

# Exploratory Research of Factors Impacting Language Dominance and Code-Switching Tendencies in ELT Classrooms of Bilingual Students at National University of Modern Languages,' Code Switching and Language Dominance

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**Abstract:-** In every society, there is a dominant language that we unconsciously prefer, and for the majority of us, that language is English. In Pakistan, the official language of English is preferred over national and regional languages. Code-switching is the practice of switching from one language to another, and it is essentially an inevitable phenomenon, especially in the zone of multilinguals and bilinguals followed by language dominance. Since Pakistan's pedagogical learning and teaching methods have never been studied, additional research is required. Code switching gained importance in the 1990s when several studies on the subject were published. Since then, it has been crucial for most institutions to strike a balance between languages so that code switching may be advantageous for both learning and teaching systems. The paper aims to discuss the impact of high and low languages in Pakistan, with a focus on Hyderabad Sindh. The causes of code-switching and language dominance will be highlighted in the article through analysis of interviews with former National University of Modern Languages students.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The first universal language, English, has made its position more stable than ever. To be considered literate nowadays, especially in nations like Pakistan, one must speak English well. Only 360 million of the 1.5 billion people on the planet, or 20% of the population, are native speakers of the language (Naved, 2020). The order of dominant languages is English, Urdu, and other regional languages spoken by common people. If that weren't enough, 67 countries have English as their official language, and another 27 have it as a secondary but official language. As a result, English holds a dominant position over other languages. An exploratory investigation found that there are barely a handful of native Urdu speakers. An exploratory investigation found that although Sindhi and Punjabi have more native speakers than Urdu, there are only 7.57 native speakers of Urdu. This illustrates the idea of high and low language since people

unconsciously pick higher languages like English and Urdu (Rahman, 2006).

Code-switching is the phenomenon for the bilingual or the multilingual students and teachers in the EFL classroom which are the classes conducted to teach English as a foreign language to the nonnative speakers of English. Pakistan also having English declared as its official language along with Urdu puts some laid out principles (Fathima, 2016). To learn the language they are teaching, the non-native speakers must change their code. There are several hypotheses on codeswitching; some of them are favorable and highlight all the benefits, while other academics are strongly opposed to this strategy and see code-switching as a significant barrier to language learning (Dar, Akhtar, & Khalid, 2014). In the Pakistani setting, the majority of students struggle with communicative competency when studying English, thus it is more important than ever for the teachers to use the codeswitching strategy to help the students comprehend the concepts and interact with others more effectively. Additionally, students all around the world must code-switch. There are several more causes for code-switching in EFL courses, which are further examined. In Pakistan, the codeswitching is in between three languages Urdu and English and is even getting introduced in textbooks as well. Some students do have a negative attitude towards code-switching as well but since it is specified that EFL classrooms it is then inevitable to go with a language that is the core purpose of the study (Dar, Akhtar, & Khalid, 2014).

“No matter your race, ethnicity, class or cultural background, you probably do it.” Gene Demby.

## II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edward Sapir, language can empower the identities of speakers, it shapes the way one think weather it's optimistic or pessimistic. People have different identities and different mindsets, the one who has optimistic identity, are more likely to be cultural, values, ideals and customs (Albarilo, 2018). It was stated in a case

study that whether the teachers have a strong grasp of the language or not and regardless of whether they have a similar linguistic background, one needs it to clarify meanings. If that's not it, it even ends up saving the time of both the teacher and the students, making it more of a win-win situation. This study helped establish a paradigm by demonstrating how code-switching encouraged some students to participate in class activities since they didn't feel self-conscious about their novice status and instead felt at ease in their own skin. Additionally, not just the professors but the students supported the idea of code-switching in the context of learning and demonstrating a higher performance in the exam as well since they would avoid the ideas and more (Bensen & ÇAVUŞOĞLU, 2013). According to this study, English is the language that holds the power over Education and bureaucracy and thus enjoys the position academic value; however, Urdu still holds the fort for nationwide connection and communicative bridge across regions. This pressure that is built with such strict principles gets to create a tense atmosphere as English and Urdu are continuously competing to be dominant language (Abbas, Pervaiz, & Arshad, 2018).

This study shows that English is the most dominant language in Pakistan and that fluency rates of English vary from public to private education institutes. Code-switching serves as a caterer for the needs of students who struggle due to incompetence in dominant language as a result of the environment in which they grow up (Kamran, Shanzay; Mansoor, Sabiha; 2017). In bilingual or multilingual classroom such as Pakistani one, where each individuals know more than one or two languages, mixing of code and language is quite common, according to author teachers while teaching in classroom switches language without even noticing it because English has been taught as compulsory subject in Pakistan and is even used as medium of class at schools and colleges level (Gulzar, 2010). He mentioned that code switching in discourse bilingual classroom has not been investigated in Pakistan, some issues that other countries are same but Pakistan's classrooms situations are quite different from others. The main purpose of his study was to know every peculiarity of code switching and find pedagogical functions of code switching.

Another study that focused on code-switching in EFL classrooms and examined its causes. The faculty felt that teachers should code-switch frequently with students because it helps them translate vocabulary, improve students' comprehension of grammar, and even help them maintain classroom decorum and develop rapport with the students (Obaidullah, 2016). The study also considered the idea that students should strive to switch codes as little as possible since doing so may cause their mother language to interfere and produce problems with their communication ability. Another study suggested that the situation where should be allowed to switch is during presentation, reason being that they might prefer to swap the code rather than keep the audience waiting since the English language does not always comprehend

concepts exactly, especially during a presentation. (Nurhamidah, Fauziati, & Supriyadi, 2018).

An educational technique, code-switching is particularly useful in EFL courses. Given their expertise in examinations, the faculty was the target audience for this poll. The reasons given for the code-switching included the fact that complex subjects may be explained more simply if the language was changed to suit the needs of the student. Code-switching would help and be utilized as a clarifying technique if the pupils were having trouble understanding a subject, and because the majority of professors code-switch while introducing new terminologies, the unfamiliar terms are the most challenging for the students because they are not native English speakers and some do not even have a good foundation to grasp the notion of the new words (Mushtaq & Rabbani, 2016).

Code-switching is influenced by linguistic, psycholinguistic, and social situational factors in addition to linguistic ones. The study revolves around the idea that code-switching should not be a subject of the negative spotlight because it is enhancing the understanding among the individuals and is also assisting them in developing the communicative competencies (Jogulu & Radzi, 2018). However, code-switching further gives the impression of flexibility and leniency even though its use is still controversial. Another crucial finding from this quantitative survey study is that code-switching usage in EFL classrooms should be reduced in comparison to other classes because it is a time-consuming process, but students should not be penalized for it. When opposed to the rigorous regulations, code-switching caused students to feel less anxious, which helped them concentrate better and feel less lost during lectures (Malik, 2014). A way to a deeper understanding is to learn the reasons why codes are switched. When the code-switching is used, complex ideas become simpler to understand. In a culture where language is dominant, code flipping can be beneficial for both students and instructors.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews with former students of the National University of Modern Languages were used for this study's qualitative research methodology. The goal of this study is to identify the potential elements that may affect the language dominance code switching patterns of bilingual students. The students were chosen based on their linguistic background, prior experience as bilingual or multilingual students, and progress toward professionalism. Some of the interviews were recorded through phone conversations, transcribed, and manually examined. The interviews were performed both physically and digitally. The six-phased model by Braun and Clarke (2006) served as the foundation for the interview. Through this qualitative study, we want to comprehend the opinions and viewpoints of Pakistan's younger generation of university students.

After logical and analytical reasoning of the data, it was reduced to three main topics and nine sub-topics.

Table 1 Analytical Reasoning

FACTORS INFLUENCING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY	DOMINANCE AND CODE SWITCHING
	Age of acquisition
	Language exposure
	Language dynamics
SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS	Educational environment
	Context and purpose
	Institutional power
IDENTITY AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION	Individual preference
	Cultural identity mutual understanding
	Peer pressure

However, participant C and D are of opinion that, despite its convenience, switching should not be done deliberately and more often, in order for students to gain speaking proficiency in the dominant language, in this case English they should be more exposed to language so they speak more. However, according to all participants, language dominance has a significant impact on how we utilize code switching. While it is a valuable tool linguistically, it is frequently used to save face rather than for its own sake. Nevertheless, in a nation with many different languages, it should be viewed as such.

*“The two factors that influence our conduct as graduates are language dominance and code-switching. There are locations where people are more accepting and don't view code-switching as a sign of deficiency, but there are other places where people assess you based on how well you speak English. Depending on what is required for the role. Speaking English is valued even in a broader social setting, and switching languages is frequently seen as a face-saving measure rather than a practical tool. Even in professional settings, increased understanding of this is influencing people's perspectives and choices.”*

**IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FACTORS**

➤ *Language proficiency*

Code switching is crucial in a bilingual classroom, according to participant A and B. conducting class in a language that everyone is proficient in and knows well might help students better comprehend the issue. There are many ideas and terminology that need to be explained in EFL courses, and even examples make the work simpler. To prevent misunderstandings. When learning a new language, native language plays an important part as first language is also necessary, and if we look at a language's intended usage, it is clear that it is used to learn another language.

*“It helps when you have to negotiate with some individuals in your professional or personal life when you use their language it becomes easier to convince and understand”*

Age of acquisition is also an important aspect as we always learn our first language at critical period that is considered as the most crucial and creative point of our learning possibilities. The instructions that are given are frequently further explained in a mother tongue or a language that is well understood in the Pakistani context, such as Urdu, as we have less exposure to English and because it is not a language we learn at a young age. Instead, our first language is Urdu or Sindhi, so we are proficient in those languages only. The teachers/instructors employ code-switching for their convenience as well because it is a simpler technique to explain things due to keeping to only one language than going for some comprehensive explanations. It is also because we have much more familiar linguistic dynamics with our first language and learning a foreign language feels different.

➤ *Sociolinguistic factors*

The reason English is still in use, despite predictions to the contrary, is because of its institutional dominance as the language of law, education, and employment.

Participant A: *“If there is a particular language with authority and strength, then that will undoubtedly appeal to a sizable majority. Impact is explained by their desire to belong to the influential or even educational groups.”*

When discussing extra-regional activities, we would choose Urdu as the bridging language rather than English because we know that the majority of people would not understand us if we spoke in English. This is because social and institutional factors are always present. We adjust our language, tone, and pitch according to the situation, the people, and the status of the language.

Second participant focuses on context of language and the changes that we make according to what our society consider formal and informal: *“Language dominance determines patterns of code-switching in formal situations, when speakers more frequently choose to use the dominant language. Language is frequently used to convey educational and social context. The prevailing language is frequently indicative of discourse components like emphasis and accuracy. Language dominance and people's code-switching tendencies are examples of this”.*

Our actions depend on the environment and the people we are with. In a formal setting, we speak English more frequently and act more elegantly and formally, but when we are with acquaintances, we speak freely and informally. In a

formal setting, we try to avoid code switching, and when we are with close friends, we use colloquial expressions.

#### ➤ *Individual Identity and cultural expression*

We express our culture and reflect our individual identity via language, which plays a significant role in our expression of self and cultural expression. Today, language is also used to showoff literacy; the person who speaks English fluently and effectively is considered to be of a better literary caliber. An individual's desire to identify with their cultural identity may be connected to code switching.

*"Speakers switch between the complex social dynamics of culture, heritage, class, and education by using code-switching. It involves switching between various social identities rather than just codes. People who speak multiple languages changes their personalities and individualities to fit in an environment. English is used to present oneself as educated and well-informed in official settings. While speaking in regional or Urdu expresses more of national and regional characteristics and cultural expression, respectively."*

Society breaks down us into different groups, and we typically try to fit into those groups, but certain traits always come through, such as the accent. For example, if a Sindhi, Punjabi, Brohvi or Balochi gives a speech, we can tell right away which region they are from because of their unique identities. If they were speaking in their respective region, they would typically code switch to their mother tongue out of familiarity, but because they are speaking at a seminar, they would not. Language dominance influences how we respond to other languages. Also, an individual changes and adopts a language that is more accepted among their respective peer so they feel normality and inclusiveness.

### V. FINDING

An exploratory study of how language dominance influences code switching behavior in graduate students of the National University of Modern Languages revealed three key themes in the study of code switching and language dominance: the uses of code switching, social and institutional power, and identity and cultural expression. Themes from the interview analysis reveal that, first, there are more positives to code switching than downsides; it fosters a feeling of community, flexibility, and leniency; students are free to speak about their emotions; and it functions as an icebreaker. Second, the language of legislation and educational institutions often adheres to the dominant language rather than the subordinate one. In the context of Pakistan, this is English, Urdu, then any regional language. Last but not least, identity and cultural expression. Our individual and collective identities depend on the language expression we use. Dominant languages suppress this aspect of identity, which can result in language death. On the other hand, code switching can be useful in utilizing cultural expression to

encourage cultural expression of regional or marginalized people.

### VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that code switching should be used as pedagogical tool in ELT classes as the institutions promote language dominance tendencies and it could lead to eradication of languages that are less active in our societies. The in-depth analysis of graduate students showed that students feel comfortable in classes when they are allowed to switch codes as they can express themselves better in their mother tongues. There are three main factors and nine subfactors that are discussed, it covers the linguistic proficiency factors such as how early age of learning first language makes them more communicative in that respective language and how language exposure and language dynamics is important. It talks about sociolinguistic factors that deal with institutional biasedness towards dominant language and the power dynamics changes a person in different context. Lastly it covers individual and cultural identities, as growing up we observe and choose our preference of language that is more respected and that would include us in peer groups and make us feel welcome.

### VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The research can be conducted in educational institutions with more participants for a better understanding of the concept of code-switching behavior influenced by language dominance. This study was limited in participation and area as it was an in-depth analysis of graduate alumni students from the National University of Modern Languages. Although the focus of this study was on bachelor's graduates, further in-depth research on teacher-student interactions may be undertaken in the future.

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