

## Code Switching in English as Second Language in ESL classroom: Students' identities, attitudes and feelings

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### Abstract

Code switching and code mixing is a widespread phenomenon in bilingual communities now days where speakers switch back and forth between their native language (L1) and their second language (L2). In Pakistan, English vocabulary is frequently mixed in Urdu, the National Language of Pakistan. The tendency of mixing of English words is not only limited to spoken discourse but are also seen in the written data as well. The policy of many public and private institutions demands to use only English language as a medium of teaching. This practice is more visible in the classrooms where English is taught as a Second Language. In this scenario, the policy makers ignore the fact that the learning abilities of L2 learners do vary. In fact they ignore the feelings and attitudes of L2 learners towards this second language.

Teaching of English has been made compulsory but its effectiveness is a matter of question. The aim of this paper is to investigate the effects of code switching and code mixing on the native identities, attitudes, voices, feelings and understanding of the L2 learners in ESL classroom. It also examines how English language and culture posing a serious linguistic and cultural shock and threat upon natives. The methodology applied in this research is both qualitative and quantitative. The target populations are 100 students of different disciplines from University of Gujrat. They have been observed for 1 hours lecture daily for a week. The classroom discourse and questionnaires add a great deal to the data collection. All the data is analyzed by applying SPSS. The findings of this research reveal how the frequent practice of switching and mixing of English affecting the native identities of the learners. The findings are shown in graphs and tables.

**Key Words:** Code switching and code mixing, Identities, Attitudes, ESL classroom

## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction and background of the research

Language is not only a means of communication. It also reflects our culture and identity. Language is a guide to social reality and plays a vital role in building a nation and shaping an individual's as well as national identity "as language practices are socially and practically embedded" (Heller, 2007: p.1). There is a dialectical relationship between identities, language and culture: identities shape language and culture and are also shaped by them. In this era of multilingualism and multiculturalism we come across a new phenomenon of hybrid cultures i.e. mixing of two cultures due to colonization, migration and trade etc.

Pakistan is multilingual and diverse region with more than 70 languages including Urdu (the National language of Pakistan), English (second language) and regional languages. Urdu is a key symbol of our identity as Pakistani. The mixing of English in the national and regional languages is one of the dimensions of spread of English in Pakistan. The gradual dominance of English over the prestigious and official matters and adaptation of English culture in our cuisine and dressings could be a serious threat to our native identity, language and culture.

English is widely used language in the world of academia all over the world. For this reason the past few years have witnessed an increase in teaching through English at all levels in Pakistan. Most of the educational institutions are essentially bilingual because the influence of the local languages could be seen in the interaction between teachers and students. Moreover the teachers and students are bilingual in a way they code switch from English to Urdu in the natural flow of classroom discourse.

In our daily routines, we come across the people who prefer to speak English rather than Urdu even that many of them cannot speak English well. Most of our youth like to eat Pizza rather than Dal chawal, love to wear jeans than ShalwarQameez. In fact, it is not wrong to say that English is the mode of speaking among the elite class in Pakistan. By these means we are getting far away from our national and cultural values and norms. Keeping this situation in view, the paper has attempted to examine the ways in which the phenomenon of code switching influence the learners native identity, their feelings for or attitudes towards the second language. It intends to observe whether English as second language is posing a threat to our national language Urdu as well as regional languages, our identity and Pakistani culture.

### Historical Background

After colonization, English has been treated as a dominant language and we could see its permanent marks on Urdu and Hindi. In Pakistan, English is now considered an important component of education and is taught as compulsory subject at all levels of education. According to Rasul (2009: p.42), after the creation of Pakistan Urdu was given the status of national language, but

“Certain factors- the colonial background, controversial issue of official language controversy over medium of education, and, prestige factor attached to English, industrialization and globalization- have added to the importance of English with the rising of every dawn”.

### **Significance of the study**

- This research documents how code switching and mixing effecting the native’s identities and also examines the attitudes and feelings of L2 learners towards English.
- To find whether English as second language might be a threat to our national and cultural identity

### **Research questions**

- What are the effects of code mixing of English on Learners native identities and feelings in ESL classroom?
- What are the student’s attitudes towards code switching and code mixing in ESL classroom?
- Are our National language Urdu and our native culture being ignored through the frequent practice of code switching and code mixing?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Following both quantitative and qualitative research designs, the present study is an inquiry to measure the ways in which code switching and mixing of English influence the identities, feelings and understandings of the ESL learners. This study used two instruments in the process of data collection: questionnaire and observation in the classroom. The researcher himself as a non-participant observer made observations which were recorded through an audio recorder. The study incorporated both close and open ended questionnaires to collect the data from the respondents of the study.

### **Population and sampling**

For this study, the population is the students of different disciplines at Masters Level from

University of Gujrat. The sample of 100 students was selected randomly for the questionnaires to be filled. Among these 100 students, 51% are males and 49% are females.

### **Observations**

The interactions between the students and teachers during lectures were recorded. These audio recorded lectures helped the completion of the process of this paper in the form of descriptivereport in the data analysis section.

### **Questionnaire**

The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire is used in this paper. The scale ranges from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The questionnaire comprises of two sections:

- Section (A): consists of respondent's information and guideline in order to fill the questionnaire
- Section (B): carries 10 questions about the three variables i.e. Identity, Feelings and understandings of ESL learners

### **Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, SPSS program is utilized to analysis the data. The findings of the study are shown in the tables and descriptive report in the data analysis section. The pie charts of the data are in appendix section.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Code switching is the process whereby the speakers know more than languages and use them interchangeably. In Pakistani classrooms, the mixing of English is a very common and frequent practice now days. English is the medium of instruction in most of the schools, colleges and universities. It is supplemented with all the subjects whether it is psychology, Mathematics, Pure sciences, ESL, EFL and any other language classes. Much research has been conducted on examining the positive effects of code switching on teaching and learning process.

Alenezi A. Abdullah conducted an exploratory study to investigate the student's attitude towards the code switching as medium of instruction. (Alenezi, 2010) . He adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches to find out the language attitude and preference of Kuwaiti students at the Allied Health College in Kuwait University. In his results, he showed that most of the participants agreed that code switching make course easy to understand. They too agreed that teaching in both Arabic and English increase the chance to pass the

examination because all the syllabus and research books are in English.

Mohamed El Mamoun Abdel Magid&Abdelrahim Hamid Mugaddam's study addresses the role of code switching to students L1 (Arabic) in ESL classrooms. (Mugaddam, 2013). It determined that L1 has been found useful in expanding the interactions between students and teachers in ESL classrooms and facilitate the learning process. This article incorporated quantitative data from classroom observations, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from students of ESL classroom in Sudan and Saudi Arabia. The results of this study showed that most of the participants agreed that use of L1 (Arabic) helps in understanding new meanings, vocabulary and transmission of new contexts.

Susan Pollard viewed the benefits of code switching in a bilingual programe. (Pollard, 2002). In this study, he explored effects of code switching on Spain dominant students in two cities in the US. He also examined that code switching could be used as an effective tool in classrooms,

Samar Rukh ,NargisSaleem , Hafiz GulamMustafa Javeed, NasirMehmood explored the student's attitude towards code switching and code mixing and its influence on their L2 learning. This is a case study of business students of Sargodha University. (Samar Rukh, 2014)

A PHD scholar LiaqatIqbal conducted a study to investigate the Linguistic Features of Code Switching. This is a study of Urdu/English bilingual teachers' classroom interactions. (Iqbal, 2011). He used observation as a tool of data collection and observed the classes of 16 universities of Lahore.

Malik AjmalGulzar and Samina Amin Qadir addressed the issues of language choice and use in Pakistani perspective. (Qadir, 2010)

Huma Imran Khan conducted a research on investigating the relationship between bilingual instruction and learner's performance in English assecond language. (Khan, 2012)

Constance Ellwood incorporates a study which discusses the relationship between code switching and identities among peer group talk in classrooms. The sample was the students with Asian and European backgrounds, studying English in Australia. (Ellwood, 2008). He observed three main acts of identity in code switching data. Firstly, the students showed frustration and demonstrated a desire to align with the phenomenon. Secondly, the students were critical of the teacher's method of teaching, choice of topics or knowledge. The third effect was their desire to become a global and international person.

A video documentary Pakistan Education and Women by Ali Haider is also relevant to this paper. In this the prominent educationist Dr Anita Ghulam Ali talked about the people of Manchar Lake, Goth Khan Mohammad Mallah, Sindh. (Ali, 2012). Her words are quoted below:

“The first thing that they say they want is a school. They do not ask for water; they do not ask for electricity. The first thing they say is that they want an Angrezi school”

Dr Anita Ali’s words show that English language and culture has deeper effects on the psychology of the people of Pakistan. These are the words about the Macheras living on the Manchar Lake. They do not crave for the basic necessities of life. The only thing they want is Angrezi. It also shows that they want to get rid of their own identity, language and culture. In the urban areas, the shift from Urdu to English and from Desi food to Continental is more visible. In our homes, the children are asked to speak in English. We prefer to send our children in LGS and Beacon house rather than government schools.

#### **Case Study of Neha:**

Neha is the student of Beacon house and lives in Iqbal town, Lahore. Her mother, Miss Ayesha, is also a teacher in Beacon house. Neha does not know our national language properly. She understands the Urdu language but cannot speak it. Neha’s social settings are not foreigners. She lives in Pakistan but is far away from its language and culture.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :**

##### **Interpretation of Observations**

From observation of the classes, it was clear that English and Urdu are interchangeably used in ESL classrooms. In fact there is a shift from Urdu to English as the matrix language of code switching

i.e. English is dominant in classroom interactions. For example,

- Teacher: Aajhumara topic of discussion ha communicative hurdles (Rukawten)
- Teacher: Do you guys have any idea about it (Koi idea ha apko)
- Student: Language
- Teacher: yes right, any other one (Koi or)

Another example is taken from the classical poetry’s class

- Chaucer was the first English poet aur wo London me pedahua
- Chaucer ka humor harmless ha; instead it is spoken as of Sunny
- Ye jo hum English k spread ki bat krte hain natu it was Chaucer who paved the way

for the emergence of English as the official, national and literary language of Urdu.

### Interpretation of Close ended questions

The 5-likert scale based questionnaire was analyzed on SPSS and the frequency of the respondent's answers is shown in percentage. The percentage is presented through tables and also through pie charts which are in Appendix section.

**Table 1: Effects of code switching and code mixing on the Understanding of the learners**

Sr. no	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Code switching and code mixing helps the students to their understanding.	39%	31%	10%	20%	
2	In your English classes, you translate words, phrases, sentences and even texts to ensure understanding lesson content.	35%	55%	10%		
3	Through Code switching and code mixing teacher is able to transfer his message well from English to Urdu.	9%	62%	29%		

Table 1 shows the learners response in percentage about the effects of code switching in understanding of the content of the lecture. From question 1 of the table 1, the percentage shows that 39% respondents strongly agree on that code switching helps in understanding the lecture. The question 2 shows that 55% prefer to translate from English to Urdu. 62% of the 100% respondents agree that teacher transfers his message in a better way in Urdu.

**Table 2: Effects of code switching and code mixing on the Identities of the learners**

Sr. no	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4	Through code switching and mixing of English, the students feel their ideology in danger	10%	47%	12%	19%	10%
5	Is English as a brand name a big threat to Urdu	14%	54%	18%	6%	8%

	language					
6	Language reflects culture. English Culture has reflections on the dressing and eatables of the ESL learners	60%	22%		9%	9%
7	Do you think that Urdu as well as Pakistani culture being ignored due to the frequent practice of code switching	22%	60%	4%	6%	8%

The question 4 from table 2 shows that 47% learners feel their native identity in danger due to the frequent practice of code switching and mixing. 54% learners feel that English is used as a brand name now days and it is an alarming situation for our native language according to the result of question 5. In a higher percentage, 60% learners strongly agree the fact that by learning English, we are adapting their culture too in our daily routines, dress codes and eating habits. According to the higher percentage of question 7 from table 2, 60% learners are of the view that Urdu and our national culture is being ignored due to English.

**Table 3: Attitudes of learners towards code switching and code mixing of English**

Sr. no	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	Do you prefer code switching in English in peer group talk	5%	9%	4%	71%	11%
9	Teaching the course only in English is beneficial to me	12%		25%	59%	4%
10	Teaching the course only in Urdu is beneficial to me	32%	24%	21%	20%	3%

71% respondents are of the view that they do not use English in their peer group talk. Instead they prefer to talk in Urdu and any regional language. In higher percentage 59% disagree in accepting only English language as medium of instruction. Some of the students view Urdu language as a better medium of instruction as per the percentage of the last question of the table 3.



### **Interpretation of Open ended questions**

An open ended questionnaire, based on two questions, is too used to find out the effects of codeswitching and mixing on learner's native identities and ideologies.

#### **what are the effects of code switching and code mixing of English on our society?**

According to one participant, being bilingual has become necessary now days. The people in villages prefer Urdu than any regional language for their children to speak whereas the urban population would like to speak or mix English in their communication.

Another respondent told that he visited some schools for the admission of his niece and came to know that many of the schools are not teaching Arts subjects. By eliminating Arts subjects, they are ignoring languages which used to teach as optional subjects. In this way, the regional languages are going towards dying stage. Secondly, the policy of privatization of educational institutions is responsible for the identity crises which our culture and language is facing today.

A female respondent answered that English has affected the psychology of the people in a great way. They use English as a trademark for being honorable and respectful.

#### **Is English gaining more dominance and respectable status than Urdu?**

According to one respondent, English has dominated the most prestigious functions in our country. It is seen as a way of adhering to high standards and enjoying a respectable status in our society. We like to introduce ourselves in English rather than Urdu. I must say that we are ashamed of our culture and language to some extent.

Another respondent answered the same question that English is the language of elite class in Pakistan and Urdu has been reserved for other strata. It has also been observed that the bourgeoisie consider the middle and lower classes illiterate and has developed a kind of abhorrence towards them.

A female respondent said that the origin of Urdu could be traced in Mughal era, the glorious period of Muslim history. But now all the glory and historical significance has been moving towards decline. I would like to quote the example of Russia, China and France here who adhere to their national language. These countries are more successful than Pakistan. It means we should also give importance to English like any other foreign language and recognize our national language Urdu as our true and only heritage.

## Conclusion

The researcher tried to answer the research questions by analyzing data which showed the frequency of their response in percentages. The results show that code switching and mixing is an effective tool for understanding the content and it also facilitates the learning process. But on the other hand the mixing of English language is the mixing of English culture. The data shows that the learners are gradually shifting from their indigenous culture to western culture which is an alarming situation for our national identity. As the video shows that the Macheras prefer only English school than their basic necessities of life.

The results of the data from observations, questionnaires and case studies show that the use of Urdu as well as regional languages have been decreasing rapidly. English has dominated the official and most prestigious domains of Pakistan. English is compulsory for higher education, to get job, to do research etc. As per the answer of one respondent,

“We feel ashamed to introduce ourselves in Urdu; I think that we cannot survive without English. Without English, the pace of our success would be decreased.”

To conclude the findings of this paper, the researcher observed that the status of Urdu is at stake i.e. we are losing our identities gradually, moving far away from our norms and values. This paper opens the door for other researchers to work on the strategies to mitigate the western effects on our native identities. It also paves the ways for those who are interested to take measures for the survival of Urdu in its historical glory and significance.

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