Research Article

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Reframing Code-Switching in Anglo-French Humour: A Genre-Based Comparative Study

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Abstract: Code-switching plays a central role in bilingual humour, generating comedic effects through language alternation. Anglo-French bilingual humour remains an under-researched field compared to other language pairs that have gained worldwide recognition. This research investigates how code-switching functions differ across three genres of Anglo-French bilingual humour: a comedy film, a stand-up performance, and a collection of bilingual jokes. A two-phase analytical approach was employed to explore how genre-specific conventions shape the use and purpose of code-switching. Each instance of code-switching was first assigned a single primary communicative function. Then, the frequency and distribution of these functions across the three genres were determined. The findings showed that code-switching in the comedy film appeared most frequently for expressive purposes along with referential and directive uses. The stand-up performance displayed a more balanced distribution with a notably high percentage of metalinguistic and phatic functions compared to the film. In contrast, the jokes overwhelmingly featured the poetic function of code-switching. These results demonstrate that communicative functions of code-switching are shaped by genre-specific goals and constraints. The study argues that functional models of code-switching, while useful for categorisation, should be extended to include genre as a predictive and explanatory component.

Keywords: bilingual humour; communicative functions; comic literature

1 Introduction

Based on a modern understanding, humour can be defined as “the ability to smile and laugh, and to make others do so,” a quality that manifests in forms ranging from a simple joke to a sophisticated Shakespearean comedy (Walker 1998, p. 3). Humour is a nearly universal aspect of human life (Jiang et al. 2019). It is a common component of daily interactions as individuals encounter humorous instances multiple times throughout a typical day (Martin and Ford 2018, p. 30). However, although humour exists in virtually every society (Fry 1994), the ways in which it is expressed and the social circumstances which are appropriate for its use are shaped by cultural norms and expectations (Martin and Ford 2018, p. 30).

Humour is a highly complex phenomenon, serving various social, psychological, and communicative functions. The social functions of humour are twofold. First, humour facilitates intra-group communication and helps individuals to become acquainted. Second, it acts as a crucial tool for alleviating societal issues, serving as a social corrective (Ziv 2009). Examples of humour’s psychological functions include its ability to evoke positive emotions, positively impact personal growth, reduce tension, and help individuals to cope with difficult situations (Martin 2007, p. 15). The communicative functions of humour can be evaluated under four headings: identification (easing communication between people and creating a warm relationship between speaker and listener), clarification (conveying complex ideas in a more understandable and memorable way),

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enforcement (gently criticising inappropriate behaviour), and differentiation (highlighting differences between people, groups, or ideas) (Meyer 2000). However, apart from such a benign characterisation of humour, there can be found aggressive humour (criticising or disparaging others through sarcasm, ridicule, or mockery) and self-defeating humour (using self-disparaging jokes to gain social acceptance or hide underlying negative feelings), too (Martin et al. 2003).

Given its many different functions, humour is a multidisciplinary field. Therefore, it has been studied by multiple disciplines, including sociology, literature, psychology, and linguistics (Mulder and Nijholt 2002, p. 3). Sociology explores the social functions of humour; literature analyses the use of comedic genres and devices like satire and irony for social commentary; psychology examines the mental and emotional processes required to understand and experience humour; and linguistics investigates many aspects of humour, such as the linguistic structures of jokes and how humour utilises language (Taghiyev and Jahangirli 2024, pp. 101-102).

Linguistics plays a special role in humour studies. The study of humour from a linguistic perspective dates back to the time of Plato and Aristotle. In its early stages, linguistic scholars focused mainly on wordplay, considered a linguistic issue, while the semantic aspect of humour remained largely overlooked for a long time (Attardo 2017; Jabeen et al. 2023). The study of the semantic aspects of humour is associated with scholars like Attardo and Raskin (Mulder and Nijholt 2002, p. 10). Although research on monolingual humour has produced significant results, bilingual humour studies have also become essential for academic investigation. This reflects the fact that the growing prevalence of bilingualism and biculturalism in society has made them the main subject of interest for researchers from different domains (Benet-Martínez et al. 2006). This focus is likely due to the rise of bilingual populations and the acceleration of language mixing. This trend represents not merely a linguistic redistribution, but an absolute increase: the majority of the world's population is already multilingual (Marian and Shook 2012), and this figure continues to rise with ongoing globalisation and immigration (Schroeder et al. 2017).

Examples of bilingual humour include humorous anecdotes created using two different languages or the funny situations that arise in such contexts (El-Dakhs et al. 2024; Ozfidan 2021). This type of humour may result from either accidental errors or intentional wordplay. Accidental bilingual humour occurs when individuals who know two languages interpret a word from one language through the lens of the other, resulting in a misunderstanding. Intentional bilingual humour, on the other hand, is achieved through various means, such as puns that rely on intentionally mixing words from different languages (Vaid 2006, pp. 156-158).

Bilingual wordplay is a highly purposeful linguistic phenomenon, as it uses similar-sounding words from different languages to activate two semantic fields simultaneously (Ahmad et al. 2024; Mahmood et al. 2025). Its humorous effect can be achieved in several ways. The most fundamental method relies on the phonetic or semantic commonality between individual words across languages. A more structurally complex form of this kind of humour, however, involves adapting commonly known expressions, such as proverbs and common sayings, by substituting a keyword with a similar-sounding one from another language. While bilingual wordplay is common in private interactions between bilinguals, in more public forms of bilingual humour, such as those found in media, advertising, or literature, for the wordplay to be successful and accessible to a wider audience, the elements borrowed from the other language must be sufficiently familiar to that intended audience (El-Dakhs et al. 2020; Stefanowitsch 2002).

The most significant linguistic phenomenon in the creation of bilingual humour and wordplay is code-switching. This study adopts a functional definition of code-switching, which describes it as the juxtaposition of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems within the same exchange (Gumperz 1982). Moreover, the term 'functional' is used in the discourse-pragmatic sense, referring to the communicative roles that code-switching serves in interaction, such as signalling stance, emphasis, humour, or topic management. The analysis adopts a discourse-functional approach that treats code-switching as a resource for constructing meaning and managing interpersonal relations rather than as a purely structural phenomenon. This perspective allows the study to examine how genre shapes and constrains the pragmatic functions that code-switching can perform. While there is much research on code-switching in bilingual humour, this paper addresses a key gap in bilingual humour studies: the literature has largely overlooked how the functions of code-switching vary systematically across different genres.

Therefore, this paper makes a dual contribution. Primarily, it argues that a genre-based analysis is essential for a complete understanding of how bilingual humour operates. Secondarily, by demonstrating that genre conventions systematically predict the distribution of these functions, this study also refines and extends the very functional models of code-switching. By comparing a film, a stand-up performance and jokes, this study demonstrates that the communicative purpose of code-switching is fundamentally shaped by the conventions of the genre in which it appears. Moreover, even though previous studies have examined humour in other bilingual contexts, Anglo-French bilingual humour remains a relatively unexplored field. To the best of our knowledge, the existing research about bilingual humour has primarily studied more globally dominant language pairs, but have disregarded the unique sociolinguistic characteristics of Anglo-French bilingual settings. First, the prestige balance between English and French differs from other studied language pairs because both languages maintain high institutional status worldwide. This symmetry suggests that code-switching in this context may serve functions beyond simple accommodation, such as cultural parody or the performance of a cosmopolitan identity. Second, the long-standing cultural competition and mutual influence between Anglophone and Francophone nations have developed extensive shared stereotypes which serve as a rich source for humorous observations. Third, the particular conflict about "Franglais" together with French institutional language preservation efforts produces a distinctive environment for metalinguistic humour which differs from other language combinations. This article investigates code-switching in three Anglo-French bilingual humorous genres through a comparative study of a comedy film, a stand-up performance, and a joke collection. This study examines how genre influences the functional ecology of code-mixing by shaping the range of discourse functions that speakers can utilize. The findings show that genre operates as a contextual variable influencing the communicative value of code-switching rather than as a predictive determinant. The research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

(1) What are the dominant communicative functions of code-switching in each genre of Anglo-French humour?
(2) How does genre influence the distribution and purpose of code-switching functions?
(3) What do these patterns reveal about the interaction between language, humour, and audience across different comedic formats?

2 Previous Research on Functional Approaches to Code-Switching

2.1 Code and Code-Switching

A code is usually defined as "a system of rules which enables us to transmit information in symbolic form." Human language also operates as a form of code according to this definition (Rzayev et al. 2019, p. 229). The definition of code varies among sociologists and sociolinguists, some of whom adopt a narrower interpretation of the term. Their definition of code refers to communication methods that can be understood by only specific social groups (Crystal 2008, p. 83).

In general, code-switching means "the shifting by speakers between one dialect or language and another" (Rzayev et al. 2019, p. 230). Bilingual or multilingual speakers employ conversational code-switching by using different languages throughout the same conversation. People using conversational code-switching change between two distinct grammar systems (Gumperz 1982, p. 59). A crucial distinction must be made regarding the complexity of code-switching (Chakraborty 2021). Though simple lexical switches do not require advanced proficiency, more structurally complex forms, such as integrating different language structures within a single sentence, can be regarded as evidence of high bilingual competence, since it requires a mastery of both grammatical systems. Such kind of proficiency of bilingual individuals both draws academic interest and creates public misunderstandings and debates. Experts interpret code-switching as evidence of strong bilingual abilities, yet many people incorrectly believe it indicates poor language use (Bullock & Toribio 2009, p. 1; Imran and Ain 2019).

2.2 Functions of Code-Switching

People switch between languages for various purposes. Sometimes, people opt to change the tone of the conversation to fit a particular social setting. Other times, they may continue switching to ensure the conversation is not linked to a particular context (Romaine 2000, p. 60). To explain such behaviour, different functional typologies of code-switching have been proposed by many scholars (e.g., Appel and Muysken 1987; Gumperz 1982; Hoffmann 1991). Among these, the most widely used framework of conversational functions of code-switching was proposed by Gumperz (1982, pp. 75-84).

Based on Gumperz's (1982) model, code-switching can serve several specific functions, including: *quotation* (repeating the words or ideas of another person to signal a change in voice or source), *addressee specification* (directing a message to a specific person), *interjection* (using short phrases or exclamations), *reiteration* (repeating a message for emphasis or clarification), *message qualification* (adding details, elaborations, or comments), and *personalisation versus objectivisation* (signaling the speaker's personal or distant stance). The last function is highly abstract and heavily dependent on sociolinguistic context. For instance, a *quotation* is a quote, and an *interjection* is an exclamation; thus, they are tied to clear and observable actions. *Personalisation versus objectivisation*, however, is about the speaker's internal stance, their psychological and social positioning relative to their message. In this case, code-switching often concerns how personal or distant the speaker wants to sound. Even though Gumperz admitted that his model was not comprehensive, his explanation of the reasons for language switching in conversation was an important new way of approaching the topic (Mahootian 2006, p. 516). Gumperz's framework was groundbreaking for situating code-switching as a meaningful, strategic discourse tool. Nevertheless, its strength (i.e. a close focus on spontaneous conversation) is also a limitation. Its categories are less suited for analysing planned or creative texts, and the abstract nature of functions like "personalisation" can present challenges for consistent classification.

Later, Auer (1984) elaborated on similar ideas through the framework of conversation analysis, and Appel and Muysken (1987) employed a model based on the earlier work of Jakobson (1960) and Halliday et al. (1964) (Mahootian 2006, p. 516). According to Appel and Muysken's (1987) model, there are six code-switching functions: referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic. The *referential function* emerges when speakers use different languages because they lack specific vocabulary, or a concept can be more effectively conveyed through one language over another. The referential function is the most commonly reported one by bilingual speakers who employ language switching for convenience or accuracy purposes, and it appears most frequently in topic-related switching. The *directive function* enables speakers to address hearers more directly by including specific people through their native language or by excluding others from comprehending the exchange. The *expressive function* allows speakers to convey their dual identity through code-switching, as this technique demonstrates membership in several cultural or linguistic communities. In these situations, the practice of language switching becomes an integral part of the communication style. The *phatic function* serves to indicate a change in tone or discussion direction, most commonly observed in humour, when a linguistic variety change signals a conclusion or a comment about the exchange. The *metalinguistic function* consists of commenting on language or presenting language abilities through examples, such as in sales or performance settings where bilingualism serves an artistic purpose. The *poetic function* describes the aesthetic usage of multiple languages in creative works, such as puns, rhymes, or multilingual poetic compositions to enhance artistic and stylistic expression.

The model of Appel and Muysken (1987) offers two distinct advantages. First, its categories are more clearly delineated. Thus, it facilitates more reliable analysis. Second, and crucially for this study, its inclusion of the poetic function provides an indispensable tool for analysing humorous wordplay, an area less explicitly covered by Gumperz (1982).

Hoffmann (1991, pp. 115-117) expanded on these frameworks by identifying various communicative purposes for code-switching, such as discussing a particular topic, quoting someone, emphasising a point, or making interjections. It is also used for repeating information to make it more understandable, expressing group identity, or helping the listener to understand better. Furthermore, speakers can switch languages to either soften or

strengthen their requests or commands, fill in the gaps where there is no exact translation, or exclude certain people from a conversation meant for a particular audience.

Hoffmann's (1991) list of communicative purposes is largely compatible with the previous models. For instance, Hoffmann's "quoting someone" and "making interjections" map directly onto Gumperz's categories, while "expressing group identity" aligns with Appel and Muysken's (1987) expressive function. This demonstrates a broad consensus on the types of functions code-switching can serve. Despite this consensus, these foundational theories share a significant limitation: they are primarily descriptive typologies, one that extends earlier functional frameworks by integrating genre-based contextual constraints into speakers' individual communicative choices. They provide a comprehensive list of what functions are possible, but they do not offer a systematic framework for explaining or predicting why certain functions will be dominant in a specific context. They do not adequately theorise how macro-level contextual factors constrain micro-level linguistic choices. This is the critical inadequacy this paper addresses. The central argument is that genre is a primary constraining force. The communicative goals, audience expectations, and structural conventions of a genre (e.g., a film, a stand-up routine, a joke) create a distinct "functional economy" where some code-switching functions are privileged and others are marginalised. The existing theories are not wrong, but they are insufficient because they lack this predictive, genre-based component. Therefore, this study will employ Appel and Muysken's (1987) robust framework not to simply categorise switches, but to demonstrate how the distribution of its functions is systematically determined by genre. The implication for code-switching theory is that genre should be incorporated as a central variable. This study argues that genre does not predict code-switching functions but rather constrains their functional ecology. Each genre sets particular communicative purposes and interactional norms that shape how code-switching is used. For example, communal humour tends to foreground creativity and solidarity, whereas classroom and online discourse often highlight clarification, stance-taking, or audience alignment. Thus, genre defines the contextual boundaries within which code-switching performs its discourse-pragmatic roles.

2.3 Code-switching in Humorous Discourse

Research has demonstrated that code-switching extends beyond communicative and identity-related functions, playing a meaningful role in the generation of humour (Cortés-Conde and Boxer 2002; Jaworska 2014; Salem et al. 2020; Sarkar and Siraj 2022; Siegel 1995). Multilingual communities often use code-switching to create a humorous effect. In Norway, for instance, the use of Standard Norwegian remains limited when children tell jokes through their native dialect, while Paraguayan speakers use Guaraní instead of Spanish for their comedic stories. The humorous quality of code-switching stems from either cultural associations or the social incongruity of language change. The use of Hindi by Fijians in an unexpected manner results in humour because this choice stands out as a socially marked behaviour (Holmes 2013, p. 39). These examples show that code-switching generates humorous effects depending on specific social circumstances and are embedded in local sociolinguistic realities. The examples also produce important questions regarding the strategic use of code-switching by comedians to create laughter in different cultures and comedic genres.

Several scholars have studied the comedic usage of code-switching in films and television series. Arrizki et al. (2020), in their analysis of the multilingual comedy film "Tokyo Fiancée," found that French dominated among the three languages used, namely Japanese, French, and English. The study demonstrated the presence of multilingualism in film comedy but failed to analyse the functions of code-switching and the specific ways it generates comedic effects. In contrast, the research by Ningsih and Setiawan (2021) into the comedy film *Yowis Ben* delivered detailed findings about how code-switching functions to create humour alongside respect, clarification, and information delivery. Their study confirmed that humour derives not only from language play but also from shifts in the social context of the conversation, such as when a speaker suddenly violates formal speech conventions by switching to a more informal tone or style. Mohd Subkhi and Hani Shaari (2022) applied this functional approach to examine the Malaysian educational comedy series *Oh My English!* Through their analysis of code-switching, which served multiple functions like repetition, interjection, and lexical need. Their work provided essential evidence that code-switching performs various functions in comedic media. However, none of these studies

considered bilingual humour in Europe, nor did they examine English-French code-switching, leaving a gap that this current paper seeks to address.

The nature of stand-up comedy, which demands immediate interaction with the audience, makes it an ideal setting for studying code-switching functions. Comedians make their language choices based on audience expectations, topic requirements, and the wider social context, according to Nadia (2014). From this perspective, comedians deliberately use code-switching as a specific rhetorical tactic to emphasise comedic points. However, Palani and Bakar (2023) challenged this perspective through their examination of Harith Iskander's performances, since they suggested that code-switching mostly occurred unconsciously. Similarly, Al-Quran (2022) researched Jordanian stand-up comedy and found that code-switching produced humour while also showing national diversity and allowing comedians to connect with diverse audience groups. These studies indicate that stand-up comedians use code-switching in various ways. However, none explicitly address bilingual Anglo-French performances – again highlighting a gap that this study aims to address.

Another major branch of research examines bilingual puns, which derive their comedic effect from similarities between words and sounds in different languages. Stefanowitsch (2002) analysed German-English puns and concluded that code-switching promotes creative meaning construction, especially when English acts as a tool for lexical innovation beyond its primary role as a means of communication. His study revealed that puns depend on the ambiguity that exists between languages. This view was supported by Peng et al. (2023) through their study of Chinese-English puns in Guangzhou. They demonstrated that bilingual puns function through phonetic play in public space as evidence of widespread sociolinguistic awareness among local speakers. The research showed that bilingual exposure enables linguistic creativity, which becomes the foundation for humour through code-switching. Leeds (1992) studied Anglo-French bilingual humour in jokes and sketches by developing categories that included Franglais, literal translations, and language errors. His study was one of the few investigations demonstrating how bilingual humour depends on cultural identity and national stereotypes to create both linguistic and social effects.

Previous studies on code-switching in comedy have focused mainly on particular linguistic contexts, such as Asian or Middle Eastern settings and specific comedic genres. Few have attempted a comparative genre analysis, and even fewer have examined the particular case of Anglo-French code-switching in humour across multiple mediums. The current article aims to address this gap by conducting a comparative study of the functions of code-switching in Anglo-French comedy across three distinct genres: stand-up comedy, film comedy, and bilingual jokes. Through this examination, the paper seeks to demonstrate the influence of genre-specific conventions on code-switching functions.

3 Methodology

3.1 Overview

This study employed a two-phase analytical approach to examine genre-specific tendencies of communicative functions of code-switching in Anglo-French bilingual humour. In the first phase, qualitative content analysis was used to classify and interpret each instance of code-switching according to its communicative function. In the second phase, the results of this qualitative coding were quantified using descriptive statistics. Specifically, the frequency and percentage of each function were calculated and compared across the three genres to identify genre-specific trends and contrasts.

To investigate the influence of genre on the functions of code-switching, this study used a comparative case study design. This approach was deliberately chosen to analyse three distinct genres whose unique conventions and contexts provide a clear contrast for understanding functional distribution. The three cases were selected to represent a spectrum of interactional and narrative contexts within Anglo-French humour. By systematically comparing the functional distribution of code-switching across these three intentionally contrasted cases, this research can isolate the variable of genre and provide robust evidence for its influence. The analysis focuses

specifically on communal humour in public or semi-public contexts, rather than private humour between individual interlocutors.

3.2 Data Collection

Three primary sources supplied the corpus of the study: the bilingual comedy film "Bon Cop, Bad Cop" (Canuel 2006), the stand-up show "#Franglais" (Paul Taylor 2020), and a collection of 47 Anglo-French bilingual jokes.

The bilingual comedy film served as the first source for this study. This film gained widespread popularity in mainstream culture, using code-switching as a core element throughout its character interactions. "Bon Cop, Bad Cop" (Canuel 2006) is deeply embedded in the Canadian context of institutional bilingualism. The film's plot revolves around a forced partnership between a Francophone detective from Québec and an Anglophone detective from Ontario. The code-switching here is integral to the narrative and character development, reflecting the real-world political, cultural and linguistic tensions between Canada's two founding language communities. The humour arises from the characters navigating their shared national identity as linguistic and cultural "insiders" who are nonetheless divided by stereotypes and language barriers.

The stand-up comedy show served as the second source because of its specific focus on bilingual humour and its audience-driven performance structure. The stand-up show "#Franglais" (Paul Taylor 2020) represents the European context from an expatriate perspective. Paul Taylor is a British comedian who lives in Paris and performs primarily for a French audience who are proficient in English. His identity as a cultural "outsider" is the engine of his comedy. His code-switching is highly self-conscious as he discusses the French language and Parisian customs from the viewpoint of an Englishman. The humour's function is rooted in this outsider-insider dynamic of affectionate critique, a sociolinguistic situation entirely different from the Canadian one.

The third source comprised 47 Anglo-French bilingual jokes that were obtained from social media platforms, online humour websites, and bilingual joke compilations. This informal, user-generated genre was included to examine typical code-switching patterns in bilingual jokes. The authors of these jokes are unknown. This anonymity is a defining characteristic of this folk genre. Unlike the film or the stand-up show, these jokes are not anchored to a specific performer's identity, a narrative plot or a live audience interaction. This lack of social and narrative context has a direct impact on the function of code-switching. Because the humour cannot be generated through character interaction or direct address, it must be generated internally.

The chosen materials displayed code-switching in bilingual humour across three different settings: written cinematic dialogue, live performance, and casual online content.

3.3 Data Transcription and Compilation

All spoken content from the film and the stand-up performance underwent manual transcription, preserving linguistic elements and contextual details. The transcriptions included timestamps and contextual notes to maintain conversational flow.

The jokes were already in written form prior to a preliminary evaluation conducted to validate their inclusion. A selection criterion limited the study to jokes that used code-switching as their core creative or humorous technique while excluding jokes that only referenced bilingualism without involving actual code-switching.

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data proceeded in two stages.

3.4.1 Qualitative Classification of Code-Switching Functions

The analysis began with the identification of code-switching instances. The identified instances of code-switching were analysed to determine their communicative functions based on Appel and Muysken's (1987) framework. The selection of this framework was a deliberate methodological choice. While other models exist, this functional framework was chosen for three key reasons. First, its focus on communicative functions directly aligns with the research questions of this study. Second, its comprehensive set of six functions is well-suited for analysing the diverse uses of code-switching across the different genres of film, stand-up, and jokes. In particular, the inclusion of the poetic function was indispensable for analysing the bilingual wordplay that is central to the joke collection. Finally, employing a single, coherent framework was essential for ensuring methodological consistency, allowing for a reliable and direct comparison of the frequency of functions across the three genres.

Each code-switching occurrence was evaluated by assigning it a single primary communicative function. During the classification of all code-switching instances, a detailed coding manual was first developed with explicit definitions and examples for each of the six functions from Appel and Muysken's (1987) framework in order to ensure consistency and mitigate potential bias. The entire corpus was then coded in separate rounds by the different researchers so as to benefit from researcher triangulation. The results of the rounds were compared, and any discrepancies were re-evaluated to arrive at a final, consistent classification.

While acknowledging that a single instance of code-switching can serve multiple functions simultaneously, for the purpose of quantitative comparison within and between genres, a single primary function was assigned to each instance. The primary function was determined by evaluating which role was most central to the immediate communicative goal of the utterance within its context. For example, if a switch served both to introduce a specific cultural term (referential) and to express bilingual identity (expressive), it was coded as expressive if the emotional tone was the most salient feature of the utterance, and as referential if the precision of the term was the main goal.

No instance of code-switching was analysed in isolation. The determination of a function was fundamentally context-dependent. The analysis relied on a close reading of the surrounding dialogue, the relationship between the speakers and the specific objective of an utterance. The contextual notes and timestamps gathered during the transcription phase were essential to this interpretive process, which ensured that each classification was grounded in the specific interaction in which it occurred.

3.4.2 Quantitative Analysis of Code-Switching Function Frequencies Across Genres

In the second stage, a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of each communicative function across film comedy, stand-up comedy and jokes. Frequency counts (f) and percentages (%) were calculated for each genre to examine the distribution of each communicative function.

3.5 Limitations

This paper has certain limitations. The analysis only examined a single film, a single stand-up performance, and a limited collection of jokes, which might not encompass the complete range of Anglo-French bilingual humour. Future studies should develop the corpus by including additional spontaneous spoken data, online media content, and various comedic formats to better analyse bilingual language usage patterns. Furthermore, a significant challenge during the analysis was the multifunctionality of language; a single instance of code-switching can sometimes serve two or more purposes simultaneously. To facilitate a quantitative comparison across genres, this study made the methodological decision to assign a single primary function to each instance. This process was inherently subjective, as it relied on the researchers' interpretation to determine which function was most salient in a given context.

4 Findings

4.1 Overview of Code-Switching Patterns

Code-switching occurred 141 times in the three chosen sources. It occurred most frequently in the stand-up performance, with 54 instances, followed by 47 in the bilingual joke collection and 40 in the comedy film. Every code-switching instance was analysed using the functional typology developed by Appel and Muysken (1987). Table 1 demonstrates the distribution of code-switching functions through their frequencies and percentages across the three genres.

As Table 1 indicates, code-switching functions in the comedy film appeared most frequently for expressive purposes along with referential and directive uses. The stand-up performance displayed a more balanced distribution with a notably high percentage of metalinguistic and phatic functions. In contrast, the jokes overwhelmingly featured poetic function.

4.2 Functional Analysis of Code-Switching in the Comedy Film

The comedy film "Bon Cop, Bad Cop" (Canuel 2006) employed code-switching primarily for expressive (35 %), referential (27.5 %), and directive (25 %) purposes. Here is an example of the referential function:

Excerpt 1:

– I'm fighting the dog with my, uh… mains nues. [bare hands.]
– Bare hands.
– Yeah, that's it.

Referential code-switching happens when speakers lack a specific word in one language, so they use a word from another language. The speaker pauses in the middle of their intense emotional narrative to use the French "mains nues" instead of the English "bare hands." At this moment, the speaker struggles to find the English equivalent, so he resorts to using French because it feels more suitable or precise. The speaker's subsequent confirmation of the English translation reinforces that the switch was made to address a lexical gap.

The expressive code-switching in the film reveals the characters' bilingual identity, for example:

Excerpt 2:

Hi! Ça va? [How is it going?].

This brief exchange demonstrates the expressive function of code-switching. The speaker initiates the greeting with English "Hi!" then proceeds to use French "Ça va?" The switch is not because the speaker lacks vocabulary. Instead, the bilingual identity of the speaker leads to this natural language mixing.

Excerpt 3:

Table 1: Functional distribution of code-switching instances across genres.

Function	Comedy film		Stand-up show		Jokes	
	F	%	f	%	f	%
Referential	11	27.5 %	12	22.2 %	0	0 %
Directive	10	25 %	7	13 %	0	0 %
Expressive	14	35 %	9	16.6 %	6	12.8 %
Phatic	4	10 %	11	20.4 %	0	0 %
Metalinguistic	1	2.5 %	13	24.1 %	2	4.3 %
Poetic	0	0 %	2	3.7 %	39	82.9 %
Total	40	100 %	54	100 %	47	100 %

Tu sais c'est qui, [You know who it is,] right?

This excerpt is an example of the expressive function, but its significance goes beyond general bilingualism. This switch is, in fact, a classic example of a common sociolinguistic pattern in informal Canadian bilingual speech: tag switching. The structure of a complete clause in one language followed by a conversational tag in another is not a random mixture. It is a patterned feature used by fluent bilinguals to signal an informal, conversational stance and to establish solidarity with other bilinguals. In the context of the film, the screenwriters' use of this specific, recognisable speech pattern may be a deliberate choice to construct a sociolinguistically authentic character.

The directive function (25 %) also appeared often, as in the following example:

Excerpt 4:

– Martin, aide-moi! [Martin, help me!]
– I'm sorry, I don't understand you.
– Martin, help me, please!

This excerpt shows the directive function of code-switching. The speaker begins by asking for assistance in French before switching to English when French does not produce the desired result. The code-switching serves as an effective tool to gain listener attention since it employs a language that the listener understands better.

Phatic and metalinguistic functions were less common in the film, but still present. Here is one funny scene:

Excerpt 5:

– Tu parles français, toi? [Do you speak French?]
– Non, je parle pas français. Je me suis fait installer un gadget au cerveau [No, I do not speak French. I had a gadget installed in my brain] and I see subtitles under people when they speak. Oui, je parle français. [Yes, I speak French.]

This example shows the phatic function of code-switching, especially through its humour and sudden language switch. The speaker switches to English to deliver the punchline. This part of the character's speech generates surprise while maintaining a comedic effect, which characterises phatic communication as a means of entertaining and connecting with people rather than just giving information.

Excerpt 6:

– You let me interrogate the witnesses. I do the talking.
– Whatever, but in French.
– Ça dépend de la langue maternelle du sujet. [It depends on the subject's mother tongue.]

This final excerpt illustrates the metalinguistic function of code-switching because the characters discuss language-related matters, demonstrating their understanding of language usage in that specific situation.

The complete absence of the poetic function in "Bon Cop, Bad Cop" (Canuel 2006) is a notable finding. It suggests that this particular film generates its bilingual humour through other means, such as character-driven and plot-related moments, rather than through linguistic wordplay. This stands in stark contrast to the findings from the joke collection, where the poetic function was dominant.

4.3 Functional Analysis of Code-Switching in the Stand-Up Show

The stand-up performance "#Franglais" (Paul Taylor 2020) featured the highest number of code-switching moments (54) and displayed a more balanced distribution of different functions. The most frequent functions were metalinguistic (24.1 %), referential (22.2 %), and phatic (20.4 %). For example, referential code-switching was used for cultural terms:

Excerpt 1:

Ben, you've already done la bise [the French cheek kiss greeting] to another guy before.

This example demonstrates the referential function, where a culture-specific concept is conveyed in French because there is no direct or adequate translation in English. "La bise" is a French custom of kissing on the cheek, which has no direct translation into English. The speaker uses the French term to preserve the cultural meaning and to be more precise.

Expressive code-switching was less frequent (16.6 %) and was mainly used to establish contact with the audience and to demonstrate bilingual identity:

Excerpt 2:

> Oh, good evening, Paris. Bonsoir, Paris, salut. Ça va bien? Bonsoir! [Good evening, Paris, hi. How's it going? Good evening!] Yes, hello, hello, sit down, sit down, sit down.

In this opening, the speaker shifts between English and French to demonstrate the expressive function. Using two languages, the speaker showcases his bilingual identity and establishes contact with the French-speaking audience. By using familiar phrases like "Bonsoir, Paris" and "Ça va bien?", he positions himself as belonging to both language communities.

The directive function also played an important role in interacting with the audience:

Excerpt 3:

> So, let's see who we've got in the audience tonight. French people, make some noise! Allez… ça va. Vous êtes trop nombreux, les Français, ce soir. [Come on… it's fine. There are too many of you, the French, tonight.] Wow, okay, let's try the non-French people. Make some noise!

This excerpt is an example of the directive function of code-switching, where the speaker addresses the French-speaking part of the audience in French. The switch helps to involve them more personally in the show and makes the interaction more direct and engaging.

In the performance, phatic switching was frequently employed to signal changes in tone:

Excerpt 4:

> Non, tu peux pas juste aller au frigo comme ça, prendre ta bière et commencer à boire. [No, you can't just go to the fridge like that, take your beer, and start drinking.] Ha ha ha, why not? Why not Benjamin?

This part is an example of the phatic function, where the language switching changes the tone. The French part sounds formal, as if it is a rule or tradition, and the English part sounds informal and sarcastic. The shift in tone, from serious to funny, contributes to the contrast that enhances the comedic effect.

> Metalinguistic switching was also very interesting as it made the audience think about language and pronunciation:

Excerpt 5:

> Pour vous, les francophones dans la salle ce soir, c'est quoi les mots les plus compliqués à prononcer en anglais? [For the French speakers in the hall tonight, what are the hardest words to pronounce in English?] OK, Canterbury, what else? 'Through' like, through something. There's too many H's, a GH in there.

This is an example of the metalinguistic function of code-switching, where the speaker talks about the English language. He asks the French-speaking audience about which English words are most difficult to pronounce, which makes everyone think about how language works and what makes pronunciation difficult.

Poetic switching was relatively infrequent (3.7 %), but it was used to deliver jokes:

Excerpt 6:

> Et au début, il y avait un truc bizarre qui se passait à chaque fois que je me présentais. J'ai dit: 'Salut, je m'appelle Paul Taylor.' Il y avait toujours un Français qui faisait: [And at the beginning, something weird happened every time I introduced myself. I'd say, 'Hi, my name is Paul Taylor.' There was always a French person who would go:] 'Ah, my Taylor is rich!' Là, vous rigolez parce que vous comprenez la blague. Moi, je la comprenais pas au début. [Now, you're laughing because you get the joke. But I didn't get it at first.]

This is an example of the poetic function of code-switching, which occurs in puns, jokes, or poems. The joke is based on the sentence “My tailor is rich,” which is a phrase from old English textbooks that is known to many learners from France. It plays with this strange, outdated phrase to make a bilingual joke.

Compared to the film, the stand-up show focused more on interacting with the audience, reflecting on language, and using humour related to bilingualism.

4.4 Functional Analysis of Code-Switching in the Jokes

The joke collection primarily employed code-switching for poetic purposes (82.9 %), unlike the film and stand-up genres. This means it focused on how the words sound in both languages, using humour based on puns, rhythm, and pronunciation.

Joke 1:

> Why do the French only have one egg in their omelettes? Because one egg is un oeuf. [an egg.]

The joke demonstrates poetic functionality through a sound-based pun. The joke plays on an English speaker’s mishearing of the French phrase “un œuf” as the English word “enough.” The comedic impact relies on audience members understanding both languages. It makes fun of the French for eating one egg because it “sounds” like “enough.”

Joke 2:

> Two cats are having a swimming race. One cat is called One two three, and the other Un deux trois. [One two three.] Which cat do you think won? One two three, because Un deux trois [One two three] cat sank.

This is another example of the poetic function. It blends English and French numbers to create a pun. The combination of sounds creates a pun between “Un deux trois cat sank” and “Un deux trois quatre cinq” (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in French), which sounds like “cat sank” in English.

The joke works because the two language words create a single sentence through their phonetic similarities.

Joke 3:

> I was surprised when I heard about the flooding in Paris. Normally, the water is l’eau. [the water.]

This joke also shows the poetic function of code-switching by transforming the French word “l’eau” into the English word “low.” The joke makes a pun by pretending that Parisian water is normally “low,” while “l’eau” actually means water. The humour results from confusing word sounds then applying this misunderstanding to create an unexpected situation like a flood.

Joke 4:

> What is it like speaking multiple languages? Very bien. [Very good.]

This serves as a simple example of the expressive function of code-switching. The speaker expresses their bilingual identity by switching between English and French, using the word “bien” which means “well” or “good.” The speaker demonstrates their ease with language exchange through this approach while incorporating both English and French into their personality.

Other code-switching functions like the referential, directive and phatic functions were not used in the jokes at all. However, there were a few cases of metalinguistic switching (4.3 %), like the one below:

Joke 5:

> A patron in a Montreal restaurant turned on a tap in the washroom and got scalded. “This is an outrage,” he complained. “The faucet marked ‘C’ gave me boiling water.” “But, Monsieur [Sir], ‘C’ stands for chaud [hot] – French for hot. You should know that if you live in Montreal.” “Wait a minute,” roared the patron. “The other tap is also marked ‘C.’ “Of course,” said the manager. “It stands for cold. After all, Montreal is a bilingual city.”

The joke demonstrates metalinguistic functionality through its language-focused content. The comedy stems from misinterpreting the letter “C” because it represents heat (“chaud”) in French and cold in English. A confusing situation emerges from this language mix-up, which highlights the unexpected communication problems that arise when people live in bilingual settings.

Unlike the comedy film and the stand-up performance, the jokes focused primarily on language itself, e.g., how it sounds, looks or plays with meaning, instead of character interactions or direct communication. This finding is a direct consequence of the joke’s nature as a genre. A written joke is a self-contained, non-interactive text. It lacks the depicted character interactions of the film or the live performer-audience dynamic of the stand-up show. Without a direct communicative or interactional context, functions such as expressive, directive, or phatic switching are largely unavailable. Therefore, the humour must be generated internally through the creative manipulation of linguistic form itself.

4.5 Genre-Specific Trends in Code-Switching Functions

The genre-specific tendencies in code-switching functions are visually summarised in Figure 1, which presents a bar graph comparing the functional distribution across the three genres.

The findings revealed that different comedy genres employ code-switching for distinctive functions. The comedy film primarily used expressive code-switching along with referential and directive functions to depict character speech and behaviour in the narrative. The stand-up performance mainly relied on metalinguistic, phatic and referential functions of code-switching to connect with the audience and discuss language itself; however, expressive and directive functions of code-switching were still used to some extent. In contrast, the primary purpose of switching between languages in bilingual jokes was to achieve poetic effects through puns and sound similarities as well as playful language.

5 Discussion

The findings demonstrate that each genre uses code-switching in a unique manner based on its structure, delivery methods and audience engagement patterns. The comedy film employed code-switching in its script to establish realistic character development and create a believable narrative. On the other hand, the stand-up show employed code-switching in response to the audience during live performance. Being short and complete on their own, Jokes depended mainly on language play to deliver punchlines.

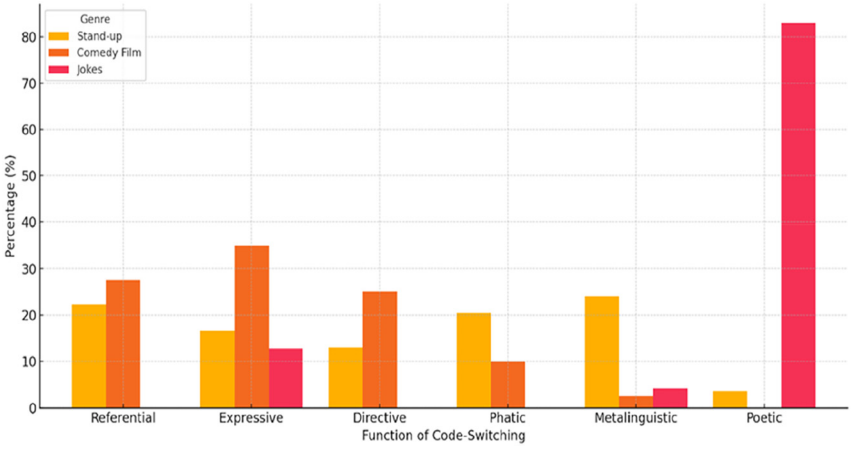

Figure 1: Genre-based variation in code-switching functions.

5.1 Interpreting Genre-Specific Functions of Code-Switching

The different genres demonstrate bilingualism through distinct methods; hence, differences in the distribution of functions of code-switching emerge. The film comedy demonstrates how bilingualism occurs naturally within social institutions where characters may not share full linguistic competence. The stand-up performance, however, presents a different scenario. The performer, Paul Taylor, could likely have performed the entire show in French for his Parisian audience. The fact that he code-switches extensively to English is therefore not a tool for basic comprehension, but a deliberate artistic choice. Each switch to English reinforces his identity as a British expatriate commenting on French culture from an "outsider" perspective, while his switches back to French demonstrate his integration and shared understanding with the "insider" audience. The code-switching itself becomes the theme of the performance, used to embody the cultural "in-betweenness" that generates the humour. In jokes, language is reduced to its essentials, and the focus is on puns, double meanings, and cultural clichés. Code-switching in these cases constructs fictional bilingual scenarios rather than depict authentic speech.

Audience considerations are a primary driver of the functional distribution of code-switching across these genres. The film is designed for a broad, mainstream audience that may include monolingual viewers. Consequently, while it uses code-switching to build character authenticity, it must also ensure narrative clarity. This is often achieved through repetition or translation embedded in the dialogue, where one character will repeat or clarify another's utterance in the other language. This strategy makes the film accessible but limits the use of untranslated, complex wordplay. In stark contrast, the stand-up performance and the jokes presuppose bilingual competence in their target audience. Paul Taylor's Parisian audience is expected to be fluent in both French and English. This shared linguistic capital is crucial; it liberates the performer from the need for translation and allows him to use code-switching for more nuanced purposes. He can employ rapid, untranslated switches to create a sense of shared identity with his audience, to perform his "outsider" status, and to make sophisticated metalinguistic jokes about the very nature of being a bilingual speaker in Paris. Similarly, the anonymous online jokes require the reader to instantly recognise the phonetic and semantic ambiguities between the two languages to understand the punchline, assuming a high degree of implicit knowledge.

Finally, the inherent structural and aesthetic conventions of each genre directly enable or constrain the use of specific code-switching functions. Stand-up comedy, as a live, dialogic performance, thrives on interaction. Its aesthetic goal is to create the illusion of a spontaneous conversation with a large audience. This generic convention explains the high frequency of phatic function and directive function. The rapid, back-and-forth switching style mimics natural conversation, making these interactional functions feel authentic. The joke, however, operates under a completely different aesthetic principle: maximum efficiency. A written joke is a static, self-contained text that must deliver its humorous payload in the most concise way possible. It has no room for the interactional work of stand-up. This structural constraint forces the joke to discard phatic, directive and most expressive functions, promoting the one function that can deliver an immediate comic result: the poetic function. The entire aesthetic of the genre is built around the clever, economical wordplay that this function provides.

5.2 Implications for Code-Switching Theory

The results of this research extend foundational functional theories of code-switching, particularly the framework proposed by Appel and Muysken (1987) that this study employs. While such theories excel at identifying what communicative functions exist, they were developed primarily from analyses of spontaneous conversation and do not systematically account for how the distribution of these functions is shaped by contextual constraints. This study contributes by demonstrating that genre is a critical variable. By showing that the poetic function dominates in jokes while phatic and expressive functions are more prominent in performative genres like stand-up and film, this research argues that a complete theory of code-switching must consider how genre conventions predict and constrain the functional use of language alternation.

The functional model employed in this study was originally developed to analyse spoken language, yet this research shows that creative and performative genres can adjust these functions. Poetic code-switching occurs

more frequently in written jokes than in everyday bilingual conversations, indicating that artistic writing enables functions that are infrequent in spontaneous speech.

Various genres also create specific constraints that simultaneously enable new creative opportunities. For example, stand-up performers frequently use directive code-switching to interact with their audience, yet this function remains absent from jokes.

6 Conclusions

This study examined the different communicative functions of code-switching in Anglo-French bilingual humour across three different genres: a comedy film, a stand-up performance and a joke collection. The study employed a two-phase analytical approach to reveal distinct code-switching patterns by genre. The findings showed that genre conventions play a major role in determining the communicative functions of code-switching. The results indicated that the film "Bon Cop, Bad Cop" (Canuel 2006) applied code-switching mainly for expressive purposes alongside referential and directive functions. On the other hand, the most frequent functions of code-switching in the stand-up performance "#Franglais" (Paul Taylor 2020) were metalinguistic, referential and phatic. The jokes mainly relied on the poetic function of code-switching for creating linguistic creativity through puns and other wordplay.

These findings confirm that communicative goals, audience expectations and structural conventions have supreme power in shaping bilingual humour, offering a genre-based model for its analysis. However, the most significant contribution of this research is the direct implications it holds for functional theories of code-switching.

Foundational functional models of code-switching, primarily those adapted from the discourse-functional frameworks of Appel and Muysken (1987) and Gumperz (1982), play a crucial role in categorizing existing functions. However, our study shows that these models are incomplete. They lack a predictive component that explains why certain functions dominate in specific contexts. The findings show that the dominance of particular functions in each case, such as the poetic function in jokes or the expressive and phatic functions in film dialogue and stand-up performance, reflects genre-specific communicative goals rather than arbitrary variation. In this sense, genre does not predict but shapes the functional ecology of code-switching by funnelling the available discourse functions within the parameters of each communicative context. This research argues that genre is the predictive variable. The distribution of functions across the three cases provides clear support for this claim: the poetic function, which accounted for nearly all switches in the joke collection, was entirely absent from the narrative-driven film. Conversely, the expressive and phatic functions, central to the character interactions and live performance of the film and stand-up, were marginal in the non-interactive jokes. This distribution is not arbitrary; it is a direct and predictable outcome of genre constraints.

Therefore, the implication for code-switching theory is clear: functional models should be extended to incorporate genre as a core analytical component. Therefore, the implication for code-switching theory is clear: functional models should be refined to include genre as a meso-contextual component that links discourse practices with communicative purpose. This study provides evidence for answering that second question, moving the analysis from simple description toward a more robust, genre-based explanation.

7 Limitations

The paper provides important findings, yet it contains several limitations. First, assigning communicative functions to each code-switching instance was partly subjective, as it relied on the researchers' interpretation. Second, the research focused on a single stand-up performance and one comedy film, which restricts the ability to generalise the findings to stand-up comedy and film genres. Third, the joke collection contained limited examples, which might not have reflected the full range of bilingual humour that occurs naturally. The study focused exclusively on the Anglo-French language pair; thus, its findings may not directly apply to other bilingual or

multilingual contexts. Future research should expand its data sources and examine different language combinations and cultural environments to overcome these limitations.

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