



RESEARCH PAPER

Undergraduate Students' Uses of Code Switching (CS) in Pakistani Universities: A Reflective Study

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: March 01, 2022 Accepted: April 22, 2022 Online: April 25, 2022	Pakistan is a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic society, therefore, code switching (CS) is a common feature of the Pakistani society. The study has deployed the qualitative and quantitative methods to answer the research questions. The data was collected from the undergraduate students and their teachers of two public sector universities located in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. The findings reveal that both undergraduate students and university teachers are using CS as a tool beneficially for multiple reasons in universities such as, teaching, translation, classroom discussion, comprehension, and explanation, conversation, asking for clarification and responding to teachers' questions. The code switching alleviates students' language anxiety. It is recommended that CS as an effective bilingual strategy of teaching should be included in teacher education programs to train the university faculty members for implementing it successfully in their classrooms for achieving the objectives of their academic courses.
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Introduction

Generally, it is observed that code switching is used during the discourse about a particular topic, quoting another person, expressing solidarity or gratitude, asking for clarification, showing group identity, providing inspiration, translating words or phrases, unconsciously engaging into code switching, getting something and saying something secretly (Weston, 2013). The purpose of the research study is to discuss that code switching is a regular feature in a Pakistani university. The undergraduate students use code switching for informal conversation, asking clarification, group discussions, asking questions and faculty members use code switching to provide explanation of information, responding to questions, appreciating students' responses, translation of concepts, ensuring students' classroom participation through informal class discussion.

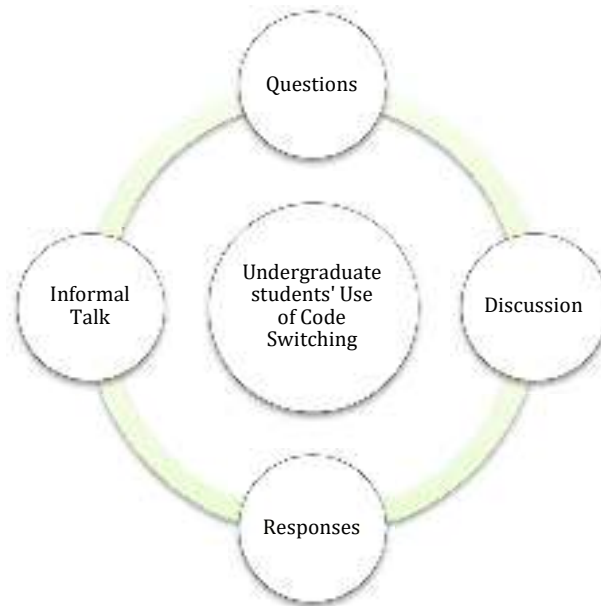


Figure 1. Undergraduate Students' Uses of Code Switching in Universities

The faculty members of a Pakistani university also make use of code switching for multiple reasons. The following figure expresses university teachers' uses of CS.



Figure 2. University Teachers' Code Switching Uses

Literature Review

The switching from one language to another is the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems (Li Wei, 2000). Code switching has permeated into all sects of life particularly in mass media, social media, trade and commerce and the academe. Outside the classrooms, code switching is heavily utilized for different purposes (Weston, 2013). Wright (2002) recognized five functions which are for: a. language facility, b. language economy, c. euphemism, d. stylistic purposes in communication and expression of multiple identities.

Studies on teachers' and learners' attitudes and perspectives toward language switching can be at par with the abundance of research on its effect and functions.

There are various social theories that are related to code switching. Code-switching relates to, and sometimes indexes social-group membership in bilingual and multilingual communities. Some sociolinguists describe the relationships between code-switching behaviours and class, ethnicity, and other social positions. The code-switching does not simply reflect social situations but is a means to create social situations (Ahmad, 2009). There are four models of code switching:

Markedness model (MM)

Markedness model, developed by Carol Myers-Scotton (1993), is one of the more complete theories of code-switching motivations. It posits that language users are rational and choose to speak a language that clearly marks their rights and obligations, relative to other speakers, in the conversation and its setting. When there is no clear, unmarked language choice, speakers practise code-switching to explore possible language choices.

Sequential analysis (SA)

Li Wei (2000) and Peter (1998) argued that the social motivation behind code-switching lies in the way code-switching is structured and managed in conversational interaction. Using conversation analysis (CA), these scholars focus their attention on the sequential implications of code-switching. That is, whatever language a speaker chooses to use for a conversational turn, or part of a turn, impacts the subsequent choices of language by the speaker as well as the hearer.

Communication accommodation theory (CAT)

The communication accommodation theory (CAT) is developed by Howard and Tania (2007). They posit that when speakers seek approval in a social situation, they converge their speech with that of the other speaker. This can include, but is not limited to, the language of choice, accent, dialect, and paralinguistic features used in the conversation. In contrast to convergence, speakers might also engage in divergent speech, in which an individual person emphasizes the social distance between himself and other speakers by using speech with linguistic features characteristic of his own group.

Teachers and students have their own individual reasons as to why they are motivated to switch to another language during discourse. For teachers, code switching is used as a means of asking, responding and clarifying students' questions and clarifications. As a result, classroom environment becomes more appealing for students. Students' level of anxiety is lessened and learning becomes more meaningful as opposed to a rigid practice of the English Only Policy (Modupeola, 2013 p. 93). It is impossible to do away with pragmatics in everyday speech. For that same reason, pragmatic functions are another area of curiosity among code switching enthusiasts. Not only do students benefit from its effect and function but teachers as well. Bernardo believes that code switching '*may result to a more definite rendering of a complex idea that would otherwise be imprecise or vague when expressed in just one language*' (Bernardo, 2005 p.159).

Having been aware of the pervasiveness of code switching in a learning environment, as manifested by its relationship to pragmatic functions used by both learners and teachers, researchers turned to another function of language switching that directly falls on pedagogy, that is, code switching as a teaching strategy.

Weston (2013) explored that code switching is used as a tool in the classroom to facilitate learning. It is helpful for students with different reading levels in understanding reading texts. On the other hand, teachers switch in delivering lessons on content areas. There is sufficient literature that informs teachers on how to utilize code switching as a pedagogical tool in the classroom, for instance, providing opportunities to communicate and enhance students' understanding, facilitating flow of classroom instruction and drawing students' attention to the objectives of the lesson (Fennema-Bloom, 2009).

Malik (1994) investigated 200 low English proficient learners in one university at Pakistan. Using a quantitative research design, Malik was able to confirm his hypothesis that the use of code switching has a positive effect on learners' second language acquisition. Students' improvement was then traced to teachers' switching between codes when explaining metalinguistic rules, setting a non-threatening classroom environment and helping students learn a new vocabulary.

Similarly, an investigative study by Ahmad (2009) in a communication class attended at different times by 257 low proficiency level learners in one public university in Malaysia confirmed the same hypothesis that Malik had in his study, specifically that there is a 'significant relationship between code switching and students' positive affective learning state and learning success'. Data analysis yielded the following pedagogical functions teachers' code switching served: 'a. checking for understanding', b. 'explaining difficult concepts' c. 'explaining the meaning of new words' d. 'elaborating on matters concerning classroom management' e. 'making learners feel relaxed' f. 'providing explanations on grammatical aspects' g. 'establishing contact with learners.' (Ahmad, 2009 p. 51-52)

Gulzar (2010, p. 35-41) found out that a high proficiency in English does not disqualify experienced teachers from using code switching in interacting with students. Through a predetermined category of possible pedagogical functions, the researcher elicited pedagogical motives for employing code switches whenever teachers clarify ideas that are difficult to express in the L2, to develop intimacy with the students, to make students feel interested in the topic, to add dimension to their message, and to ensure solidarity. Estremera (2017) and Fullmer & Oyzon (2013) identified common problems confessed by teachers that are lack of instructional materials, inadequate vocabulary knowledge and insufficient teacher training. They have identified most important pedagogical functions of code switches that revolve on aiding students' comprehension, lessening students' anxiety level, and encouraging students' participation.

Material and Methods

The researchers used qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect the data from the faculty and undergraduate students of two public universities of Punjab, Pakistan. The universities have been given the pseudonyms HU and MU. The instruments were questionnaires and interviews for faculty members and undergraduate students. The sample size of undergraduate students' was n=225 and faculty was n=35. For interviews, 20 faculty members and 20 undergraduate students participated in the research. The selected academic program was BS Economics. The data was analyzed using SPSS and NVivo quantitative and qualitative data analysis softwares.

Results and Discussion

Use of code switching for classroom teaching

It is seen that 10 HU teachers and 14 MU teachers report that they use code switching for teaching BS Economics students (see Tables 1 & 2). It is noted that 8 HU teachers and 8

MU teachers report that they have preference for code switching of English and Urdu languages for teaching undergraduate students. 11 HU teachers and 12 MU teachers report that they do not prefer to teach using English (see Tables 1 & 2).

Table 1
HU teachers' preference to use code switching

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
Teaching in English	4	7	3	4	2.78
Teaching with Code Switching	3	2	4	4	3.44

Table 2
MU teachers' preference to use code switching

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
Teaching in English	4	8	3	2	2.47
Teaching with Code Switching	2	3	4	4	3.29

They discuss about the necessity to make use of code switching in classroom in the focus group interviews as MUT3 comments, '*in our classrooms, the undergraduate students do not understand theoretical concepts if only English is used*'. The teachers make use of the national language because they keep in sight their students' educational and linguistic backgrounds. MUT6 says, '*Combination of Urdu and English languages is used to satisfy the students and to increase their comfort level in the classroom*'.

It appears that these BS Economics students fall short of adequate English language skills because most of them have been educated in Urdu medium schools and colleges which leads to significant variation in the linguistic background of the students. The responses suggest that the undergraduate students are unable to grasp the concepts if taught only in English, thus, in order to tackle this problem, teachers rely on bilingual instruction to explain the concepts and terminology presented in English. The respondent MUT2 explains that the teachers '*we are bilingual using code switching...and give examples in Urdu from our culture*' (MUT1). HUT4 comments, '*I provide the terminology in English but explain the meanings of words and theoretical concepts in Urdu*'.

It can be implied that teachers deliver their lectures in English but explain them in Urdu to bring themselves close to students' understanding. It can be interpreted that not only undergraduate students face language learning dilemmas but teachers also confront pedagogical challenges. This suggests that not only students have their preference for using code switching in the classroom but highly qualified university teachers' perceptions suggest that they also have natural preference for code switching.

Significantly, the respondent MUT2 explains:

'We are directed to use English as a language of instruction but undergraduate students lack the required proficiency in English. They have to be guided through code switching for attaining the course objectives'. They underperform if the lecture and instructions are delivered in English.

This is corroborated by respondent HUT2 who agrees about the effects of using only English in universities:

'Language affects students' class performance, their potential to grasp something....not knowing a language acts as a barrier and affects adversely his/her class participation and performance'.

Code switching for classroom discussion

The questionnaire responses show, 9 teachers of HU and 11 teachers of the other university attempt to build up discussion in English in classroom (see Tables 3 & 4). However, participant MUT2 says, *' when I engage them in discussion...they are unable to communicate in English as they hesitate to speak English. Then I ask them to use both Urdu and English languages using code switching to express their ideas'* (MUT4). The responses show that 15 teachers of HU and the same number of BS teachers allow their students to talk in both Urdu and English in classroom, whereas, a total of 19 teachers from both universities claim that they do not permit their students to talk in mother tongue in classroom (see Tables 3 & 4).

Table 3
HU teachers' perceptions of code switching in classroom

Items	Never	Rarely	Mostly	Always	Mean
Allowing students to talk using code switching	0	3	12	3	3.83
Permitting students to talk in MT	5	7	2	4	2.61

Table 4
MU teachers' perceptions of code switching in classroom

Items	Never	Rarely	Mostly	Always	Mean
Allowing students to talk using code switching	3	0	12	3	3.47
Permitting students to talk in MT	9	4	0	2	1.94

Code switching for informal conversation in universities

It is noted, 6 teachers of HU and 11 teachers of MU report that English should be used for informal conversation in universities, while 10 HU teachers and 13 MU teachers agree that both Urdu and English should be used for informal conversation in universities. The responses show that 8 HU teachers and 10 MU teachers yearn for the mother tongue to be used for informal conversation in universities (see Tables 5 & 6).

Table 5
HU teachers' perceptions of code switching for informal conversation in universities

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
English for informal conversation	5	3	6	0	2.59
Urdu and English for informal conversation	3	4	10	0	3.00
Mother Tongue for informal conversation	1	5	6	2	3.18

Table 6
MU teachers' perceptions of code switching for informal conversation in universities

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
English for informal conversation	2	5	10	1	3.17
Urdu and English for informal conversation	1	4	10	3	3.67
Mother Tongue for informal conversation	2	4	5	5	3.33

Concerning English for informal uses in universities, participant HUT2 reflects:

'It is noted even proficient speakers feel hesitant to speak English because classroom culture and environment does not allow them to do so'.

This perceptive comment implies that they would like to talk in English but as explained above most of the students have rural background and have come from Urdu medium institutions so are not used to respond in English. The informant HUT3's view is noteworthy, *'we are suffering from inferiority complex...our minds are not free of slavery, we feel dominance of English language'*. It is implied that English is not considered necessary to be used for informal conversations in universities. It is believed that those who speak English extensively have a sense of superiority and lack of faith in the national language.

Undergraduate students' perceptions about their uses of code switching in the university

This section given below will discuss undergraduate students' perceptions of using code switching in universities.

Table 7
MU's undergraduate students' views about code switching for classroom teaching

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
English as a language of instruction	5.8%	37.6%	33.6%	14.6%	3.14
Code switching for classroom instruction	3.5%	21.7%	51.8%	10.2%	3.43
Using English with teachers	21.7%	49.6%	15.5%	3.5%	2.30
Using code switching with teachers	3.1%	9.7%	52.2%	31.0%	3.98

Table 8
MU's undergraduate students' views about code switching for classroom teaching

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
English as a language of instruction	6.7%	33.3%	39.1%	18.2%	3.14
Code switching for classroom instruction	2.2%	20.0%	61.3%	15.1%	3.43
Using English with teachers	15.6%	48.0%	17.3%	5.8%	2.30
Using code switching with teachers	1.3%	12.4%	48.0%	34.7%	3.98

HUS1 utters, *'when teachers prefer to teach in both Urdu and English languages using code switching, we are able to participate actively and comfortably in the class sessions'*. The participant MUS4 believes:

'We have rural educational backgrounds. Teachers' use of English medium of instruction goes beyond our mental levels.....I can't comprehend terminology in English ...'

It can be interpreted from the responses of both groups that undergraduate students have preference for using code switching in classroom and the complete comprehension of their teachers' lectures in English is a challenging task for them.

Discussion

Most of the BS Economics students experience English as the 2nd language learning problems in universities because of English medium of instruction and remain under pressure throughout their program. Many undergraduate students have a rural background where they were not provided with enough exposure to English language. The students view that English is a foreign language for them and their uses of English are far more limited as compared to Urdu and mother tongues. Students undergo many language problems, for example, inadequate vocabulary in English which is needed for comprehension of concepts and effective oral and written expression.

They express their preference for code switching because they believe that teachers' lectures in English go beyond their comprehension. Many of them would like English to be used for social interaction but at the same time realize that they need confidence to speak English in classroom. Most probably, they are deprived of workable social atmosphere for practising English. Many teachers have preference for teaching with in Urdu because their experience tells them that undergraduate students in public universities are unable to understand lectures in English, for that reason, they use Urdu language as a strategy to accommodate them. Moreover, code switching makes learning more authentic and also serves as a practical tool to develop understanding between the local and global. The university teachers also experience teaching problems because they are untrained to cope with these students having diverse educational backgrounds. One interpretation is that they themselves lack native speaker like proficiency in English language. Therefore, teachers willfully permit their students to use code switching as the means of communication in classroom, keeping in sight students' hesitation to speak only English but also because of their own lack of fluency in spoken English.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is surmised that both undergraduate students and university teachers CS instrumentally for diverse reasons in universities such as, teaching, translation, classroom discussion, comprehension, explanation, conversation, asking for clarification and responding to teachers' questions. It can be concluded that code switching is a highly valuable teaching strategy to enable the undergraduate students to understand teachers' lectures and enhance their critical thinking and active participation in the classroom. It is recommended that code switching as a tool of bilingual method of teaching should be incorporated in teacher training programs to help the university faculty members for using it effectively in their classrooms.

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