A Study of Undergraduate Students' Perceptions Regarding Code-Switching as a Teaching Strategy

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Abstract- In a bilingual community, the people fluctuate between two or more languages during communication. This fluctuation between two or more languages is also common in the educational institutions for teaching/learning processes. Such an alternation between two languages is termed as code-switching. The current study is aimed at analyzing the various perceptions of the teachers and students regarding the use of code-switching as a teaching strategy in an EFL classroom. Moreover, the concerned research work is an attempt to find out the differences between the perceptions of the teachers and students and the perceptions of the male and female students regarding the role of code-switching as a teaching strategy in an EFL classroom. The study seeks to suggest views on the impacts of code-switching on the English Language proficiency of the students. Students' perceptions and insights are worthy of consideration. For achieving the said goals, the data were collected through questionnaires from 60 teachers and 200 students. The data was analyzed through SPSS version 17. The results revealed that majority of the students and teachers supported the use of code-switching in the classroom. No reasonable difference has been found between the perceptions of the teachers and students and the perceptions of the male and female students. The overall results show that code-switching has a role in developing the understanding level of the students, increases intimacy among the participants of the class and make the students bold enough to get exposed to the target language. A reasonable space is present in researching the applications of code-switching in the classroom of EFL from different perspectives for further research.

Keywords: Code-switching, Perceptions, role of code-switching, EFL classroom, Pakistani students and teachers.

I. INTRODUCTION

In different communities all over the world, where the people are bilingual, they will fluctuate between two or more different languages, while communicating with each other. This phenomenon of alternation among different languages is termed as code switching or code mixing. Machler (1998) defines it as, "The use of two languages in a way that a new code arises in which the ingredients of these two languages have been definably incorporated structurally", Machler (1998). This code switching in itself is a source of innovation in language, Talaat (2003). The combination of different linguistic elements such as, morphemes and different clauses from a collective activity for the purpose to infer, what they have committed for, must placate what they listen to and understand Bokamba (1989).

In Pakistan and specifically in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the medium of instruction from the very start of their academic life till the highest level is English, though in government schools it is Urdu and in some areas it is Pashto. In order to cope with the diverse backgrounds of the students who come to the University, the teachers will have to periodically alternate between two or more languages. In such a situation the role of a monolingual teacher and a bilingual teacher would be different. A bilingual teacher would be one who can teach by using not only the language that is being given in the text, but also the first language of the students. Clearly then, this does not prevent a "monolingual teacher" from being a bilingual or even a multilingual human being. We found in fact that students' perceptions and attitudes echoed an earlier proposal of mine Macaro (1997, 2001) regarding the different positions that teachers take with regard to (L2) only or Code-switching. Norrish (1997), held the view that the purpose of code-switching by a teacher is to make the students easily understand about the course contents, Ellis (1994). It has commonly been observed that, students who are supposed to learn and read their courses in a foreign language, feel difficulty in

understanding the lectures in the said medium. Malakand division, being a multilingual zone and English being a foreign language, creates the same problems for the learners, while understanding their course contents. Consequently, the teachers have to resort to Code-mixing/code-switching to overcome this obstacle in the way of exact transmission and comprehension of the valuable contents in English Language Teaching. The current research work is focused upon the subject to evaluate the students and teachers perceptions on Code-mixing/code-switching in the subject of English at undergraduate level in different public sector universities in Malakand Division.

Ellis (1994), states that, success can only be achieved when a person gets expose to the target language, such an exposure is not possible in every classroom due to the diverse backgrounds and linguistic aptitudes of the students. Jones (1995) stated that, different social conditions operating within a classroom can shape the code switching and how different perceptions come about the worth and aim of multilingual education can be molded in the practice of discourse. Code-mixing is usually utilized as teaching strategy in English classes at Different levels in the Universities for the purpose to provide elaborate explanations of Course contents through the application of switched languages i.e. English, Urdu and Pashto.

The official medium of instruction at Undergraduate level happens to be English language (L2) and the students at this level usually have not got the required proficiency of English language to understand and follow thoroughly their learning materials in English language. Particularly in rural areas of Pakistan, the students usually happen too weak in English (L2) to follow/pick their class teaching. They are not competent enough in English (L2) to understand their course contents entirely in English language (L2), Malik (2014). Consequently, the teachers have to resort to Code-mixing/code-switching to overcome this obstacle in the way of exact transmission and comprehension of the valuable contents.

The proposed study is intended to investigate about the perceptions of the students (both male and female) and regarding code-switching in the classroom to find out whether it adds to the effectiveness of the teaching of English or becomes a hurdle in the English language proficiency. For the said purpose different determinants would be taken under consideration like: increased understanding level, exact transmission of course contents, fluent and clearer expression, raising interest level and active involvement on the student part, developing intimacy and solidarity with the students.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language as a means of communication and situations for Code-mixing

Language is a great means of communication because all kinds of thoughts, emotions, desires and feelings are expressed mainly thorough a language. There are two types of communication i.e. linguistic communication and non-linguistic communication. A language is, therefore, the best instrument of communication in this world and it is the best source of storing knowledge and transmitting knowledge, messages and experiences.Code-mixing makes the classroom environment comfortable for the students and help them understanding the lecture easily and effectively. It further arises the interest of the students. The language learning process is thus continued, Burden, (2001). In Malaysia code-switching has been found profitable for the students in the teaching of English. It is more effective for those students who are weak in the English Language conversation, Asma and Omar (1992). Chi WC (2000), asserts that those teachers who are practicing code-switching have got enormous importance in China especially for Chinese oriented AMEP learners. Some of the experts have different views about code switching in the classroom like, Krashen (1988), is of the view that the frequent use of the target language in the classroom can be more effective for learning English language.

God has bestowed man with the quality of learning more than one language. A man can learn various languages at the same time and can put them to use also. So, a man can be Monolingual, Bilingual and multilingual. The term Bilingual may usually be used for the sense of multilingual. It means that language is an achievable objective for the learners and a single man can learn and use many languages simultaneously. Similarly, the whole society/community can be bilingual and multilingual as the Pakistani society and particularly the people of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa KPK where the students have to learn three languages i.e. Pashto, Urdu and English.

In such a bilingual society, there can be a greater chance/possibility of the mixing of the two or three languages sometime on the words level and sometime on the sentence level also. This mixing of two or more languages refers to as code-mixing or code-switching.

2.2 Research findings on the use of Code-mixing in EFL classroom

Many researchers have investigated the phenomenon of code-switching in a bilingual setting in the classroom where English is taught as a second language, Alinezi (2010); Sampson (2011); Hait (2014). In the gulf countries many research works were conducted to know about the attitudes toward the use of code-mixing in the EFL classroom. Al- nofaie (2010) conducted her research on the mixing of Arabic in the EFL classroom and she found that the perceptions of both the instructors and learners towards the use of code-mixing in the classroom were positive and all of them were supporting the use of the native language (Arabic) in an EFL setting. Some of the researchers in the same area got the opposite results and pointed out that most of the students were against the use of the native language in the classroom, Dweik's (2000). Another researcher Hussein, (1999) conducted his research on the students of Jordan University regarding the practice of code-switching. He found out that some of the students were against the use of code-switching in the classroom, while some of them were supporting the intervention of Arabic in EFL setting. He further pointed out the main reason of the use of code-mixing by the teachers and students. He argued that the lack of equivalents for the terms and expressions in English makes them to code-switch. Another study was conducted in secondary schools in Jordan, which revealed that for personal, educational and pedagogical purposes the students practice code-mixing, Hait (2014). It was investigated in the EFL classroom in Finland that code-switching makes the students easily understand the rules of English grammar as the students did not know the English and grammatical terminologies, Yletyine (2004). She further pointed out that the use of code-mixing by the teachers saved most of their time, as through the use of code-mixing they can easily and in no time can make the students understand. However, the intense use of code-switching will make the students much familiar with the said practice so the students and they will then start expecting the teacher to repeat each and every thing in the native language, Yletyine (2004). The similar study was conducted in Iran in an EFL classroom by, Hamidi and Sarem's (2012) pointed out that code-switching makes the classroom environment pleasant. The students' code-switch to correct each other's mistakes which they commit during communication. The instructors and the learners sometimes avoid the use the native language; despite facilitating the communication within the classroom, Rahimi and Jafari (2011). If the students want to clarify their concepts regarding a particular topic, they tend to use code-mixing. It was further investigated that the teachers used code-mixing particularly for translating the materials into the native medium, Moghadam, Samad and Shahraki (2012).

III. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Research Design
The current research work is of quantitative nature and uses quantitative data collection tools. The core concern of the present research work is to investigate an explanation of how a target language (English) can be learnt through the use of code-mixing in a formal setting like classroom. Such a case study is investigated by explanations: Scrutiny and different other sources, Creswell (2007).
Normally in quantitative research, the data collected are tabulated and are then analyzed through the different techniques of statistics with respect to a particular standard, Olugbara(2008). Quantitative analysis has the potential to constitute data on a huge number of participants, Olugbara (2008).For detecting the accuracy of the results the current research work has also adopted the quantitative analysis and for finding the variability's among the participation of the participants the researcher has used percentages.

3.2 Context and Participants of the Study
The current study was carried out in different Public sector universities in Malakand Division. Different public sector universities, Malakand University, Swat University, Buner University, University of Chitral and a sub-campus of Abdul wali Khan University have been established here since 2000 onwards. These universities offer different Programmes like Bechlor, Masters and Doctor Programmes. These programs are

mostly offered in English, though the Area is multi-lingual having the native speakers of Pashto, Chitrali, Kohistani etc. The students come to these universities from a diverse backgrounds and ethnic identities. Some students have their backgrounds from an Urdu Medium Schools and colleges, while some of them arise from English medium Schools. At primary level mostly the medium of instruction and even the textbooks are in local Pashto Language.

In the current research work a random sampling technique has been used to collect a sample of 200 students (Including 100 male and 100 female) has been taken by the researcher, who participated in the current research work. The students study at undergraduate level in different subjects but English as a subject is taught to them as a second language. The current survey is on the students of undergraduate level and a proportionate number of students have been taken from each year i.e. First year, Second year, Third year and fourth year. There is a variety in the mother languages of both the teachers and students like in one university the Teachers are mostly Pashto speakers while the students are Chitrali speakers etc. Almost half of the population in Malakand division are Pashto speakers , while the rest have diverse languages like Chitrali, Gugro, Kohistani etc. Some of the teachers in these Universities are from Punjab and Sindh, whose native languages are Punjabi and Sindhi respectively. Even some Kashmiri teachers and students have been ideantified in these Universities. Though majority of the population are Pashto speakers but they are using different dialects and accents of Pashto language. Table 3.1 shows the demographics of the teachers, while Table 3.2 shows the background information of the Students:

Background Information of the Students:

Categories		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	100	50%
	Female	100	50%
Study year	1st year	50	25%
	2nd year	50	25%
	3er year	50	25%
	4th year	50	25%
Native Languages	Pashto	120	60%
	Chitrali	50	25%
	Kohistani	30	15%

3.3 Tools for Data Collection
In the current research work the data were collected through questioner from the Students (See Appendix).

In the given questioners the functions and role of the teacher's code-mixing has been divided into four basic categories on the basis of multi-dimensional impacts of Code-mixing in the classroom;
1.   General Impacts of Code-mixing in the classroom;
2.   Code-mixing as a necessity
3.   Role of Code-mixing in raising the understanding level of the students
4.   Expressive functions of code-mixing
5.   Role of code-mixing in developing the interest of the students.
In order to find out the perceptions of the students a five-Likert scale has been designed in the questioner from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".

Table-4.1   perceptions of the students regarding code-mixing as a teaching strategy at undergraduate level.

Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	Std D
When my teacher speaks Pashto during lecture, I feel that I understand better.	30 (15%)	3 (2%)	11 (6%)	35 (18%)	121 (61%)	4.07	1.4
When my teacher gives us instructions, I want him or her to	23 (12%)	11 (6%)	14 (7%)	26 (13%)	126 (63%)	4.10	1.4

use Pashto.						
When I ask the question in English, I want the teacher to answer me in Pashto	20 (10%)	9 (5%)	16 (8%)	21 (11%)	134 (67%)	4.2	1.3
If my teacher explains something that I don't understand, I want him to repeat it in English	15 (8%)	13 (7%)	16 (8%)	23 (12%)	133 (67%)	4.23	1.3
Local language (L1) substitutes/equivalents are not always possible for English (L2) Technical terms.	15 (8%)	15(8%)	16 (8%)	26 (13%)	128 (64%)	4.18	1.3
Learning English with direct method (L2) into (L2) can be sufficiently understandable for students	93 (47%)	45 (23%)	30 (15%)	9 (5%)	23(12%)	2.12	1.4
The teaching/learning of English is possible entirely in the local language (L1) without using English words/terms and sentences	98 (49%)	44 (22%)	30 (15%)	6 (3%)	22 (11%)	2.05	1.3
Code-mixing becomes a requirement for exact communications for teaching/learning of English at undergraduate level.	17 (9%)	13 (7%)	27 (14%)	35 (18%)	108 (54%)	4.02	1.3
Code-mixing helps increase understanding level for topics related to English at undergraduate level	17 (9%)	12 (6%)	21 (11%)	32 (16%)	118 (59%)	4.11	1.3
Code-mixing add further dimensions to the message/sense conveyed in teaching English at undergraduate level.	21 (11%)	8 (4%)	20 (10%)	23 (12%)	128 (64%)	4.14	1.4
Code-mixing/code-switching enable the students to get the exact idea of the contents more comprehensively.	26 (13%)	5 (3%)	17 (9%)	23 (12%)	129 (65%)	4.12	1.4
Code-mixing facilitates teaching/learning in accordance with linguistic needs and mental capacities of students	23 (12%)	13 (7%)	11 (6%)	23 (12%)	130 (65%)	4.12	1.4
Teacher's frequent and discretional use of code-mixing helps him express the ideas fluently and clearly	26 (13%)	5 (3%)	14 (7%)	22 (11%)	133 (67%)	4.16	1.4
The appropriate and sensible use of code-mixing ensure clarity in mutual communication	26 (13%)	4 (2%)	12 (6%)	24 (12%)	133 (67%)	4.18	1.4
The students understand better through code-mixing and hence their interest is raised	28 (14%)	3 (2%)	13 (7%)	23 (12%)	133 (67%)	4.15	1.4
Code-mixing increases curiosity and search for knowledge.	29 (15%)	8 (4%)	10 (5%)	20 (10%)	133 (67%)	4.10	1.5
Teacher-students mutual	29	7 (4%)	12	20	132	4.10	1.5

	SA	A	N	SD	D	M	Std D
understanding develop intimacy and which in turn makes teaching-learning process more favorable and effective	(15%)		(6%)	(10%)	(66%)		
Code-mixing removes boredom and fatigue	26 (13%)	5 (3%)	17 (9%)	16 (8%)	136 (68%)	4.16	1.4

Note: SA= Strongly Agree   A= Agree   N= Neutral   SD= Strongly Disagree   D= Disagree   M= Mean   Std D= Standard Deviation.

The above given table 4.1 shows the perceptions of the students regarding code-switching as a teaching strategy in the classroom of English at undergraduate level in the public sector universities of Malakand division. The perceptions of the students are arranged on a five-point Likertscale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Most of the questions are deeply linked with the different effects of code-mixing in the classroom of English. This section covers the first research question of finding out the perceptions of the students regarding code-switching in the classroom of English.

The above Table shows homogeneous values of both Mean (4-4.20) and Standard Deviation (1-1.20), which is an indication of the support of the use of Code-switching by the students.Majority of the respondents as obvious from the given Table are either strongly supporting the use of Code-switching in the classroom or supporting it. Most of the Mean Values in the given Table are above 4 and the standard Deviations is mainly in between 1 and 1.5 which is a strong indication of the support of the use of code-switching in the classroom of English.

In the light of the results obtained from the above table, Code-switching performs multiple functions within the classroom of English. It has a very effective role in enhancing the understanding level of the students, adds further dimensions to the Teaching/Learning processes, helps to express ideas clearly and fluently, develop intimacy among the participants of the classroom, increases the curiosity of the learners and several other functions are performed by the use of code-switching in the classroom.

IV.   DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results of the analysis of the questionnaire investigating functions of the use of code-switching by the teachers of EFL in the classroom show that the most common functions of code-mixing are as follows:
The dominant role of code-mixing as obvious from the analysis section is to translate and clarify difficult vocabulary and terminologies. Most of the respondents are strongly agree with this function of code-mixing in the classroom by the teacher. It is because of the reason that teachers might find it difficult to use the direct method of teaching in the classroom and to teach exclusively in English, Duff and Polio (1990). For saving the time in the classroom code-mixing is a best strategy to be used in the classroom, Yletyinen (2004). This function of code-mixing has been supported by several other research works, Eldridge (1996), Hussein (1999), Liang (2006), Ahmmad and Jusoff (2009); Jingxia (2010); Atas (2012); Chowdhry (2012); Weng (2012).The findings of the current research work include the unavailability of the equivalents in L1 for L2 has been fulfilled by the use of code-switching in the classroom. The main reason for the use of code-mixing by the teachers is the lack of equivalents in the native language of the students for English terms or terminologies, Hussein (1999). The linguistic needs of the participants of an English language classroom have also been addressed in the current study. It has been found out as shown the above tables that code-switching can overcome the linguistic gaps and boundaries among the participants of the classroom. Most of the participants on the current study are strongly agree with this role of code-switching in the classroom and has further been supported by Atas (2012) who states that; There exists a huge linguistic gap among the participants of the classroom. This linguistic gap is fulfilled by the use of code-mixing within the classroom, Atas (2012).Another important function of code-mixing which has been highlighted by the current research work is to increase the understanding level of the learners in the class. This function of code-mixing has also been strongly supported by most of the respondents in the current survey of this research. When the teacher

is using code-mixing in the classroom, the students then can readily get the course contents, which can ultimately increase the understanding level of the students, Samad and Shahraki (2012).Similarly, another function of code-mixing which has been highlighted by the current research work is the expressive function of code-mixing within the classroom. Through the use of code-mixing the teachers can express ideas and propositions very clearly and fluently. Again this role of code-mixing has strongly been supported by most of the participants in the current research work. It can validly promote and ensure clarity in mutual communication. Camilleri (1996), found that the social distance between the teachers and students can be reduced by the use of code-mixing. Through the use of code-mixing the teachers can easily motivate the students to participate in the classroom activities, Atas (2012). It was also found out that code-mixing enables the students to speak freely without any hesitation and without the pressure or stress of the target language, Ustunel and Seedhouse (2005).

It was also found out that the use of code-mixing in the class raise the interest of the learners towards their studies and which in turn increase the curiosity of the students. This curiosity enhances the spirit of enquiry in the learners which is a key for getting knowledge. According to the research questions of the current research work it was confirmed that there is no difference between the perceptions of the instructors and learners on the use of code-mixing in the classroom. Most of them have the perception that code-mixing can get the students satisfied.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study aimed at identifying students' perceptions regarding the use of code-mixing in the classroom of EFL in different public sector universities of Malakand Division. The concerned research work focused on finding out the perceptions of the learners regarding the use of code-mixing in the classroom. The participants of the current research study constituted 200 students. The students were from different department who were learning English as a second language and were at different (From 1 up to 4) years of studying. Most of the participants were Pashto speakers but some Chitralis, Kohistanis and Urdu speakers were also found in the said universities. The analysis of the Data indicated that the major role of code-mixing is translation and to clarify different concepts and terminologies. Further, code-mixing can bring the participants of the class close together and can develop intimacy among them. It can make their ideas more clear and fluent and can raise their interest towards their studies. The perceptions of the teachers towards their own code-mixing were almost positive and they were supporting the use of code-mixing in the classroom. The perceptions of the students were also very much positive towards the teachers' code-mixing in the classroom.

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