

**TENDENCY OF LANGUAGE SHIFT IN PAKISTANI STUDENTS****Muhammad Tanveer Akhtar**

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**Abstract**

This study explores the tendency of Language shift in Pakistani college going students. Regardless of the fact that Urdu, being the national language of Pakistan, the students have a tendency to use as many English words in their conversation as possible. There is a recurring code switching in their daily conversation. It is observed that they do not consider improving Urdu vocabulary rather English lexical items. Even they think that English code switching strengthens their conversation. The researchers in this Qualitative study have probed a tendency of language shift among the students due to code switching. 45 students of HSSC level belonging to three colleges in Lahore participated in this study. The constructive qualitative research paradigm is applied in the study. A semi-structured interview has been used to collect data. The analysis of data shows a rapid use of code switching among the participants which may cause a language shift in the near future in Pakistan. The study provides suggestions to make the present situation better.

**Keywords:** language shift; language attitude; Code switching; Pakistani students; neglect of Urdu.

**Introduction**

Language attitude is people's way of thinking in connection with different linguistic varieties and the users of these languages (Meyerhoff, 2008). Language tendency or attitude is a kind of opinion a group of people has towards their language as well as to the others. It consists of approving or disapproving, and reveals through choosing or preferring a language or linguistic variety. These social language attitudes show the feelings of a community for a specific language (Crystal, 2012). Schmid (2002) considers language as of great importance, as this can guarantee of growth and decay of a language. Language attitude also deals with judgment and evaluation of a people for themselves and others on the basis of language usages (Llamas, Mullany and Stockwell, 2007).

The importance of a language in a community or society can be judged by the attitude of people toward this language. "A language grows and develops when people have positive attitudes towards it and when it is allowed to function as a medium of communication in various settings, contexts and domains in a multilingual society" (Cooper, 1982). The speaker of a targeted language has a specific judgment in the context with certain values for the language, this is called the attitude of the learner toward a language (Myers, 2006).

Language shift occurs when a language community leaves collectively using its native language and prefers some other language of a dominant society or community. Ultimately, the neglected language is eliminated (Trudgill, 2003). The process of language shift happens when such a language is adopted as offers maximum monetary, practical, and some social prestige (Batibo, 2005). According to Holmes (1992), there are two bifurcations of language shift i.e. the shift of language in indigenous communities where native language is neglected or abandoned by favouring the language of some dominant community, for example Itdian clans in North America and Maori in New Zealand abandoned their languages. Thus, their languages died away. The other bifurcation of language shift occurs when a certain people are required to gain a healthy command over a language of a dominant society, however they do not leave their native language. Mostly, the dominant societies impose such a situation.

Pakistan is a land of multilingual people, but importance is given only to English and Urdu languages. Schneider (2007) asserts, although the constitution of Pakistan restricts the use of English, yet ironically the constitution itself and the laws are written in English. Being the language of privileged class English borrowing is always welcomed in Pakistani society. Apart from this, there are a number of other factors e.g. advertisements, cultural changes, cross cultural needs, and educational demands etc. This use of code- mixing in Urdu and English languages is advocated and explained by Rasul (2006), he considers that code-switching happens as the result of multilingualism or Bilingualism. There are many reasons for Code-switching. English language is not only an international lingua franca but also a language of science, technology and esteem.

Mixing of two or more languages by the bilinguals in their speaking is found everywhere, and in every society of the world. In conversation the speakers use the words and different items of different languages. This

usage of two or more languages in a communication is taken as code-switching (Milroy & Muysken, 1995). Pakistan being a multilingual society, where people are bilinguals or multilingual, and the practice of code-mixing is very frequent here. If we take the example of Urdu the national language of Pakistan, we come to know that the educated speakers frequently insert English words or items in their speech. The people, who are not good at English, also try to use English words in their conversation to gain social prestige (Khan, 2004).

Fasold (1991) says that language shift is a result of a deliberate and continuous adopting or choosing a language and preferring this language in certain domains. At present, Pakistani college going students with Urdu as their first Language frequently use English vocabulary. There are many reasons behind this recurring code switching, which likely lead to a language shift in Pakistani society.

#### **Statement of the problem**

Urdu is the National language of Pakistan. It is a kind of lingua franca across the country. Besides, Urdu language is a medium of instructions in educational institutions. However, the majority of HSSC level students speak maximum English vocabulary in their day to day conversation. They switch code frequently.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the tendency of Pakistani students recurring code switching with English language may lead to a language shift in Pakistan from Urdu to English.

#### **Research questions**

1. How much code switching is being practiced by the students?
2. Why do they prefer using English vocabulary in their conversation?

#### **The significance of the study**

1. This study is expected to help understand the present ratio of English code switching in the students.
2. This paper will show some futuristic prospective for language shift.
3. The study will show the tendency or attitude of the students towards Urdu language.
4. It will also provide some basis for improvement.

#### **Research methodology**

This is a qualitative research. The tool for data collection, a semi structured interview which was generated with the help of English and Urdu languages, focusing the research questions. 45 students from three different colleges in Lahore were selected randomly to participate in the study and answer the questions of interview. After seeking the necessary permission and consent from the students, the interviews were recorded in the concerned colleges. The interviews have been recorded with the help of a smart phone. They have been analyzed and discussed.

The constructive qualitative research paradigm meets the requirements of this study. The constructivist paradigm challenges the primary convictions of objectivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This paradigm aims at to view the phenomenon from the view point of a research participant. It lets the researcher "to get inside people's heads" with an intention to understand their perceptions (Palys, 1997). This serves a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participant, and enables the researcher to study and investigate the opinion of the participants. The paradigm focuses the obtaining, analyzing and interpreting the data (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Lewins, 1992).

#### **Literature Review**

The study of language attitude describes that how the usage of a language imparts the listener an opportunity to learn about the beliefs of speaking community (Preston 2002). Learning of a language is bound to the attitudes of the speakers of the targeted language, even it shows the emotional aspects of a language community (McKenzie, 2008). Attitude keeps the element of intensity and passion of an individual (Oppenheim, 1992). The behaviorists and mentalists say that there is not any inborn quality of attitude in a person, it is learned through socialization (Baker, 1992). Attitude is practically important for an individual to get the benefit himself of the knowledge of the surrounded world, and serves as a utilitarian approach (Erwin, 2014).

There are more than 6500 spoken languages across the world, says Kachru (1985), and when these languages establish contact with one another, the transfer of linguistic items from one language to other then code switching happens. Crystal (2010) considers English as a borrower language. At present it has become not only a chief donor language, but also a lender of vocabulary to a number of languages across the world. Urdu language borrows many words and expressions from English after the same pattern, as more than 120 languages contribute towards the present vocabulary of English.

Code-Switching is being used as conversational policy to maintain, or destroy the group boundaries and to accomplish the interpersonal relations among the public. (John, 2002). Fundamentally, code mixing is a specific element of bilinguals, which is identified with circumstance where bilingual people interchange between

languages or inside conversation (Greer, 2007). Bista (2010) details a distinction between Inter-sentential and Intra-sentential Code-Switching. The Inter-sentential Code-Switching, makes changes within a sentence. Mostly, this is made by fluent bilinguals. As far Intra – sentential code switching it happens in the middle without making pause.

Asraf (2003) says that code-switching frequently happens at word or lexical level. A big deal of data shows that open ended words from one language can be inserted easily into the other language. There are also some other categories for example, modifiers of English and Urdu with Urdu and English Nouns, verbs of English with operators of Urdu. English address terms are frequently used in Urdu instead of the presence of Urdu equivalent for example *Mister* instead of *Janab/sahb*. Similarly, ‘yes’ is the only example of exclamation expression. This expression has *Wah and Zaberdest* as its Urdu equal. These equivalents give the complete sense of ‘yes’, and are used frequently.

English language left a deep impact on scientific industrial vocabulary, adding thousands of new words in English Dictionaries. This was simply meant that whoever wanted to know about the scientific and technological advancements, would learn English very well to get the true benefit (Preshous, 2001). In 1945, when the League of Nations became United Nations, English gained the role of international lingua franca. In this way, English also became the language of almost all the other organizations of international scope. English language has been considering as a medium of press since 1622. English is a language of global communication, as it is the language of postal, telephone, and electronic networks. It is also the language of computers and Internet, which we communicate with the rest of the world. English is an official language of many organizations in different countries of the world. These organizations use English in their communication. Almost 63 percent of communication in the form of correspondence on internet is made in English. It is said that 80 percent of world’s stored data/information is in English ( Khatib, 2011).

Teachers employ such a language to enhance comprehension levels of vocabulary building in students. They also switch code to solve trouble and to motivate the students to communicate. On the other hand, code switching proves helpful for teachers to adapt students with the language and to achieve their targets in any university (YANG, 2004). Pakistani educational institutions adopt English as a medium of education. In addition to EFL and ESL classes, code-switching is present in the other classes, because they are also supplemented with English language. Asghar (2004) finds code-switching in many textbooks. As textbooks are big source in imparting the required knowledge. It can be said that textbooks provide the required knowledge regarding a language in the very language.

#### **Data analysis**

Three levels of code switching i.e. Tag-switching, intra-sentential, and inter-sentential have been observed satisfied by the participants. This shows that how much the speakers have used English language and what is their attitude for both English and Urdu languages.

All respondents answer almost all the questions. They switched code in English on the three levels i.e. Tag Switching, intra-sentential code switching, and inter-sentential code switching. All the participants used English vocabulary or made code switching in their conversations touching the three levels of code switching according to their knowledge of English language. All the researchers have listened the interviews separately and opined that as much as 95 percent code switching has been made by the participants while applying Tag Switching, intra-sentential switching, and inter-sentential switching. The participants have satisfied different levels of code switching as follow:

**Tag Switching:** this happened on word level; the participants used English words in answering the questions asked in the interview. They use more and more English words while speaking in Urdu.

**Intra-sentential code switching:** this was applied on phrases and clauses level, with a less force than that of Tag switching.

**Inter – sentential code switching:** this was used on sentence level. This was the less satisfying than the above two levels. The respondents rarely switched to English sentence level.

#### **Findings and Discussion**

The data analysis has revealed that college going students in Pakistan use code switching frequently and unknowingly with quite an ease in their daily conversation. As far as the Purpose of this study is concerned, the responses in the interview plainly elaborate the Pakistani students have an ardent attitude towards code switching as they made maximum code switching in their conversation. They frequently switch codes on word and phrase levels. This work also reveals the students have a tremendous tendency of language shift as they prefer English to Urdu language. They consider that English language has a great impact on Urdu.

The participants considered that English language is easy to communicate when compared to Urdu language. They think to use a proper Urdu word in a conversation is far more difficult. In fact, they know Urdu vocabulary, but they are not accustomed to use it. They find it very strange and orthodox to speak in pure Urdu language. They report to encounter maximum English language on both electronic and printed form, from

textbooks to Internet. English speaking is to be an educated for them. All this shows that they have a great move to language change in the future.

### Conclusion

The researchers have reached to the conclusion that Pakistani college going students frequently switch code between Urdu and English languages. This code switching occurs mostly as, Tag Switching, intra-sentential code switching, and inter-sentential code switching. Almost all the participants practice this repeatedly with quite an ease. The analysis of their answers shows, they find English as an international language, the language of science and technology. According to their interviews, English language is necessary to get advancement in almost all the social walks, personally, nationally and internationally. Most of the participants think to speak English is the vogue of the present times and to show you as a highly qualified person. English language is a guarantee of getting better social positions and prestige. As far the purpose of this study is concerned, the data shows a strong attitude or tendency of language shifting in Pakistani students. The targeted population has just passed their SSC level while studying in both public and private schools where Urdu is used as a medium of instructions. However, their maximum use of English vocabulary and code switching even on sentence level, and their neglecting of national language Urdu in their day to day speaking show that they have decided their language of choice for the future. All the above discussion reveals a tendency of Language shift in Pakistani students.

### Recommendations

The present study shows a frequent use of code switching in Pakistani college students. As the youth has to undertake the responsibilities of any society in the future, so, the present-day students will be setting the policies for the advancement of Pakistan. The language is considered as identity of a community or society, at present all the concerned have to take necessary steps to diminish the attitude of language shifting in Pakistan. The Government should establish new centers of language and linguistics at districts level to promote the research. Similarly, the Government is needed to facilitate the National Language Promotion Department for a better promotion and expansion of Urdu Language as well its promotion across the country. The Provincial curriculum Departments are required to play their active role in devising curriculum keeping in view the maximum promotion of Urdu Language. Teachers training programmes to be initiated focusing on the utmost usage of Urdu language while instructing the class. PEMRA should promote Urdu Language in both Print and electronic media. Apart from all the above steps, the youth and the students are direly needed to have a respect and love for their national language.

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