Code Switching of English in Pakistani Urdu Classrooms: Bilingual Practices and Challenges

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Abstract

One of the dimensions of spread of English in Pakistan is through its code-switching, code mixing and borrowing in the national and local/regional languages of Pakistan. These bilingual practices have very significant socio-linguistic implications in education. The present paper explores bilingual practices in the Urdu classrooms at primary level, their advantages or/ and challenges in Pakistani context. Five sections of grade 4 are selected as the sample of the current study. Classroom observation, interviews of teachers, role-play and group interviews of sample groups of students from an Army Public school of Rawalpindi are used as research tools to explore what are the bilingual practices of teachers and students in the classroom; how teachers and students use their linguistic repertoire to carry out classroom interaction; and how teachers and students perceive these bilingual practices. Observation notes- data and audio-video recorded data is categorized into two main categories: Category A: Bilingual Practices of Teachers, Category B. Bilingual Practices of Students. Each category is further subcategorized into Standard/ Regular Bilingual Practices, and Non-standard/ Eccentric Bilingual Practices. The categorized data is analyzed to examine the bilingual practices of teachers and students used to perform various communicative, pragmatic, religio-social and management functions in the classroom. The study provides interesting insights into the phenomena; and it is expected that it will help in understanding the bilingual classroom dynamics in a better way.

1. Introduction:

1.1. Globalization and the Status of English Language in Pakistan

English has transcended the global boundaries and is being used by native speakers as well as by speakers who have acquired it as a second or a foreign language. Due to its global spread today it is the world lingua franca. This role and status of English is quite noticeable in the socio-linguistic scenario of Pakistan as well. Pakistan has a multi-lingual context; and according to Gordon (2005), there are seventy seven living languages used in Pakistan. Alongwith the national and regional languages English is a significant part of the linguistic mosaic of Pakistan. In determining the role, status and position of English in Pakistan various factors have played their role such as the colonial experience, social prestige attached to English and globalization. In fact the processes of globalization through the recent years have further complicated the situation by making English a significant feature of the linguistic landscape of Pakistan more than ever before. Code switching, code mixing and borrowing of English in the national and regional languages are a common feature of the linguistic scenario of Pakistan. This reflects what (Prucha, 1983) asserts as the linguistic reality of any society as it is determined by certain purposes, programs or aims reflective of societal needs.

1.2 Significance of the Study- Status of Urdu and English in Pakistani Academic context

In Pakistan Urdu has the status of national language whereas English occupies the role of official language. Here English is associated with high and the native and regional languages are associated with low prestige in the mind of a large class of people. Consequently Pakistani

education system reflects the same. As far as classroom practices are concerned a lot of switching between Urdu and English is made in the classrooms of almost all subjects.

The current research deals with the bilingual practices in Pakistani Urdu classrooms. In this regard it is important to mention that Urdu is our national language and it is taught as a compulsory subject right from the initial levels to intermediate level in all Pakistani government schools. Generally and ideally speaking it is expected that in the Urdu classroom only Urdu will be used as tool of communication. However, the reality is different. Especially when it comes to the middle, and upper middle social class institutions. Be government, semi government or private, all the institutions who cater for the middle class, teach Urdu as a compulsory subject at middle level (at least). Need and ideological aspiration to learn the national language on one hand and the desire for social prestige attached to English on the other hand serve as push-and-pull forces simultaneously at work. In this context the use of English in the Urdu classroom gathers significance. The current research explores what, why and how questions related to this phenomenon.

2. Literature Review
This part presents a brief review of the literature related to the current research.

2.1 Code switching- the term
Code switchingis defined by (Gumperz, 1982, p.59) as the 'juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems'. It is a linguistic strategy of bi/multi-lingual speakers that is used to make shifts or switches between two or more languages depending upon the context, setting, purpose and speakers/ listeners involved. According to Yua (1997) code switching is the use of more than one language within a single communicative exchange. In this regard Titone (1991) further elaborates that it 'may take a variety of forms: a set of utterances in one language is followed by a set of utterances in the other, one single utterance in one language is followed by one single utterance in the other, one single utterance is produced in which one segment is in one language and another in the other language (p.442).

According to Kachru the purpose or goal of code switching is to create or establish 'communicative intimacy' or identity (Kachru, 1986, p.62). According to Poplack(1980) code switching can be of three types or degrees: tag switching, intra sentential, and inter-sentential. Intra sentential switching takes place within the clause or sentence boundary and is a result of the insertion of a part of a word, a word, a combination of words and or a phrase of one language in the other. This type is also called code mixing by some linguists.

Odlin (1989, p.6) asserts, 'Language mixing is the merging of characteristics of two or more languages in any verbal communication.' In comparison with this loosely structured definition of code mixing, Hammink (2000) asserts that intra-sentential switching (code mixing) takes place at the clause, phrase level, or at word level if no morphological adaptation occurs. Further, Cook (1991) determines the extent of code switching in normal conversations amongst bilinguals by outlining that code switching consists of 84% single word switches, 10% phrase switches and 6% clause switching (Skiba, 2005).

There has always been a debate that code switching is not a language interference or a source of enrichment of language. "Where it is used due to an inability of expression, code switching provides a continuity in speech rather than presenting an interference in language. The socio-linguistic benefits have also been identified as a means of communicating solidarity, or affiliation to a particular social group, whereby code switching should be viewed from the perspective of providing a linguistic advantage rather than an obstruction to communication" (Skiba, 2005).

2.2 Code mixing- the Term

A very interesting dimension of the spread of English in Pakistan is the ever increasing phenomenon of code mixing of English in Urdu (and other regional languages), and the resultant language hybridization. A new mixed code is being created through the frequent mixing of English words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in Urdu. This not only leads towards the expansion of the vocabulary of Urdu in a specific dimension but also has very significant social, cultural and ideological implications.

Different linguists have defined code mixing in different ways. According to Wardhaugh (1992, p. 106), 'Code mixing occurs when during conversation, speakers 'use both languages together to the extent that they shift from one language to the other in the course of a single utterance'. Code mixing is one of the major kinds of language choice; it is subtler than code switching because Fasold (1984) states in code-mixed utterences, pieces of one language are used while a speaker is basically using another language. According to Fasold (1984) these pieces or chunks of the other language are often words, but they can be phrases or clauses also.

2.3 Borrowing- the Term

In the context of the sub-continent Urdu emerged in a background where already English, Hindi, Arabic, Persian and various local languages were being used in a variety of contexts, to varying extents, and for various purposes and functions. The arrival of the British as colonizers added English as a dominant language in the socio-political context of the sub-continent. During the period of colonization and even after the creation of Pakistan English has not lost its importance. Resultantly as a dominant language it has left permanent marks on Urdu. A natural result of the dominance of English is that some of the vocabulary of English has been mixed in Urdu and has become a regular and permanent part of its vocabulary. Emergence and spread of English as a lingual franca in the recent decades has also contributed towards frequent borrowing from English in Urdu as it has happened in many other languages of the world.

Code mixing and Borrowing are closely related and there are subtle differences in both. Borrowing is the initial step toward code mixing' (Kachru, 1978, p.31). In Pakistan, too, the heavy linguistic borrowing, combined with social, economic, political, and international factors has led to code mixing. It is difficult to determine whether an itemis code mixed or borrowed. This problem cannot be solved merely on the basis of 'degree of assimilation' since 'assimilation is a gradient and not categorical concept' (Myers-Scotton, 2000, p. 143). Furthermore, the general division that the insertions of L2 that carry a social significance are code switching but those that do not, are borrowings, is also problematic 'since a borrowing can appear as code switch when it is a part of style switching' (Myers-Scotton, 2000, p. 144). Pfaff (1979) and Romaine (1986) have used switching as a generic term that includes borrowing (Clyne, 2000).

2.4 Confusion and ambiguity related to the terms: Code switching, code mixing, borrowing
In the literature related to bilingualism code- switching, code mixing and borrowing are the frequently used terms,. However, there is a lot of ambiguity related to their use because some time they are used interchangeably and some time they overlap. Especially code switching is a very confusing term because some linguists/ researchers use it to refer to the shift from one language to the other within one conversation, the others use it to refer to the mixing or sprinkling of the vocabulary items of one language into the conversation executed in the (structure of) another language. It is very important to remove this confusion at the out set so all the three terms are defined and discussed under separate heads in the current research. It is also worth mentioning the in this research code switching is used as an umbrella term that covers all the three: code-switching, code mixing and borrowing. However, where necessary the distinction is made explicit. Many other linguists have also done the same such as Berthold, Mangubhai, and Bartorowicz(as cited in Skiba, 1997),assert thatcode mixing takes place when speakers shift from one language to the other in the midst of a conversation. Thus, this definition also caters for inter-sentential switching and intra-sentential mixing both under the term code switching. Romaine (1995), too, has used code switching as an umbrella term to cover switches, mixes and borrowings. She has also discussed the ambiguities related to these terms; and she asserts that borrowing, code switching and code mixing overlap at certain points, and thus hamper the study of language change and variation (Romaine, 1995). Many other have used code switching and code mixing interchangeably in their works.

2.5 Purpose of Code switching and Code mixing
Code switching and code mixing serve various purposes. Actually a distinction can be made in code switching and mixing on the basis of the functions that each of these performs and the purpose/s each of these serves. Purpose of code switching is 'to establish, cross or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations' (Gal, 1988, p. 247). On the other hand the purpose of code mixing is three folded and there are basically three motivations for code-mixing i.e. 'role identification, register identification, and desire for elucidation and interpretation' (Kachru, 1978, p.36).

According to Crystal (1987) there are a number of possible reasons for code switching. A person may switch from one code to the other to compensate for the deficiency if s/he is not able to express himself / herself. It can happen when the speaker is upset, tired or distracted in some way. Secondly, switching occurs to show solidarity with a particular social group. 'Rapport is established between the speaker and the listener when the listener responds with a similar switch' (Skiba, 2005). Another reason for the switching behavior as asserted by Crystal (1987) is the switching that occurs when the speaker wishes to convey a certain attitude to the listener.

2.6 Pakistani Classroom Bilingual Practices
In Pakistan English commonly co-occurs with indigenous (regional and national) languages in a wide range of situations. As far as the use code switching and mixing in the field of education is concerned they are frequently used. Some research has been carried out how and why it is used in English classrooms. However, its use in Urdu classrooms still needs to be explored. In English classrooms "code- switching" (e.g., Myers-Scotton, 1992) and "-mixing" (Bokamba, 1989) is frequently considered as "sub-standard" language behaviour and teachers seldom feel at ease with this phenomenon in their classrooms (Norrish, 1997). As far as Pakistani ELT classroom is

concerned, code switching is used as a tool to bring ease, to facilitate learning, to explain concepts, and to enable the learners to move from the known to the unknown in a gradual way. Cook (1991) and Prucha (1983) have debated the pros and cons of the use of code switching as a teaching strategy. Cook (1991) offers a teaching strategy that is "is similar to the 'New Concurrent Approach' presented by Rodolpho Jacobson, outlined in Cook (1991). The approach gets teachers to balance the use of languages within each lesson with the teacher allowed to switch languages at certain key points, such as during important concepts, when students are getting distracted, during revisions or when students are praised and told off" (Skiba, 2005). However, its use in the Pakistani Urdu classroom needs to be explored because the purposes and functions of code switching in this case are different.

2.7 Functions of Teachers' Code Switching
The use of code switching by teachers is not always and necessarily performed consciously; and they are not always aware of the purposes, functions and outcomes of the code switching that they do. "Nevertheless, either conscious or not, it necessarily serves some basic functions which may be beneficial in language learning environments" (Sert, 1991). According to Mattson and Burenhult (1999, p.61) these functions include topic switch, affective functions, and repetitive functions. In topic switch cases, the teacher switches language according to the topic that is being discussed. As far as affective functions are concerned, they are a means for expression of emotions. In this cases code switching is used by the teacher to create solidarity and intimate relations with the students. Another dimension of the functionality of code switching in classroom settings is repetitive function in which code switching is used as a tool to transfer the necessary knowledge required for the clarity of the students. These functions can be seen at work in the Pakistani Urdu classrooms as well (Sert, 1991).

2.8 The Functions of Students' Code Switching
Like teachers students also are not always aware of the purposes and functions of he code switching they do. Students mainly switch to bridge the gaps that are caused by inability to express in any language. Another function is holding the floor. The learners performing code switching for floor holding generally have the same problem: they can not recall the appropriate target language structure or lexicon (Sert, 1991). According to Eldridge another function of the code switching of students is: "messages are reinforced, emphasized, or clarified where the message has already been transmitted in one code, but not understood" (1996, p.306).

3. Research Methodology
This part presents the research methodology, research sample, tools used for the research and justification for the selection of these tools. It also provides aim and objectives of the current research.

3.1 Sample for the Research
As far as the sample for the current research is concerned it is taken form an Army Public School and College in Rawalpindi. Level selected for the research is Primary and only grade four is taken. All the five sections of grade four are included; and the Urdu teachers and the students of these sections are taken as a sample of this research.
One group of 6-9 students from each section

3.2 Tools of Data Collection and Justification for the selection of tools

Three tools are used in the current research. Observation is used as a major tool to understand and examine what happens in these classrooms. Then to see what do teacher think about the bilingual practices in these classrooms the teachers are interviewed. In order to understand the perspective of the students role-play and group interview tools are used. The selection of the tools can be justified on various grounds. Classroom observation is selected was a tool because it provided a chance to peep into the real life situation. However, since the presence of the researcher in the classroom (though sitting at the back, without interfering) may cause teachers and students to make some conscious choices of language so to authenticate the findings the data is triangulated. For this purpose the views of teachers are taken through semi- structured interviews.

As far as the students are concerned since they were very young to be individually interviewed, a very interesting tool of role–play was used. Role-play is 'the acting out or performance of a particular role, either consciously (as a technique in psychotherapy or training) or unconsciously, in accordance with the perceived expectations of society with regard to a person's behavior in a particular context'[10].

There is little consensus on the terms used in the role playing and simulation literature such as "simulation," "game," "role-play," "simulation-game," "role-play simulation," and "role-playing game" are used interchangeably (Crookall & Oxford, 1990). However, in the current research the term role-play is used.

To execute these role- play arrangements were made. With the help of a teacher, who was not an Urdu teacher and who was assigned the task by the administration of the institution to support the researcher, all the students were gathered in the assembly ground one day prior to the role-plays. From each section 6-9 students were asked to volunteer for a skit. Hus, five groups were created. These groups were then told that they were supposed to gather in the junior library of the school at 9:00 am, where they would be given the topic of their skit on the spot. The next day when the students were gathered they were told that from within each group one student would perform the role of the Urdu teacher and the rest would perform as students. They would act a scene from their Urdu classroom. It was ensured that none of the Urdu teachers was present at that time. The performances were audio-video recorded and then analyzed to understand the perceptions of these students about the bilingual practices in the Urdu classroom. At the end of each role play while the next group would organize themselves, the first group was group interviewed to confirm on certain issues and practiced that were noticed during the performance.

3.3 Aim and Objectives of this research
- What are the bilingual practices in the Urdu classroom at primary level?
- How teachers/students use their linguistic repertoire to carry out classroom interaction?
- How do students perceive these bilingual practices?
- What do teachers say about these bilingual practices?

3.4 Categorization of Data

Following categories were devised to examine the data:

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[10]*(www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O999-roleplaying.html -)*

Category A: Bilingual Practices of Teachers
1: Standard/ Regular Bilingual Practices
2: Non-standard/ Eccentric Bilingual Practices

Category B. Bilingual Practices of Students
1: Standard/ Regular Bilingual Practices
2: Non-standard/ Eccentric Bilingual Practices

4. Presentation and Analysis of Data
Data is presented category- wise.

4.1 Category A: Bilingual Practices of Teachers- 1: Standard/ Regular Bilingual Practices
Pakistani Urdu teachers perform certain standard/ regular bilingual practices in their classrooms. This is supported by the findings of classroom observation, interview from the teachers and the role play of the students as well. These standard practices involve the following:

- Instruction
- Reprimand
- Praise & Approval
- Taunts

Further more English affirmatives (such as Yes, Ok), negatives (No) and interrogatives (Why) are repeatedly used in the Urdu classrooms.

Classroom observation was carried out for two periods in each section. Each period is of thirty five minutes so seventy minutes observation in each of the five sections resulted in three hundred and fifty minutes observation time in total. Observation showed that all the five teachers frequently code switched in the classroom. All the instructions were given in English. For instance instead of asking "*bacho apni kitabain kholo*", all the teachers said "girls/ students open your books". Simple standard classroom management instructions were also given in English such as "Sit in your chairs", "Be quiet", "Open the window" etc. Only once a teacher said, " *safah thirty four kholo*"; though even in this case code mixing of thirty four instead of the Urdu equivalent ' *chountees*' was used. The functions of praise and approval were also performed by all the teachers in English. Out of the total instances of praise and reprimand that were 42, only 7 times Urdu was used to perform the functions. In the same way standard reprimand utterances were in English. May be the teachers were conscious of the classroom observation so only six instances were found. However, it is interesting that the role play of the students, through the performance of the role of teachers demonstrated a lot of use of reprimand of which standard utterances were all in English. Some instances of English Switches found during classroom observation are given below:

- Keep quiet
- Sit down
- Keep standing
- Stand up (name)

Examples from the role play (of Blue section) include:

- No sorry keep standing
- Keep standing… both of you
- Alina keep quiet
- Shame on you
- Alina keep standing

As far as performing the function of taunts is concerned, during observation no instance was found due to the consciousness of the presence of the researcher. However, this limitation of the tool was compensated though the use of the tool of role- plays. The data of the role- play demonstrates a lot of use of taunts along with reprimand. However, standard and regular taunt utterances were not completely in English rather they were in a mixed code, and switches were made between English and Urdu. For instance:

- Very good, *khari rahaen gee ab aap*
- *Saray* answer *ap nay bata diye haen na jo* sit down
- Very good … *itna mushkil tha ye…ye likhnay maen itna mushkil tha wo ap ko a gaya hay ap ko insane ka nahee aya?*
- Keep quiet, *Jhoot bol rahee hay*

Apart from these regular practices, a standard use of affirmatives and negatives was found. All the teachers used ok, yes, no etc. instead of their Urdu equivalents through out the classroom activity. It is also interesting to mention that during the interviews of teachers when they were asked whether they use English language in their Urdu classrooms only two of them said yes. Three asserted that they do not use English as such. Later on they added that they use some commonly used sentences to give instructions etc. When they were asked the reason for these switches three of them said that it happens automatically and unconsciously, one asserted administration of the school wants it to be so, while one said that it is a matter of creating style.

4.2 Category A: Bilingual Practices of Teachers -2: Non-standard/ Eccentric Bilingual Practices

During classroom observation it was noticed majority of the switches took place for fulfilling the standard functions of instruction, reprimand, praise and approval and taunts. However, sometimes a particular teacher would be found performing a non-standard/ eccentric bilingual practice. Some examples from classroom observation are as follows:

- So, this is not my headache.
- *Phir,* what can I do?
- *Chalo,* write quickly and finish it.

From the quantitative perspective it is important to mention that the number and frequency of occurrence of non-standard/ eccentric bilingual practices is far lower than the standard practices. Classroom observation findings were supported by the role-play analysis. For example:

- **T:** You have take(n) out you grammar *fun-e-quwaid-e-insha*   (Blue)
- **T:** First of all we would do.   (Pink)
- **T**: Why you have forgot(ten) to bring   (Pink)
- **T:** Why don't you bring   (Pink)
- **T:** Why don't you bring your book   (Pink)
- **T:** You are laughing?   (Pink)
- **T**: *Tou,* what can I do?   (Pink)

The number of these occurrences is fewer as compared to the standard/ regular utterances.

4.3 Category B: Bilingual Practices of Students- 1: Standard/ Regular Bilingual Practices
Like teachers, students also perform various Urdu classroom functions in English. As far as the standard practices that are commonly used are concerned, analysis of the classroom observation data proved that these include the following:

- Apology/ Excuse
- Request/Seeking Permission
- Acknowledgement

During classroom observation it was noticed that social functionsof Apology/ Excuse, Request, Seeking Permission, and Acknowledgement were performed through switches to English. Out of 49 instances overall of these social functions only three times Urdu was used to perform them. Even out of these three times immediately the student shifted to English as soon as the teacher responded I English to the request. See the following conversation:

- Student: *Ma'm mein pani pi aon?*
- Teacher: First finish your class work. Why didn't you bring your (water) bottle?
- Student: Sorry ma'm. I forgot.

Role plays furtherconfirmed these classroom practices as for example following are the examples of requests from section Red's role play:

- S: Mam may I come in (2 times)
- S: Mam please..
- S: Mam may I go to washroom
- S: Mam may I go to drink water

While from Grey section examples are:
- S: Mam can I go to washroom?
- S: Mam may I come in?

Apart far these bilingual practices of the use of English Affirmatives (Ok ma'm, Yes ma'm) and Negatives (No ma'm) is found very common during the observation of sample Urdu classrooms.

4.4 Category B: Bilingual Practices of Students- 2: Non-standard/ Eccentric Bilingual Practices

Like the data of the utterances of the teachers, in the data of the observation of students also some instances were found where non-standard or eccentric bilingual practices could be noticed. However, the data was very limited and in total only 22 instances were found. The examples include:

- Why don't you people understand?
- Where is you sash?
- (Name) are you ok? What happened?

Some of the examples from the role play of section Blue illustrating the same point are as follows:

- (Monitor says to the class): Class take out your grammar *fun-e-quwaid-e-insha*; Ma'm X is saying; and do not touch these things.
- S: Ma'm I did not bring the book
- S: Ma'm I forgot to bring
- S: Ma'm it was in the room
- S: Ma'm you said we will not bring the book today
- (Monitor to the teacher): Ma'm you must issue information slip

5. Conclusion

The triangulated findings of classroom observation, interviews of teachers and role play of students not only provide an opportunity to have the perspectives of different stake holders in classroom interaction but also observation provides a chance for examining the reality of the classroom practices. Findings through all the three tools support the same conclusion that in Pakistani Urdu classroom at middle level a lot of code switching of English takes place. These bilingual practices have both social and management functions. However, English is not used for pure pedagogical purposes; the text is taught and learnt in Urdu , and Unlike the English classrooms no switches are made to English to explain Urdu text, concepts or vocabulary items.

The frequent use of English in Urdu classroom provides insights in the globalization processes, and indicates the attitude of masses towards Urdu and English languages. Both on the conscious and unconscious level the teachers and the students' code-switch and code mix English into Urdu as a reflection of everyday life bilingual practices. The study also provides insights into the perceptions of teachers and students about what happens in a Pakistani Urdu classroom.

In conclusion it can be said that the study of the bilingual practices of teachers and students in the Urdu classroom provides interesting insights: English is mixed/ switched by the teachers as an instrument to exhibit power. All the standard/regular classroom management functions such as Instruction, Reprimand, Praise & Approval, and Taunt etc. are performed through English. However, subjective/ personal comments that are non-standard/Eccentric are in Urdu. In response students also perform regular practices of Apology/ Excuse, Request/ Seeking Permission, Acknowledgement etc. through switch/ mix. All the communicative (interactive) functions such as Affirmatives, Negatives, and Interrogatives etc. are also performed in English.

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