

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CODE SWITCHING AND CODE MIXING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Saleha Ainee<sup>\*1</sup>, Syeda Sumera Qamar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup>BS Scholar Department of English Faculty of Languages and Literature University of Central Punjab;

<sup>2</sup>M. Phil Scholar, Department of English language and Literature, The University of Lahore, Pakistan

<sup>\*1</sup>[aineesaleha@gmail.com](mailto:aineesaleha@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup>[Syedasumera699@gmail.com](mailto:Syedasumera699@gmail.com)

Corresponding authors\*

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### ABSTRACT

This research explores the concepts of Code Switching (CS) and Code Mixing (CM), where individuals alternate between languages within conversations, particularly in the realm of language education. The aim of language instruction is to enhance learners' proficiency in the target language, promote personal growth, and encourage intercultural awareness. A key tactic in reaching these objectives is the use of CS and CM, which have often been viewed negatively as signs of linguistic incompetence. Nonetheless, in multilingual environments, CS and CM are common practices that aid in communication and comprehension. Previous studies emphasize the routine and often subconscious nature of CS, which typically occurs in short phrases or individual words within sentences. This research focuses on the sociolinguistic roles of CS and CM, showcasing their potential advantages in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study utilized audio recordings of classroom interactions and quantitative analysis of questionnaires. The results reveal that students frequently code switch due to limited vocabulary and the relaxed classroom atmosphere, using CS for better comprehension, clarification, and social interaction. Teachers use CS to explain and translate content into the students' first language (L1). CS and CM enhance language learning by aiding students' transition from L1 to the second language (L2) and easing the teacher's instructional load. The study concludes that CS and CM are effective strategies in language education, benefiting both educators and learners by enhancing communication and understanding, thus making the teaching process more efficient and less demanding.

**Key Terms:** Code Switching (CS), Code Mixing (CM), ESL (English as a Second Language), L1 (First Language), L2 (Second Language).

### INTRODUCTION

Code Switching (CS) is a prevalent phenomenon in language learning environments globally, including in Pakistani educational settings. While researchers define CS in various ways, it is commonly understood as the use of a second language (L2) within a primarily first language (L1) setting, typically by bilinguals or multilingual individuals during a single interaction (Muysken, 1995). In Pakistan, where Urdu is the official language, numerous other languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi are spoken, influencing linguistic interactions in educational contexts.

This study aims to investigate the effects of CS on students' comprehension of the target language, their learning abilities, and their attitudes toward using CS as a medium of instruction. Researchers have diverse views on CS, based on various theoretical frameworks and research methodologies, primarily within sociolinguistic perspectives. While sociolinguistic studies have explored CS within bilingual and multilingual communities, limited research has focused on its impact on students' language learning processes, their attitudes toward linguistic features, and the specific contexts in which CS occurs. The existing

literature does not sufficiently explore whether CS facilitates or impedes progress in learning the target language. Additionally, researchers have identified several factors influencing code switching, such as language proficiency, social identity, and the roles of participants. The interaction between languages, along with their status, power dynamics, and prestige, significantly shapes code switching practices.

The research methodology employs a qualitative paradigm, using data from classroom observations through audio recordings and student questionnaires. The researcher utilized participant observation to closely monitor how CS as a medium of instruction affects teaching and learning processes while maintaining a professional distance for data collection (Fetterman, 1998). In second language education, code switching and code mixing are used for practical purposes. Teachers intentionally alternate between languages or mix linguistic elements to enhance students' understanding and retention. According to Trudgill (2000:105), speakers switch languages to shape social interactions and convey subtle meanings.

The study also explores the differences between first language (L1) and second language (L2), with L1 referring to the native language, such as Urdu or regional languages in Pakistan, and L2 to the acquired or target language, English. The concepts of code switching and code mixing, essential to bilingual and multilingual communication, involve the alternation or blending of languages within discourse. Overall, this research seeks to clarify the functional roles of code switching and code mixing in ESL classrooms, examining their effects on teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes. By exploring these dynamics, the study aims to inform educational practices and policies, advocating for the effective integration of these linguistic strategies into language teaching methodologies across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

### **1. LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Code Switching (CS) refers to the practice of alternating between two languages during communication among bilinguals, influenced by various social and linguistic factors. Skiba (1997) categorizes CS into several types, stating that "CS includes eighty-four percent single word switches, ten percent phrase switches, and six percent clause

switching." Mechanically, CS can occur unintentionally, also known as code mixing, where speakers substitute expressions from one language with those from another due to difficulties in lexical retrieval (Lipski, 1985). Another type, code changing, involves fluid shifts within a sentence driven by situational and stylistic factors (Lipski, 1985).

The primary reasons for CS are social. Olmedo-Williams (1981) identifies various categories such as emphasis, sociolinguistic play, clarification, and lexicalization, where CS facilitates more effective expression of ideas in different contexts. Goodman and Goodman (1979) found that CS is more common in spoken language than in written language, highlighting its informal nature in communication.

In bilingual education settings, CS plays a crucial role as students acquire new vocabulary in a second language while reverting to their native language for comprehension and expression (Boztepe, 2005). Teachers strategically use CS to facilitate language learning, employing activities like group dialogues and alternating between languages to enhance students' linguistic proficiency (Skiba, 1997). Teachers' beliefs and educational policies shape CS practices in classrooms (Liu & Ahn, 2004). CS functions serve diverse purposes including topic switching, affective communication, and clarifying content, essential for effective pedagogy (Sert, 2005). Similarly, students employ CS for equivalence, repetition, and conflict control, enhancing their learning experiences and communication clarity (Sert, 2005).

The concept of "attitude," defined as a psychological evaluation shaped by cultural and behavioral factors (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), is crucial in understanding CS. Extensive research in fields such as Psycholinguistics, Semiotics, and Sociolinguistics (Jared and Kroll, 2001; Christoffels et al., 2007; Hushino & Kroll, 2008; Halliday, 1978; Muysken, 2000) explores the social and linguistic motivations behind CS.

Bokamba (1989) differentiates between code switching and code mixing, emphasizing their distinct roles in bilingual communication. Meyerhoff (2006) explains that code switching occurs at the sentence level, while code mixing integrates linguistic elements within a discourse to enhance clarity and comprehension. In the ESL

classroom, CS facilitates effective communication and relationship-building among students and teachers (Waris, 2012). It serves functions such as emphasizing points, substituting unknown words, and fostering solidarity within the classroom environment (Baker, 2007; Waris, 2012).

## 2. METHADODOLOGY:

Participants in this study were selected from the University of Central Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan, where English is the primary language of instruction, with occasional use of Urdu due to students' varying proficiency levels. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants, comprising both students and teachers who are fluent in both Urdu and English. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 43 years, with Urdu as their first language (L1).

Data collection involved recording natural conversations between students and teachers using a high-quality voice recorder. To minimize observer effects and encourage the spontaneous use of both languages, code switching (CS) was not explicitly explained to participants, though their consent was obtained before recording. Additionally, quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to both teachers and students at the University of Central Punjab. Two separate questionnaires were designed: one for teachers and another for students. The teachers' questionnaire assessed the effectiveness and challenges of using CS in ESL teaching, particularly in vocabulary development and reading comprehension. The students' questionnaire explored their perceptions of CS, its impact on their English learning, and its usage both inside and outside the classroom.

## 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS:

### 4.1 Data Collection from Audio Recordings:

Transcripts of the conversations were qualitatively analyzed to address specific research questions, including:

1. Varieties of language roles in code switching.
2. Elements affecting code switching.
3. Students' perspectives on code switching in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.
4. Beneficial effects of code switching on students' understanding of the target language.

From audio recordings of classroom observations, it was noted that the teacher, Ms. A, along with all

students in the group, frequently engaged in Code switching (CS). CS was particularly prominent in functions such as clarification, translation, and social interaction. The participants included Student W, Student X, Student Y, Student Z, and the teacher, Ms. A. Detailed analysis and interpretations are presented in the following sections.

### 4.2 Code Switching and Varieties of Language Roles:

The linguistic roles observed among students and the teacher included verifying comprehension, asking for clarification, translation, and social interaction. Each role is illustrated with excerpts from the audio recordings.

#### 4.2.1 Verifying Understanding:

In the Pakistani classroom context, the primary reason for teachers and students to use Code switching (CS) to the first language (L1) is to ensure clarity in communication. This function is illustrated through the following example.

#### Example:

**Ms. A (T):** What is the meaning of mystery?

**W (S):** Iska matlab kya hai? (What does it mean?)

In this example, W used Urdu to confirm his understanding of the word 'mystery', emphasizing his query with a rising intonation.

#### 4.2.2 Asking for Clarification:

During the recordings, students utilized the clarification function on four occasions. Whenever they encountered difficulties in understanding, they sought explanations from their peers. Here are instances documented in the study:

#### Example 1:

**Y (S):** Group work mai kaam karna hai ? (Do we need to do group work?)

**Ms. A (T):** Yes.

In this instance, Y used Urdu to clarify his understanding about 'group work'.

#### Example 2:

**W (S):** Summarize karna hai? (Do we need to summarize?)

**X (S):** Haan karna hai.

Here, W sought clarification from X using Urdu to ensure he understood the key details. In these

examples, Urdu was employed by the students to seek clarification from their peers and teacher, highlighting their preference for using their native language for better understanding.

#### 4.2.3 Clarification:

Code switching (CS) enables students to provide additional details to clarify an idea or message. When students are unsure about the meaning of a word in the target language, their peers often offer explanations. CS was used when there was a lack of understanding or when expressing differing opinions was difficult in English.

#### Example:

**Y (S):** Squeeze?

**Ms. A (T):** Jab aap kisi cheez ko apni ungliyon se dabate hain. (When you press something firmly with your fingers).

In this example, Y sought clarification in Urdu about the meaning of 'squeeze', and Ms. A responded in Urdu to clarify. This example illustrates how students in Pakistani classrooms use code switching to clarify concepts.

#### 4.2.4 Translation:

In Pakistani classrooms, both students and teachers frequently switch languages to translate or elaborate on important messages when explaining new vocabulary or instructions. This practice helps students understand the material more easily.

#### Example:

When Y (S) sought clarification about the meaning of 'track', initially confusing it with 'trace', Ms. A (T) attempted to differentiate between the two:

**Ms. A (T):** When you walk, you leave traces behind, which is called a track. (Y and X nodded in understanding, while W and Z appeared puzzled. Ms. A continued with further explanation).

**Ms. A (T):** 'Trace' ussi cheez ke guzishta hone ki nishani hai, lekin 'track' wo silsila hai jo kisi cheez ke guzishta hone ke baad reh jata hai, jaise gari ke pahiyen ke nishan. (Even after the second explanation, they still couldn't quite grasp the subtle difference between 'track' and 'trace', prompting Ms. A to code switch).

**Ms. A (T):** trace yani asar.

This example demonstrates how Ms. A used Urdu to clarify the meanings of 'track' and 'trace' when English explanations weren't sufficient for all

students to understand. This example highlights how code switching is utilized in Pakistani classrooms to enhance comprehension, particularly when explaining complex linguistic concepts or new vocabulary.

#### 4.2.5 Socializing:

In Pakistani classrooms, students often switch between the target language and their native language to express their emotions, whether positive or negative. Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) also discuss the emotional functions of code switching (CS) in classroom settings, including the spontaneous expression of feelings during student interactions.

#### Example 1:

Social interaction occurred twice during the study. The first instance occurred when a Pakistani student, unexpectedly entered. The atmosphere shifted as students greeted him warmly and exchanged jokes in their native language:

**W (S):** Aye, tere class mein kya kaam hai? (Hey, what are you doing in our class?)

**Y (S):** Arey wah, tu yahan kaise? (Wow, how come you're here?)

This interaction illustrates how students utilized Urdu to socialize and interact with their unexpected peer.

#### Example 2:

The second occurrence of code switching happened when everyone shared their thoughts on the challenging nature of the short story:

**W (S):** Yeh kahani toh bohot mushkil thi! (This story was very difficult!)

**X (S):** Sach mein, samajhna mushkil tha. (Seriously, it was hard to understand.)

Here, Urdu was used to discuss and share their collective experience of the challenging story. These examples illustrate how students in Pakistani classrooms use code switching for socializing and expressing emotions, creating a more comfortable and expressive environment among peers.

#### 4.2.6 Frequency Of Code Switching Based On Different Language Functions:

##### • Verifying Understanding:

- Student W: 0
- Student X: 0
- Student Y: 1

- Student Z: 1
- Teacher Ms. A: 0
- **Total: 2**
- **Asking for Clarification:**
- Student W: 1
- Student X: 0
- Student Y: 3
- Student Z: 0
- Teacher Ms. A: 0
- **Total: 4**
- **Clarification:**
- Student W: 0
- Student X: 1
- Student Y: 2
- Student Z: 0
- Teacher Ms. A: 2
- **Total: 5**
- **Translation:**
- Student W: 0
- Student X: 0
- Student Y: 1
- Student Z: 1
- Teacher Ms. A: 3
- **Total: 5**
- **Social Interaction:**
- Student W: 2
- Student X: 1
- Student Y: 2
- Student Z: 1
- Teacher Ms. A: 0
- **Total: 6**
- **Total:**
- Student W: 3
- Student X: 2
- Student Y: 9
- Student Z: 3
- Teacher Ms. A: 5
- **Total: 22**

### 4.3 Elements Affecting Code Switching:

#### 4.3.1 Limited Vocabulary Knowledge:

Grosjean (1982) proposes that individuals resort to code switching when they encounter a vocabulary gap or when a language lacks an exact equivalent. Code switching (CS) acts as a bridge in such linguistic situations. Here's an illustration:

**W (S):** delicious?

**Y (S):** mazedaar. (delicious)

**W (S):** mazedaar.(delicious)

In this scenario, Urdu was employed to clarify the meaning of 'delicious' when the English term wasn't entirely clear.

#### 4.3.2 Informal Environment:

In less formal settings, the likelihood of code switching increases as students feel free to use their first language (L1) without fear of penalty. Through audio recordings, it has been observed that when the environment was more relaxed and informal, students naturally communicated in their L1. It was as if they all shared a common comfort level, as evidenced by the class collectively engaging in code switching during informal situations.

### 4.4 Students' Perspectives on Code Switching:

Code switching during instruction enriches the learning environment by enhancing student comprehension and application of the material. It also fosters positive relationships between students and teachers. Observations reveal that students appreciate receiving instruction in both their native language and the target language, especially preferring grammatical explanations in their native language.

### 4.5 Beneficial Effects of Code Switching on Students' Understanding of the Target Language:

Cole (1998) argues against a total ban on using the native language (L1) in classrooms, advocating instead for occasional translations to save time and prevent misunderstandings. In this study, both students and the teacher aimed to use their native language thoughtfully. While their initial intention was to restrict code switching during formal instruction, they acknowledged its importance during discussions to ensure clear comprehension of concepts.

### 4.6 Data Collection from Questionnaires:

#### 4.6.1 Results from Teachers' Questionnaires:

The responses from teachers' questionnaires revealed the following insights:

1. **Teaching Experience:** 58% of teachers reported less than ten years of experience teaching English in rural communities, while 42% had more than ten years of experience.



2. **First Language (L1) of Students:** The vast majority (95%) of students' first language was Urdu, with minimal representation of English (1%), Punjabi (1%), and other languages (3%).
3. **First Language of Teachers:** Similarly, 94% of teachers identified Urdu as their first language, with English (1%), Punjabi (1%), and other languages (4%) comprising the rest.
4. **Training in Local Language:** All teachers (100%) reported having formal training in the local language (Urdu).
5. **Students' Background Knowledge:** 95% of teachers considered their students to have adequate formal background knowledge in their local language.
6. **Use of Code Switching:** A significant majority (98%) of teachers reported using code switching and mixing in their classroom activities.
7. **Facilitation of Learning:** 98% of teachers perceived that students' proficiency in Urdu can aid in learning English, especially in tasks related to learning (98%), emotional development (80%), questioning (95%), and various other aspects (65%).
8. **Effectiveness:** The effectiveness of code switching and mixing was rated highly by 92% of teachers, with 6% rating it as average and 2% as below average; none rated it as poor. Teachers noted its efficiency in vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

#### 4.6.2 Results from Students' Questionnaires:

The students' questionnaires yielded the following outcomes:

1. **First Language:** The majority of students (97%) identified Urdu as their first language, with minimal representation of English (1%), Punjabi (1%), and other languages (1%).
2. **Language Use in School:** Within the classroom, 48% of students used English predominantly, while 30% used Urdu, and 22% used both languages.
3. **Language of Study:** 95% of students studied in both their first language and English.
4. **Teacher's Language Use:** 97% of students indicated that their teachers used their first language while teaching.
5. **Improvement in Understanding:** The use of the first language by teachers was reported to improve understanding by 94% of students.

6. **Student-Teacher Interaction:** 90% of students used their first language to interact with teachers in class, primarily for asking questions (55%), giving explanations (30%), and creating rapport (5%).
7. **Peer Interactions:** Students engaged in multilingual conversations with their peers during class.
8. **Importance of L1:** Students evaluated the practicality of using their first language (L1) inside and outside the classroom as follows: English (5%), Urdu (84%), both languages (10%), and other languages (1%). A significant majority (90%) considered its utility to be highly beneficial.

#### 4. DISCUSSION:

The research findings underscore the positive effects of code switching and language mixing in teaching and learning English as a second language, as viewed by both students and teachers. It highlights that code switching and mixing, particularly between Urdu and English, bolster students' confidence in addressing language challenges, foster a supportive learning environment, and enhance proficiency in the target language. Moreover, these practices enable students to articulate their understanding of language tasks in English while receiving feedback in their native language (L1) from teachers. The study found strong support for the effectiveness of code switching and mixing in ESL instruction, especially in activities like vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and word formation. Teachers' positive responses, particularly regarding questioning and emotional development (98%), underscored its educational benefits. Likewise, students expressed high satisfaction (97%) with classroom activities facilitated by code switching and mixing. Audio recordings demonstrated how teachers use code switching to manage classrooms and create a supportive learning atmosphere, helping students feel more comfortable by incorporating elements from their L1 and promoting mutual understanding and effective communication. Additionally, code switching plays a crucial role in nurturing emotional skills among language learners, maintaining their interest, and fostering a positive learning attitude in the ESL classroom. When students approach learning with the right mindset, they actively engage in tasks and embrace

new learning opportunities. Ultimately, the study highlights that code switching significantly contributes not only to cognitive learning but also to the affective and motivational aspects of language acquisition.

## 5. CONCLUSION:

The findings from both audio recordings and questionnaires highlight the significant role of code switching (CS) in the classroom, driven primarily by student needs and the dynamics of the learning environment. CS was predominantly used to fulfill various language functions tailored to students' requirements, as indicated by the analysis provided in the table. Socializing through CS was observed most frequently, while checking for understanding was noted as the least utilized function, with clarification and translation functions being equally common. This underscores the influential role of informal settings and gaps in vocabulary knowledge as key factors influencing CS occurrences. While CS facilitates effective communication and can naturally emphasize important information, its impact on learning outcomes requires further investigation over extended periods. There is a need to raise awareness among educators and learners about the careful and strategic use of CS in language instruction. While enhancing classroom interaction and aiding in conveying complex information efficiently, CS's role in developing students' language proficiency and cognitive skills demands ongoing research. Recognizing the dual benefits of CS in enhancing both linguistic competence and fostering a positive learning environment underscores its potential as a valuable pedagogical tool.

In summary, the practice of code switching and mixing enriches language learning by facilitating comprehension and communication, while also playing a crucial role in developing affective and psychomotor skills. By promoting a conducive learning atmosphere and cultivating a positive attitude towards learning, CS significantly contributes to the holistic development of language learners.

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