



Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods design to examine how code-switching affects perceptions and outcomes in courtroom settings. The research combines direct courtroom observation, transcription-based linguistic analysis, and qualitative interviews with people involved in legal proceedings.

Courtroom Observations

Courtroom sessions from five U.S. states - California, Texas, New York, Georgia, and Illinois - were selected based on demographic diversity and public accessibility. Observations focused on criminal cases where the defendant or a key witness used more than one language or dialect during their testimony. Notes were taken on when code-switching occurred, how the speaker shifted, and how others in the courtroom responded (visually, verbally, or procedurally).

Transcription and Language Analysis

Audio recordings and publicly available transcripts were collected for 15 cases. These were reviewed using discourse analysis tools to identify patterns in code-switching, tone changes, or shifts in speech register. Special attention was given to moments when a speaker moved between dialects, such as from AAVE to Standard American English, or alternated between English and Spanish. The analysis focused on lexical choice, rhythm, syntax, and how shifts aligned with emotional or high-pressure moments in the proceedings.

Interviews



A total of 24 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a mix of legal professionals and former jurors. Participants included defense attorneys, prosecutors, judges, and individuals who had served on juries in trials where code-switching occurred. Interview questions explored how they noticed, interpreted, or reacted to code-switching in the courtroom. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for recurring themes related to language bias, clarity, and perceived credibility.

Ethical Considerations

All research procedures were reviewed and approved by an institutional ethics committee. Interview participants were fully informed of the study's purpose and gave written consent. Courtrooms were observed only in states where proceedings were legally open to the public. No identifying information from specific cases or individuals is included in the final data analysis.