

CODE SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING PRACTICES IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS OF OKARACANTT

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Abstract

This study looks into how teachers and students in English classes in Okara Cantt, Pakistan, switch between languages or mix them. It includes 20 teachers and 40 students from different language backgrounds. Participants, hailing from various regions, spoke languages including Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, and Balochi. Through semi-structured interviews data were collected to explore the role and attitudes towards code-switching (choice of languages) and code-mixing (to mix more than one languages in verbal and non-verbal communication) in English instruction. The findings reveal strong support from both teachers and students for these practices as effective pedagogical tools. Teachers reported using code-switching and code-mixing to clarify complex concepts, enhance student comprehension, and foster an inclusive classroom environment, particularly for students with varying proficiency levels in English. Students valued these practices for improving understanding, reducing anxiety, and bridging linguistic gaps, enabling them to engage more confidently in lessons. The multilingual context of OkaraCantt, where regional languages coexist with Urdu and English, so, code-switching is common in the premises of cantonment Schools and Colleges. Teachers often switched to Urdu or regional languages to explain vocabulary or grammar, while students mixed languages to express ideas more fluently. Even though some worry that using code-switching and code-mixing too much might slow down English learning, teachers and students find it helpful for learning. This study uses communication accommodation theory, which focuses on how people adjust their way of talking to communicate better. This theory was developed by Howard Giles, a communication professor at the University of California. In methodology, sampling purposive was used to relevant participants. These findings endorse to the wider dialogue on more than one language. Suggest that code-switching and code-mixing is naturally occurred by students and teachers. Because they have no habit of use English outside the classroom. That's why both students and teachers maintained code-switching and code-mixing.

INTRODUCTION

Code refers to any language. Code-switching means using more than one language during a conversation,

switching between them. Thelander (as cited in Chaer&Agustina, 2010, p.115) explains code-

switching as when a speaker uses two or more languages in the same conversation. Similarly, Bullock & Toribio (2009, pp.1-2) describe code-switching as the ability to switch between two languages, showing that the speaker knows both languages and can move between them. Code-mixing, on the other hand, is when someone mixes two languages in a single sentence, often because they're unsure which language fits best, according to Hudson (1996, p.53). In order to attain the best communication effect, the speaker thus will mix the codes. For instance, if Teacher entered in the class he/she greet with Asslam u alikem and then mixing English open your books and page number 10 etc. After that students asked sir what is the meaning of darkling thrush (darkling thrush ke meaning kaya hai) teacher explained in mix Urdu and English (andhery me roshni or hope) So, all lesson delivered in mixing of varieties. Even if few speakers accent is totally different due to cultural and language difference. So inserting elements of other language is common in cantonment areas schools and colleges. Such difference of opinion must even be incorporated into our curriculum.

Curriculum Theory stresses on the designing of a curriculum that is relevant to societal /local needs, ensuring comprehensiveness and connectedness to our culture. (Khan, Shakeel, & Khan, 2024)

Bilingualism is common in Pakistan. Mainly an individual speak two languages besides his/her native language. Urdu, Panjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto, Hindko, Shina, Kashmiri, Siraiki are common spoken languages of Pakistan. English and Urdu are official language.. It is the language of government. About 30 to 40 million speakers of English exist in Pakistan except minutes has first language as English (AhmerMahboob: 2004). Cantonment areas are special where people from across Pakistan lived. Armed persons, civilians and defense areas are included. Those persons are serving they live with their families and their children study a premises of cantt. So, it is big challenge for students and teachers to understand their language because they belong to different regions, cultures and languages. Except few many peoples off spring only know their native language very well and have fluency in speaking and writing in native language. So when they entered in schools or colleges they coup de at with languages.

Urdu is commonly understood due to the influence of media and communication. Urdu is patronized by state, so they acquire it from their society. Besides it, English is the need of medium of instructions. So, students and teachers use mix varieties in their speaking and writing. Code mixing is common in cantonment areas. Male and females students prefers to speak Urdu and English because it shows their status of educated society. So practicing of Use of Urdu and English in common in native speakers of Punjabi, Sindhi and Blochi etc. where parents shows their status by language. Urdu and mixing of English is common language of parents at homes. Because they want to keep their status of high. How this is helpful to reduce the communication gap between students and teachers? So, this is easy way to learn language. Code switching and code mixing make easiness for students and teachers to understand their messages.

The purpose of this study to find out the benefits of cod-switching and code-mixing in classrooms of Okaracantt. What is the way that code switching and code mixing help students and teachers to connect their ideas with each other? Because multilingualism is main hindrance to understand the message. So mixing of varieties create balance among students and teachers. So this study analyses the impact of practicing code-switching and code-mixing. Even if teachers are recruited across from Pakistan and posted far flung areas where there is no speaker of their native language. So due to, nature of mother tongue, so, it is difficult for students and teachers to understand each other easily. How students perceived the lecture of teacher by different level of phonetics and phonology. And same for teachers to understand the students of different cultures and language. Tis study find out this gap is either helpful for students and teacher or not. Code-switching and code-mixing is improving language skills or not. This shifting occurs frequently in classrooms. Syllabus is in English medium except Urdu and Islamiyat, Pakistan Study. So shifting occurs in other science and arts subjects.

Literature Review:

Pakistan has endowed with different cultures and regions, there multilingualism and bilingualism is common across the country. Everyone speaks more than two languages. It is common practice is observed

in schools too. English and Urdu is official and medium of instruction in Pakistan except in Sindh, Sindhi is also used. So, students acquire Urdu language beside their mother tongue, either it would be Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi or Kashmiri. In early age, child acquire two languages but when he/she become the part of school. A new language is introduced, which is English. Thus, a child thrives to achieve target language. But teacher, also part of same society. He/she speaks more than two languages. His fluency is developed according to their native language. The phonetics and phonological variation is common. So, that teacher code-mixing is his/her lecture. Even though English is sometimes taught using Urdu, schools should use less Urdu and encourage more English practice in classrooms. In places with many languages, this topic is still being debated.

Theoretical frame work

The main reason for code-switching and code-mixing depends on the speaker's situation and what they want to say to their audience. Myers-Scotton suggests three models that explain how bilingual people choose languages in conversations: Conversational Analysis, Communication Accommodation Theory, and the Markedness Model. This study uses Communication Accommodation Theory because it focuses on why people switch languages. Developed by Howard Giles, a communication professor at the University of California, this theory explains how people adjust their speech or behavior to either highlight or reduce social differences with others. These adjustments can happen through words or gestures.

Interactant: refers to the close connection between people communicating with each other. People adjust their communication to gain approval or create a good impression with the person they're talking to. The environment where they interact also affects their communication behavior.

There are two types of Communication Accommodation Theory:

Convergence:

When people adapt their communication style to match the other person's, reducing social differences.

Divergence:

When people avoid adapting and instead emphasize social or nonverbal differences between themselves and others.

The two processes depend on the traits of the interactant. Individuals adjust their communication when engaging with someone they think as having higher standards or superior qualities compared to themselves.

And the divergent exhibits an opposite characteristic as it emphasizes the difference among the close relations with each other. So, this theory help to understand the code-switching and code-mixing. Because social interaction in bilingualism reduce the gap of verbal and non-verbal communication. In Okara Cantt, students from diverse backgrounds use divergence and convergence to learn unfamiliar languages

Blom and Gumperz (1972) did important work in sociocultural linguistics, introducing "situational" and "metaphorical" code-switching in their study "Social Meaning in Linguistic Structures." Even though code-switching and code-mixing were already being studied by 1972, many researchers only recognized their significance later. Barker (2021) was among the first to explore code-switching and language choice in linguistic anthropology.

Ferguson (1957) introduced the concept of diglossia, later expanded by Fishman (2020). Diglossia refers to a distinct, formal version of a language used in specific situations. Originally, Ferguson focused on variations within one language, but Fishman extended it to include separate languages with similar functional differences. Neither provided examples of switching between varieties in conversation, but their ideas relate to situational code-switching.

Many researchers have studied code-switching and code-mixing from various angles, including psycholinguistics (e.g., Jared & Kroll, 2001; Hushino & Kroll, 2008), semiotics (e.g., Halliday, 1978), sociolinguistics (e.g., Hymes, 1978; Muysken, 2000), and other fields, each offering unique insights into this phenomenon.

From a language perspective, code-switching is a widely discussed topic in sociolinguistics, related to language development, skills, and classroom achievement. Bokamba (1989:281) describes code-switching as using words, phrases, or sentences from

two different languages in the same conversation. Code-mixing, however, involves combining smaller parts of languages, like prefixes, words, phrases, or clauses, in a shared activity, where listeners need to link what they hear to what they understand.

Meyerhoff (2006) proposes that code-switching involves alternating entire sentences, while code-mixing entails using individual words or short phrases without switching whole sentences.

Heredia & Brown (2006) define code switching as 'the practice of moving back and forth between two languages or between dialects of the same language.

For achieving target language, learners use code-switching to understand very well and become familiar with new language. It creates eases for learners to mix their language with target language. Consciously and unconsciously code-switching and code-mixing occurred in classroom by students and teachers.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts the approach of qualitative research in which CM and CS practicing will be explored among the students and teachers of Okaracantt. Where multilingualism exist among students and teachers. Teacher belong to different background, cultures, languages and region. Same situation for students. Mainly students are of army persons. They lived for here on temporary basis about 3 to 5 years. Their schooling is different because of transfer and posting. However, it is difficult for them to achieve SLOs based target easily. So this study will be done through qualitative research and find out the motivation toll is behind there in code-switching and code-mixing.

Sampling Purposive:

This approach will be applied to select participants from college and schools. There are 20 teachers and 40 students, total (60). These participants will be used as sampling and randomly selected from classes.

Research setting:

This research will be conducted in Okara cantonment based public schools, colleges. Where diversity is exists. Students and teachers from different areas are here to teach and learn. Even, college will be observed where English language program is taught at BS level.

Few schools of boys and girls from 6 to 10 will be part of this research.

Participants:

Teachers: those instructors who taught English in these schools, college will be observed. Even if those teachers will be part of this research who taught other subjects but belong to different regions and cultures will be included in this research.

Students: students aged between 14 to 22, will be part of this research. Their background, language, culture and learning style will be observed.

Data Collection Methods:

Classroom Observations:

About 5 to six classroom will be observed where teachers are teaching English language and the use of CM and CS will be recorded. A checklist will be developed and recorded the CM and CS.

Semi-Structured Interviews:

Interviews of teachers and students will be recorded that what is reason behind using CM and CS and the impact on learning is and what challenges both teachers and students faced.

Focus groups interviews with students to find out the reason and attitudes towards CM and CS and how it effects on comprehension and enhance the teaching and learning process.

Audio Recordings:

Note-taking in diaries and audio-video recording of classroom interaction, focus group discussion and interviews will be done to ensure accurate transcription and analysis of CM and CS.

Results:

The interview of 20 teachers and 40 students were conducted in the schools and colleges of Okaracantt. There are living people with diverse culture, language and region. Mainly they served in Army or Army related institutions. Few students come from outside the cantt. Even if teachers are also belong to different areas

Teacher's perspective:

85% teachers admitted to use Urdu or Punjabi language besides English in Classrooms. It occurs

mostly to clear the difficult concepts. According to them for understanding of students it is necessary to switch Urdu language, because students belong to different regions and cultures.

Teachers used Punjabi, Urdu and English language in classrooms.

Purpose of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing:

According to teachers it clarifies the concepts, aid understanding or help students to grasp the topic.

Experience and Attitudes:

The experience of teachers range from 3 years 20 years. They have taught in different regions of Pakistan in premises of Cantts. Teacher responded that code-switching and and code-mixing occurred naturally. First of all they use the word “Asslam O Alikum” then said that “beta” (used polite word for students son) have you done your homework or task. And then said,

“ KalAap ne jo Parrhathaosko revise kartyhain” (yesterday topic revision).

All teachers supported code-switching and code-mixing, because it minimize the stress of new language that is not spoken in their society. It helps them to understand the concepts easily. But after sometime this sort of practice reduce and use of English encouraged in Classes and outside the classroom.

Students’ response and impact:

90% students agreed that they used code-mixing and code-switching in everyday communication, especially in answering questions in classroom or in discussion with classmates. Because it is naturally that happened. Udru, Hindko, Siraiki, Sindhi, Pashto, Kashmiri, Balty language speakers students were part of this interview. Their home language has also influence to learn in new environment where multilingual speakers existed.

Students learn better, feel rapport, and engage, more when multiple languages are used. So students feel comfortable in more than one language specially Urdu and English mixing is easy for students to understand the concept and theories. During interviews many students response in Urdu or other language. The accent and pronunciation of students were different due to influence of mother tongue.

Classroom Observation:

Students feel comfortable in code-switching and code-mixing in language. They understand very well during Urdu and English. Teacher believes that using L1 (Home language) supports students to learn English fluently.

Start of the classroom students responded “waalikum Salam” and then mixing with Urdu and English. Even if, questioning and answering was done in both Languages.

So, teachers and students feel comfortable while using L1 besides English. It enhancing the learning of students. Because they have exposure of many languages and there is no proper environment where they speak English with their parents, friends, relatives and neighbors. They speak English and Urdu in their classrooms and native language at home.

Discussion:

According to data occurrence of code-switching and code-mixing is natural and effective for instructional tactics in multilingual classrooms of Okara cantt. Teachers use Urdu alongside English to fill the gap and create comfortable environment for learning English.

Students also support the idea of code-switching and code-mixing in instructions because they are familiar with their native language after blending of both languages it creates easiness for them to learn English in better way.

These finding proves that code-mixing and code-switching practices in English Classrooms supports students because this area is rich in linguistic diversity.

Conclusion:

Code-mixing and c ode-switching are helpful in instructions for learning English language. Both teachers and students supported it. It creates environment of easiness and learn difficult concepts easily. They think in their native language and then try to understand in their in English language. After long practice it becomes automation. So, there is no harm in code-switching and code-mixing practices as they live in linguistics diversity where people live who belong to different regions of Pakistan. Many students newly admitted they only know their native language so, the practice of code-switching and code-mixing is necessary for them. Students said that initial stage it is

helpful but after sometime getting much knowledge of English this practices should be reduced. This study evidenced that code-switching and code-mixing is necessary in early stage, it enhance language knowledge and clear the difficult concept.

Recommendations:

Train teachers in blending of languages that support pedagogy without reducing English language exposure.

Encourage multilingualism among educators.

Design activities and enhance visual aids to minimize over-reliance on L1 while still supporting understanding.

Conduct further research with a larger sample size to validate and generalize findings.

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