

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TOWARDS CODE-SWITCHING AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL IN PAKISTAN

Madiha Rehman ✉, English Lecturer, FAST - National University of Computer & Emerging Sciences Karachi, Pakistan

Younna Rehman, Linguistics Student, Jinnah University for Women Karachi, Pakistan

Abstract: This research study concentrates on the insight of students & teachers about code-switching at the intermediate level in Pakistan. It is evident that Pakistani classrooms are culturally diverse & teachers used to practice from one language to another to enable their students to stand on their toes. This research corroborated through the qualitative method that code-switching is an ultra-practical technique for mixed ability students at intermediate level. Code-switching not only takes place among students but also among educators to unclog the learning process. Nonetheless, not many have looked at it from the students' perspective in response to what they think about their teacher's code-switching in Pakistan. Therefore, the researcher took this opportunity to look into pupils' insight about code-switching. The semi-structured interview was collected from five intermediate students & five lecturers of a well-known private college in Karachi, Pakistan. The findings of the study indicate that students show a keen interest in learning the concepts when the teacher does code-switching during his lecture. Thus, this study suggests that code-switching is an effective teaching strategy when teaching intermediate students in Pakistani scenarios.

Keywords: Code Switching, insights, Pakistani intermediate classrooms

✉ madiharehman2512@gmail.com

Citation: Rehman, M. & Rehman, Y. (2021). Exploring Perceptions of Students & Teachers towards Code-Switching At Intermediate Level in Pakistan. *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)*, 2(3), 221 – 229. DOI: 10.25273/she.v2i3.10511



Published by Universitas PGRI Madiun. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization, English enjoys the state of Lingua Franca & has become the language of business, technology, medicine & education. Keeping in view the status of the English language, the teaching of English has been made mandatory from primary to graduate classes in Pakistan (Abdulloh & Usman, 2021). However, its effectiveness is still not like as it should be.

There are several causes of English which are struggling for its status in Pakistan & one of the main reasons is the inability of the learners /students to comprehend what teachers deliver in a foreign language (Akram & Mehmood, 2007). The reason for its ineffectiveness is we belong to a multilingual society where the medium of instruction is Urdu however, stakeholders & practitioners already have tried to handle the inability of this problem & according to them, and the strongest measure is "Code Switching" which is an up-shot of bilingualism. Lie (2010) defines code-switching as *"the use of two languages in the same discourse' this definition provides us with the simplest way to understand that code-switching is the conversational strategy that helps the students to comprehend the concept entirely"*. Teachers do code-switching to create an effective function of the lecture, to facilitate the learner to improve second language learning & so on.

The main purpose of this research is to look into student's insight about their teachers who switch codes from English to Urdu. Code-switching is considered a golden opportunity for teachers to deliver their lecture successfully (Bhatti, A., Shamsudin, S., Said, S., 2018) and it gives chance to students to clear their concepts and get good grades in intermediate board exams. But unfortunately, teachers who use the Urdu language along with English are being criticized by the administration & those teachers are considered unskilled in the English language,

however, in western countries code-switching is considered a facilitating tool for students. This research gap enforced the researcher to conduct the study in the Pakistani context.

The role of code-switching at an intermediate level in Pakistan is quite crucial & unfortunately, very few studies have been done in this domain in the Pakistani context. This instigated the researcher to undertake this study particularly to understand the intermediate student's insight about teacher's language's switching in delivering the material to his/her class.

Aims of the study

1. To examine students' perception about teacher's code-switching during lecture
2. To investigate the level of student's interest due to code-switching in class

Research questions

To reach these aims the following research questions were set forth:

1. What are students' perceptions about teachers' code-switching during the lecture?
2. What are the major factors that lead the teacher to switch codes during his/her lecture?

Review of literature

Code-switching is related to language processing and inference of L1 (Zhou & Wei, 2007). It is the conversational approach uses to establish norms or destroy group boundaries to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations (Gal, 1988). It is also considered the speech style in which bilingual/multilingual speakers move in or out of two or more languages during the conversation (Macswan, 1999, p.37). Many research studies in the code-switching phenomenon have been carried out with various perspectives & approaches.

The issue of effective English language learning in Pakistan is influenced by the pedagogical consideration of teachers. There is no

single theory that is all compressive & compacting to improve language learning in the local context (Shamim, F., Rashid, U., 2019).

Inter-language theory of Sclinker, F., (1972) was employed to formulate the theoretical framework that escorted the study & assisted in drawing a conceptual perspective of Code-switching in the Pakistani context.

Inter-language theory by Sclinker, F., (1972) as cited in Johannes, 2017) refers to the “*gradual process of learning the L2 form L1*”. Johanes (2017) believes that teachers should be aware of the gradual process of L2, he also claims that the concept of Inter-language helps enliven the students to observe their errors & mistakes during their class.

Alam, S. (2006) researched code-switching in the Bangladeshi context. They examine the necessity of code-switching in the academic setting. They concluded that code-switching plays a pivotal role in socio-cultural society & to progress & develop, the Bangladeshi people need to learn the art of code-switching to improve their lack of proficiency in English.

The comparative study was also prosecuted by Ahmed, R. Ahemed, R. Seemab, G. (2015). The research study was made to explore the trend of code-switching in Urdu EFL classes. They concluded their research that code-switching plays a significant role to make students confident & it also motivates the students to learn SL properly.

Gulzar, S., M. (2014) also researched the same domain. The main objective of his research was to find out the role of code-switching in EFL classes. His research study provides shreds of evidence that code-switching serves as a great deal of function in EFL classroom and it also assists unskilled students to exhibit an interest in class to improve the learning & understanding process faster.

METHODS

This research study aims to explore the

perceptions of teachers and students about CS at an intermediate level. A qualitative method was deployed to find out the answers to the research question. The reason for selecting qualitative research is because it involves direct experience & it makes the researcher be able to understand and interpret the setting (Rahman, 2016). Furthermore, this research aimed to obtain complete information in a real situation that happens in intermediate classrooms.

This study was conducted in the well renowned private intermediate institute, where the classes majorly contain mixed ability students who constantly need extra attention from teachers during lectures. The participants were selected based on Purposive Sampling because, in this sampling, participants are selected deliberately to get important information that cannot be obtained from other alternatives (Maxwell, 1996). The medium of instruction at the selected college for the lecture is English. However, teachers often switch codes to facilitate all students & this code-switching is one of the reasons private colleges produce good results in intermediate exams (Azlan, Narasuman, 2012).

A total of five different subject teachers from the college participated in an interview and shared their opinions about the concept of code-switching that they use unconsciously during their classes. Besides, five students from the Second Year Pre-medical class also have appeared in an interview to provide their perceptions about code-switching during the lecture.

Data collection tools

A Semi-Structured interview tool was employed to collect data for this small scale research study. The semi-structured interview has a list of questions to be called an interview guide (Bryman, A., 2016). The interview guide for this research study was adapted from Schweer's (1999) to get reliable data

from the participants. The interview guide was also served as a guideline for research to get rich answers from interviewees.

Furthermore, interviews are also flexible as they tell the perception of the participant about a topic.

The interviews were conducted using an interview guide which was prepared to show the direction to the issues related to research objectives.

Data analysis

The researcher did a thematic analysis to explore students' and teachers' perceptions about Code-switching. Students' and teachers' perceptions were recorded through structured interviews. Five students from Pre-medical classes and five lecturers other than English participated in the study. Students' and teachers' perceptions have been categorized into four and five major themes. For participants anonymity codes were assigned to participants. Students from the Pre-medical group were assigned SM with numerical 1 to 5 and teachers were given T code with numerical 1 to 5.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The current study explored the perceptions of students as well as teachers about code-switching in intermediate college classrooms. Many research studies assert that code-switching plays a pivotal role in catering to students' learning needs in classrooms. The findings of semi-structured interview from students and teachers are discussed below.

1. Findings of students' perceptions about teachers' code-switching

Thematic analysis of the interview showed that all participants demonstrated high interest in the use of code-switching & they favor positive acknowledgement towards the practice. The analysis of data revealed that students take more interest in class if the

teacher switches the code during her lecture.

Code-switching helps them to grasp the concept

During the interview one of the students replied to a question about teachers' code-switching in class,

SM1: "I think it's good to do code-switching because sometimes we don't get or grasp the concept in English so if the teacher repeats in Urdu, our concept would get much clear... If the teacher switches code, it helps us to think out of the box. Code-switching helps us to write clearly and according to the questions too during class work".

The interviewee revealed that they remain attentive & vigilant during class if the teacher switches the code during lecture, and it helps them to write the answer properly.

Code-switching improves the attitude of students & motivate them

Another student believed that teacher should switch the code as it helps them to enhance their vocabulary & make them be focused in class.

One of the interviewees replied to question no. 2(see appendix 1)

SM2: "Because of CS, we can ask the teacher because we are not afraid of the wrong English or other students would make fun of us. Due to code-switching we can ask and speak what we have in the mind at that moment. CS provides us with the confidence to ask questions from our teacher".

Therefore, the student's answer revealed that code-switching motivates students to participate in class confidently.

Code-switching helps students in mastering the language

During the interview, four students out of five favored the idea that CS helps them to improve their speaking & listening

skills because if the teacher is giving lectures in both languages then after some time their minds would automatically begin to translate the concept & gradually it would improve their interpreting skills. As student 1 replied the Q: 4 (see appendix 1)

SM: 1: "Yes, Code-switching does help in improving English, as when the teacher explains a certain thing in English & tell us the same thing in Urdu, we get to know the concept more clearly. This is how we remember the new word and phrase and can use it in another context".

Code-switching helps to produce better board results

All five participants agreed that CS plays a pivotal role in producing good board results as teachers already have explained them in both languages so students can attempt the paper & can produce better results because students have already grasped the concept. As student 3 answered question 5:

SM: 3: "We were already aware of two languages in class. Sometimes when stuck in a question, we translate it into the language in our mind that helps us to write the answer in English during board exams".

2. Teachers' perception of code-switching

Five lecturers have also appeared in a semi-structured interview. The Thematic analysis of the interview revealed that all the teachers including English lecturers switch code during teaching to serve effective & repertoire functions. Code-switching also helps them to achieve the learning outcomes and objectives of the lesson.

Teachers switch for better lecture delivery

During the interview, all teachers reported that they switch the code

because of their audience (students). They also revealed that if it seems that they are unable to apprehend the notion of the topic so ultimately teacher adopts the strategy of code-switching for better lecture delivery as one of those teachers said:

T:4: "If my students don't seem to comprehend my lecture due to one language, so it means I am the controller of the class than a facilitator because I am not realizing my students' need and preferring to focus more on English language".

The above statement of teacher shows that for facilitating the students, teachers switch code as per need because the objective of their teaching is not to make them proficient in the English language but to achieve learning outcomes.

Code-switching is better for high-grade intermediate board results

During an interview with teachers, all teachers agreed that CS plays a pivotal role in producing good board results. The medium of instruction for the teacher is in English, and they are restricted to speak English during lectures. However, the class situation is different, as each class consists of mix ability groups & they are not experts in English. So the teacher has to switch codes to bring good board results. The Following is the response of one of the teachers regarding whether code-switching helps to bring good board results or not.

T: 2 & T: 5: "At intermediate level in Pakistan, teachers are recognized, and promoted based on our board results. If the results would not be as the institute's expectations, nobody would ask about our medium of instruction in the class throughout the year. However, we would be asked about the reason for such bad results. That is why we need to switch codes in class to facilitate every individual.

So that in the end, the slow learner would also bring good grades in the intermediate board”.

The teachers pointed out that they are not in class to improve the language proficiency of students. They can help pupils to improve their language skills, however, teachers' main objective is to bring good board results & this is the core reason for their promotion in the institute.

Code-switching helps to break the communication barrier between student & teacher

Two of the teachers also disclosed that code-switching helps students communicate with the teacher more confidently. They share their opinions or ask a question due to code-switching during the lecture. However, if they use only English in class, students feel hesitant to inquire about their queries. One of the reasons can be fear of speaking wrong in class.

As one of the Physics lecturers replied to the question how you would improve the communication gap by using CS? (See appendix -2)

T: 1: “When I am explaining derivation in the class, I notice students want me to speak English & Urdu. You know, physics is a conceptual subject. If I would keep on giving a lecture in English, consequently they tend to be more confused at the end of the lecture & may avoid asking the question because the very first step of derivation would not be cleared to them so, they must be scared asking the question from me.”

Thus, CS is the great trigger that breaks all kinds of communication barriers of students.

3. Drawbacks of code-switching

The interviewer also inquired about the drawbacks of CS & a few of the responses are as follows.

Code-switching hinders in language proficiency

One of the lecturers replied to the question asked about the disadvantages of code-switching.

T: 2: “I think, the only disadvantage of CS besides all the advantages is that we are paying attention to improving foreign language skills. We do not provide them with an environment where they indulge themselves & try to speak only English... Hence, I believe the teacher should avoid code-switching as much as possible”.

The comparative study by Johanes (2017) also asserted that code-switching & code-mixing is associated with failure to learn the English language. Moreover, there are also chances of errors during translation. He concluded his research dissertation by suggesting teachers be limited in code-switching to enable students to master the language.

CONCLUSION

One of the aims of this research study was to investigate the students' and teachers' perception of code-switching in class and to what extent it can play its role to get success in improving the language & in generating good board results.

The result of the research study indicates that students prefer a combination of English and Urdu in their classes. Moreover, they also showed themselves as a willing learner who tends to learn and speak English confidently.

On the other hand, teachers who use code-switching in class are well prepared, well planned & have clear objectives for the lesson. The teachers tended to switch codes in those situations where they find students confused and unable to grasp the scientific concept. Moreover, they sometimes get compelled to use CS due to the struggling learners in their class.

Four of the teachers mainly switch codes to clarify the concept as they consider it an effective strategy. However, one of those teachers does code-switching because a few of the students in class face a lot of trouble understanding the English language.

The findings of this research investigation revealed that it is evident that CS is an effective, rich, productive & cornucopian strategy for intermediate colleges, but it should have its limitations. It must not be considered the only method of teaching to get better results. However, institutes should include a few language courses for struggling learners. This step could help them to understand the lecture without any trouble. Thus, it is inferred that teachers' code-switching is entirely related to learners' effective support & their success in bringing desirable board results.

REFERENCES

- Abdulloh & Usman. (2021). Students' Perception towards Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Sociolinguistic: A Case at an English Education Major. *EDULINK (Education and Linguistics Knowledge) Journal*, 3(1):24-34.
- Ahmad, B-H. (2008). Teachers' Code-Switching in Classroom Instructions for Low English Proficiency Learners. *English Language Teaching*, 2, 49-55.
- Ahmed, R. Ahemed, R. Seemab, G. (2015) Concepts of Code Switching and Code Mixing as Facilitators in Urdu EFL class. *Journal of Policy Research*, 1(2), 62-66.
- Akram & Mehmood, (2007). The Status and Teaching of English in Pakistan. *LANGUAGE IN INDIA*, 7(1), 1-7.
- Alam, S. (2006). Code Mixing in Bangladesh: A case study of non-government white-collar service holders and professionals. *Asian Affairs*, 28.
- Azlan, Narasuman, (2012). The Role of Code-Switching as a Communicative Tool in an ESL Teacher Education Classroom. *Social and Behavioral Sciences (Conference)*. 458 - 467.
- BENSEN, H., ÇAVUŞOĞLU. (2013). Reasons for the Teachers' Uses of Code-Switching In Adult EFL Classrooms. *Yücel Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi Sayı. 20 (2)* 69-82.
- Bhatti, A., Shamsudin, S., Said, S. (2018). Code-Switching: A Useful Foreign Language Teaching Tool in EFL Classrooms. *English Language Teaching*. 11(6), 93-101. doi: 10.5539/elt.v11n6p93
- Brinkmann. (2016). *The Role of Teachers' Beliefs in the Implementation of Learner centered Education in India*. [Doctoral Dissertation] Education & International Development UCL Institute of Education. London.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press. United Kingdom.
- Gal, Susan. (1988). The Political Economy of Code Choice. In: Monica Heller (ed.) *Code switching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 243-261.
- Gulzar, S. M. (2014). Teachers, code switching in a context-Focused English as a second language (EFL) classroom. *International Journal of linguistics*, 6(4), 130-153.
- Gumperz, J.J., 1982. *Language & second identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hadei, Kumar, Jie. (2016) Social Factors for Code-Switching-a Study of Malaysian-English Bilingual Speakers. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 4, No. 3, 2016, pp. 122-127. doi:10.11648/j.ijll.20160403.15

- Johanes, J. (2017). *The Influence of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing On Learning English Language in Secondary Schools: The Case of Rombo District*. Masters thesis, Open University of Tanzania
- Johansson, S. (2013). *Code-switching in the English classroom: What teachers do and what their students wish they did*. [Degree Project]. Karlstade University.
- Lie, H.L.J. (2010). Code-switching in the teaching of English as a second language to secondary schools students. *Malaysian General of ELT Research*, 6(1), 45.
- Lin, Angel. (2013). Classroom code-switching: Three decades of research. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 4(1), 195-218.
- MacSwan, J. (1999). *A Minimalist Approach to Intrasentential Code Switching*. Routledge. New York, NY: Garland Publishing
- Malik, J.G. (2010). Code switching: Awareness about its utility in bilingual classrooms. *Bulletin of education and research*, 32(2): 23-44.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. London, Applied Social Research Methods Series.
- Rahman. (2016). The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Language "Testing and Assessment" Research: A Literature Review. *Journal of Education and Learning*. 6(1). Canadian Center of Science and Education.
- Schweers, C. (1999). Using L1 in the L2 Classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, 37, 6-13.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Inter language. *International Review of Applied Linguistic*, 10(4), 201-231. Available at <https://www.degruyter.com/view/j/iral on 11/3/2015>.
- Serman Boztepe. (2008). Issues in Code-Switching: Competing Theories and Models. *Working Papers in TESOL & Applied Linguistics*. Columbia University. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8765DVB>
- Shamim, F., Rashid, U., (2019). The English/Urdu-Medium Divide in Pakistan: Consequences for Learner Identity and Future Life Chances. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 6(1), 43-61.
- Zhou & Wei. (2007). Code-switching as a Result of Language Acquisition: A Case Study of a 1.5 Generation Child from China. The 2007 Annual Conference of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Seattle, Washington.

APPENDIX -1**Students' Interview Guide**

1. What do you think about the CS of your subject teacher? Do you think you enjoy lectures if the teacher switches the code?
2. Do you think CS allow you to enhance your vocabulary skills & motivate you to learn the concept?
3. What do you like to deliver the lecture, in English only or Urdu or code-switching? & why
4. Do you think CS can improve your language skills?
5. What do you think CS helps you to improve your board results?

APPENDIX -2**Teachers' Interview Guide**

1. In what situations do you choose to speak Urdu?
2. Do you think CS can improve intermediate results?
3. What do you think, can CS improve the communication gap between you & your students?
4. Are there advantages to changing the language to Urdu in your teaching?
5. Are there disadvantages to changing the language to Urdu when you teach?
6. Is your choice of language different depending on which one of your classes you are teaching?