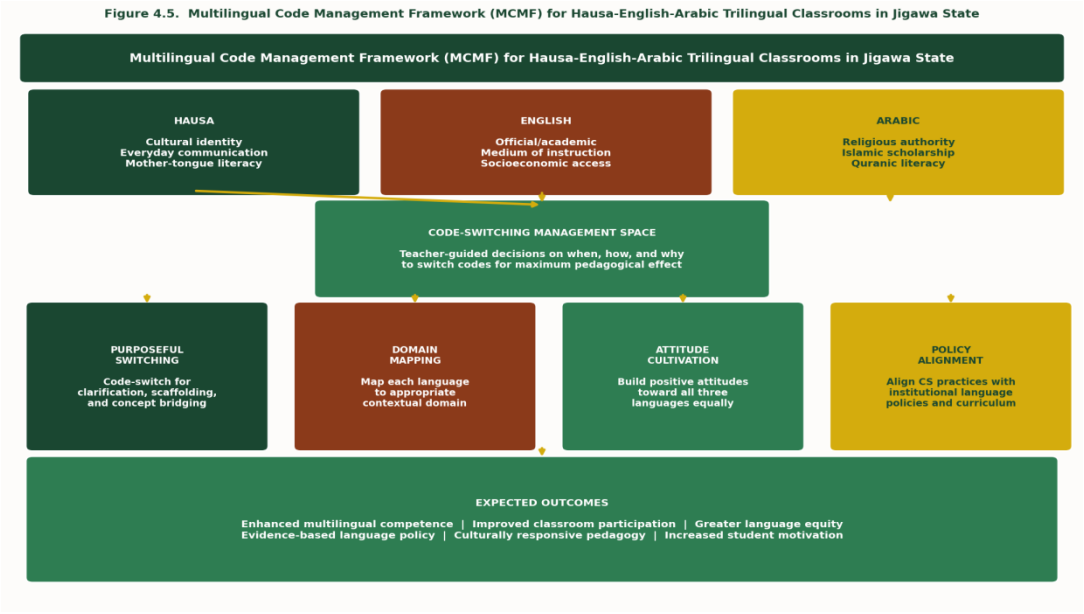


Figure 5. Multilingual Code Management Framework (MCMF) for Hausa-English-Arabic classroom instruction.

Table 3 Teacher and Student Perceptions of Code-Switching as a Pedagogical Tool (N = 100)

Perception Item	Teacher M	Teacher %Agr.	Student %Agr.	Implication
CS helps students understand difficult concepts	4.12	92%	88%	Consensus on CS as comprehension scaffold
CS reduces student anxiety in class	3.88	82%	78%	Affective benefits strongly endorsed
CS should be guided, not restricted	3.74	76%	72%	Both groups prefer managed over prohibited CS
Teachers need multilingual classroom training	4.34	96%	88%	Community mandate for professional development

Note. M = mean score on 5-point scale (teachers only). %Agr. = combined Agree and Strongly Agree. Source: DMLAQ Section D and interview data, 2025-2026.

The near-universal call for multilingual classroom training (96% of teachers, 88% of students) is the most policy-urgent finding of this study. It represents a community mandate — endorsed by both the providers and the recipients of education — for evidence-based guidance on multilingual classroom management that is not currently being provided by institutional policy or teacher education curricula. The MCMF responds to this mandate through four management strategies grounded in this study's empirical findings. Purposeful

Switching directs teachers to switch for the two most widely endorsed classroom functions identified in the data: content clarification (82%) and anxiety reduction (endorsed by 82% of teachers). Domain Mapping formalises the domain-specific language allocation that Fishman's (1972) theory predicts and this study's domain use data confirm. Attitude Cultivation leverages the positive language attitude landscape documented across all participant groups by explicitly framing each language in terms of its distinct social value. Policy Alignment ensures that individual teacher code management decisions are embedded within institutional frameworks that legitimate and support multilingual pedagogy.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides the first systematic empirical analysis of Hausa-English-Arabic trilingual code-switching and language attitudes in Jigawa State, generating five principal findings. First, code-switching in the study region is purposeful, functionally structured, and setting-specific: intra-sentential switching dominates, Hausa-English switching dominates secular settings, and Hausa-Arabic switching dominates religious institutional settings. Second, positive language attitudes toward all three languages are near-universal, with Hausa receiving the highest cultural identity endorsement, Arabic receiving the highest religious-cultural prestige endorsement among Quranic instructors, and English receiving the highest instrumental value endorsement among pre-service teachers. Third, religious identity and domain of use are the two most powerful sociolinguistic motivating factors, confirming both Gumperz's (1982) interactional framework and Fishman's (1972) domain theory in the Jigawa State context. Fourth, content clarification and religious expression are the two most widely endorsed code-switching functions, establishing the classroom and the mosque as the primary settings for purposeful language alternation. Fifth, both teachers and students overwhelmingly endorse the need for professional training in multilingual classroom management, representing a clear community mandate for the evidence-based guidance that the MCMF provides.

Four recommendations emerge. First, NCCE should mandate multilingual classroom management training as a component of NCE Hausa and Arabic language teacher preparation, using the MCMF as a curriculum framework. Second, the Jigawa State Ministry of Education should develop a formal multilingual classroom language policy that legitimates purposeful code-switching and provides explicit guidance for teachers. Third, JSCELS Ringim should establish a Multilingual Education Research Unit to develop MCMF training materials, deliver professional development workshops, and extend the empirical research base of this study through follow-on investigations. Fourth, secondary school and Islamiyya school administrators should adopt the MCMF as a framework for internal professional development, tailoring the four management strategies to the specific institutional language norms and community values of their settings.

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