

**An exploration of teachers' code switching: The case of English language classroom**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The linguistic phenomenon of using two languages by switching between them is universal in multilingual situation. Code-switching takes place when two bilingual speakers are busy in interacting with each other. Most commonly, such individuals are not consciously aware of the fact that they are involved in such linguistic phenomenon. The same happens to teachers as they switch the code while teaching English in the classroom and the reason for this code-switching maybe that English has an important status in Pakistan. However, it serves a very conspicuous social function too. This study highlights on how code-switching assists in second language learning. A Quantitative study based on survey data was conducted to observe the effect of code-switching on the language learning process. In this investigation questionnaire was a major tool. Furthermore, the questionnaire used in this research was composed in accordance to the objectives of the study. The setting of the research was various educational institutes of Lahore. Hundred English language teachers both male and female were chosen for sampling. This research, although introductory in nature, seeks to underline and elaborate the effect of code-switching on the language learning process. The result shows that code-switching helps students in learning concepts of second language in English language classroom. Moreover, it can also be noticed as a good educational practice. To cap up, this research has made an endeavor to better comprehend the tendencies of code-switching in Pakistani English language classrooms.*

**Keywords:** English language classroom, codeswitching, teaching process, learning process, teacher

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## INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

English has achieved the status of lingua Franca in the modern expanding world. It is the language that opens new vistas of knowledge for everyone. It is the language of education, media, technology, and business. That is why Pakistan has given its due share in the socio-cultural infrastructure. English is also enjoying official status being taught as a compulsory subject and used as MOI (Medium of Instruction) for all levels. Teachers switch codes while teaching their subject in the classroom considering it as a tool that helps students in learning and understanding. This research explores the role of English teachers' code switching in the classroom, how it affects teaching/learning process of English language, the performance of language learners, individual difference, affective factors, and code-switching as a conversational approach.

Raul quoted that in Pakistan, there are more than seventy languages being spoken (2013); whereas, Urdu is the national language but English occupies the post of an official language. Currently, English is treated as the compulsory subject in all the educational institutes (Ehsan & Aziz, 2014). Code-switching and code-mixing are the clear traces of the fact that English language is at large in Pakistan. English is known as the most widely used language in in the education sector and in other domains and in the past few years an increase has been witnessed in teaching through English at all levels in Pakistan. Fundamentally, code switching is an inevitable need of the students in English language classrooms because many of the Pakistani students are still lacking in their English communicative competence. Teachers, normally, switch code for the interpretation of difficult concepts, to place illustrations or to socialize as well. Teachers are found to switch code for making the concepts of grammar clear and moreover to make their lesson easier for their students in Pakistani classrooms (Gulzar, 2010). There are multidimensional causes for code-switching in a classroom. It is very important to trace the causes of code-switching used by ELT teachers in their classrooms. There are many people who still consider code-switching in a biased way. Some people are of the view that incompetent people switch codes while other consider it as a clue to being lazy. Whatsoever it is, the objectives of the study are to determine the reasons for which ELT teachers go for code-switching in classroom.

English is taught as a compulsory subject in Pakistan and is also used as MOI (medium of instructions). Teachers and students do switch the codes in classrooms during teaching and learning process. Furthermore, applied linguists working in the area of classroom discourse have stretched the paradigm of their research in order to focus on the prominent areas of classroom practices in connection with the second language learning. In educational set-up the phenomenon of code-switching is all-pervasive which attracts various attitudes from learners and the teachers. There are various reasons

for the teachers to switch the code. Teachers go for code-switching for multifarious reasons such as management, social and academic (Barandagh, Zoghi & Amini, 2013; Chowdhury, 2012). Code switching is used to be familiar with the learners, whenever the instructor wishes to be open in accordance with the need of the task in classroom for second language learning (Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult, 1999). Code-switching is also used to maintain discipline, to give instructions to the students for different projects and tasks. Chowdhury (2012) emphasizes that code-switching can serve as a very handy tool for crowded classrooms where the students happen to come from various socio-economic background and diversifying linguistic competence and anticipate the teachers' maximum attention. In the current scenario, it is needed to develop better understanding for code-switching in English language classrooms.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Code-Switching is named of changing one language to other language during speech. Different researchers have defined it in different ways, talking about the earlier definitions Valdes-Fallis says that borrowing, transfer or mixing, of two codes is code-switching (1978). Gumperz (1982) is of the view that juxtaposing of two sub systems or two separate grammatical systems is called code-switching. The word code-switching on broader level is used in the field of linguistics, and it is always studied in a social context. Wardhaugh (1998) uses language for code and switching from a language to another based upon the context is code-switching.

Code-switching is the use of two or more than one language in a single conversation or in a single context. The speaker switches back and forth between languages in a same conversation. Code-switching can take place in different situations. Sometimes question is asked in one language but answer is provided in another.

Code-switching can also be observed as a strategy by the speaker to hide his\ her lack of knowledge or vocabulary in the target language. It is a normal phenomenon for a speaker during switching process to use more words from a language than the other language. Scotton named matrix for the language whose words are more used in the speech than the language whose less words are used. The other language is called embedded language (1993). Code-switching is fundamentally the use of two distinct languages within a written text or discourse. Code-switching is divided into two types;

### 1) Inter- Sentential code-switching

E.g : Are you fine? Tum preshan lag rahy ho. (Are you fine? It seems that you are upset).

## 2) Intra- Sentential code-switching

Example: Bas leave it.

Jdetawy (2011) has tried to highlight different reasons of code-switching, they included the intentions of the interlocutors and characterized the morpho-syntactical constraints in which they focused on the location of the switches in the sentences. There are other social motivations of code-switching like social characteristics of different community and the relation between the proficiency and attitude of the bilinguals. Eldin (2014) indicates that speakers sometimes switch to unify with the community, express emotions, discuss a specific topic, reflect social status, and sometimes for audience persuasions. Code-switching normally assists the learner to enhance the power of comprehension. Kinloch (2005) is of the view that students enjoy the right to employ their own language whenever they find it difficult to understand the concept and the meaning. Kinloch (2005) speaks for the students to claim the right to treat their own language in composition course where they sense that meanings are not significantly propagated.

When a native language is utilized in the teaching and learning settings it serves three functions which include to maintain the privacy, constructing an interaction to engage learners, and establishing inter-subjectivity (Momenian & Samar, 2011). Lee explored the functions of English as a foreign language and he concluded that use of L1 provides an opportunity to improve knowledge, promote confidence and development of social and cultural identity. Additionally, code-switching of the instructor is relatively related to the effective support and educational success of the students (Badrul & Kamaruzaman, 2009). It is also believed that code-switching facilitates the English language teaching and learning process in a way that it finds out the hidden message behind the code-switching (Tien & Liu, 2006).

Pakistani society is known as a multilingual society as a majority of the population use more than one languages. Viewing it historically, it is normal that newly evolved languages take effects from old languages. Many words belonging a language have become transfuse into another language due to its constant use. Similarly in sub-continent Urdu emerged in a context where along with other local languages, English, Persian, Hindi, and Arabic were already being used. After colonization, English not only emerged as a dominant language but it also left its permanent traces on Urdu and Hindi. Resultantly, some of its lexical items have become a permanent part of Urdu.

Code-mixing is a small term as compared to code switching because of its inclusion of mixing and switching both. The Urdu language used for communication between different language speakers thus Urdu is most commonly spoken language in Pakistan. There are many other provincial and regional languages such as Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Hindko, Barahwi, Saraiki, and Kashmiri. Along with all these local languages English is also used in Pakistan as an official

language. As Urdu as national and English is the official language of Pakistan, both the languages are used side by side, so while speaking people do switch between these and other languages as well.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A cross sectional survey type has been selected to collect the information from a population that was predetermined. A structured questionnaire was designed to in order to collect precise and useful information related to the study. A survey type of research is very commonly used by the researchers in the field of education. Besides that, the survey research is good to deal with large population. In the present study a representative sampling method was used. Data is collected at cross-sectional level from the subjects having varied experience, qualification, gender, and medium of instruction.

The questionnaire used for the research was created for the information collection from the following areas:

Section 1: Demographic information

Gender, Education (Qualification, Experience and Medium of Instruction)

Section 2: Reasons initiating code switching in English language class

This study comprises a simple random sampling of the available population of English language teachers from various educational institutes of Lahore. The sample consists of hundred English language teachers. The researcher used questionnaire as a tool for data collection. Moreover the researcher collected the data from the various parts of the Lahore city.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The responses of the subjects were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. An SPSS version 21 was used to analyse the data. The responses of the participants were evaluated to spotlight the effects of code-switching in English language classrooms. The following statistical methods were used according to the demand of the research questions:

1. The method of relative frequency was used to acquire the general percentage of the views of the respondents about the effects of code-switching in second language learning.

- Independent samples test was performed to find out the relationship from and to different questionnaire sections with the fixed significance level of 0.05. The primary objective of this test was to ascertain the significance value of the gender among the subjects. Finally, the results were exhibited by using tables and charts as well.

**Personal Information Data**

Table 1 **Gender**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	47	47.0	47.0	47.0
Female	53	53.0	53.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

In this study, out of hundred English Teachers, forty seven percent were male and fifty three percent were female teachers.

**Personal Information Data**

Table 2 **Qualification**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
M.Phil	46	46.0	46.0	46.0
M.A	54	54.0	54.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

So far as the qualification was concerned, forty six percent were MPhil and fifty four percent were MA degree holders.

**Personal Information Data**

Table 3 **Experience**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-5 YEARS	60	60.0	60.0	60.0
6-10 YEARS	25	25.0	25.0	85.0
11-15 YEARS	15	15.0	15.0	100
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The teachers whose experience was (1-5 years), they were sixty percent, the teachers whose experience was (6-10 years), they were twenty five percent and the teachers whose experience was (11-15 years) they were fifteen percent. Moreover, cumulative percentage is recorded in the up given table.

**Personal Information Data**

Table 4 **Medium of Instruction**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid ENGLISH	31	31.0	31.0	31.0
BOTH	69	69.0	69.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Out of hundred percent, thirty one percent teachers follow English medium of instruction and sixty nine percent teachers follow both (English and Urdu) medium of instructions.

Table 5: **Inferential Statistics on the base of gender (statements 1-6)**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. It is easy to teach second language by code switching.	MALE	47	2.2128	1.06191	.306
	FEMALE	53	2.4151	1.16741	
2. Code-switching increases the reliability of a second language learning.	MALE	47	2.6809	1.10545	.742
	FEMALE	53	2.6038	1.23007	
3. Code-switching eases in translation in second language class.	MALE	47	1.7872	.58741	.032
	FEMALE	53	2.0943	.81487	
4. Code-switching ensures the linguistic competence of the learners.	MALE	47	2.4468	.99583	.444
	FEMALE	53	2.6038	1.04402	
5. Code-switching helps the teachers to meet learner's level of understanding.	MALE	47	2.2766	1.09747	.489
	FEMALE	53	2.4340	1.16865	
6. Code-switching serves as a bridge of understanding between first and second language.	MALE	47	2.1064	.98321	.247
	FEMALE	53	2.3585	1.17824	

Independent Samples Test was performed on the data and all the thirty items were presented in the form of five clusters, comprising six item in one cluster. Mean values and standard deviations are given up in the table for each item accordingly. Moreover, Sig. (2-tailed) values are also given for each item. Most of the Sig. (2-tailed) values are greater than the required value which is 0.05, it shows that there is no significant difference in the scores of the given items on the basis of the gender of the participants. But in one of the items given up in the cluster which is no.3, Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.032 which is lesser than the required value 0.05, itexposes that there is a significant difference in the score of the given item on the basis of the gender of the participants.

Table 6: **Inferential Statistics on the base of gender (Statements 7-12)**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
7. Code-switching makes it easy to pass on technical/specialized information.	MALE	47	2.4681	1.17679	.156
		53	2.8302	1.35499	
	FEMALE				
8. Code-switching improves the performance of second language teachers.	MALE	47	2.4681	1.12000	.736
		53	2.3962	.98722	
	FEMALE				
9. Code-switching is an effective process of providing feedback to learners.	MALE	47	2.5319	.90532	.821
		53	2.4906	.91194	
	FEMALE				
	MALE	47	2.3404	.84124	

10. Code-switching is a source of handling the individual differences effectively in second language learning.	FEMALE	53	2.5849	.88652	.160
11. Code-switching improves class room management in second language learning.	MALE	47	2.5532	1.03857	.903
	FEMALE	53	2.5283	.99235	
12. Code-switching helps to control student behavior easily.	MALE	47	2.6383	1.13109	.249
	FEMALE	53	2.3774	1.11332	

Independent Samples Test was performed on the given items up in the table. Apart from Mean values and Std. Deviation, Sig. (2-tailed) values are given in the table. All the Sig. (2-tailed) values are greater than the required value which is 0.05, it simply shows that there is no significant difference in the scores of the given items on the basis of the gender of the participants.

**Table 7 Inferential Statistics on the base of gender (Statements 13-18)**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
13. Code-switching makes the instruction of second language more effective.	MALE	47	2.6383	1.11171	.014
	FEMALE	53	2.0943	1.04263	
14. Code-switching enhances integrated skills of second language learners.	MALE	47	2.5106	1.23134	.425
	FEMALE	53	2.3208	1.12273	

15. Code-switching helps in creating a comfortable environment in a second language classroom.	MALE	47	2.1489	.95505	
		53	2.3396	1.23947	
	FEMALE				.388
16. Use of code-switching, develops the interest of second language learners.	MALE	47	2.3830	.99024	
		53	2.5283	1.15365	
	FEMALE				.500
17. Code-switching gives students a sense of attachment with their mother tongue.	MALE	47	2.1702	1.02828	
		53	2.5472	1.24909	
	FEMALE				.101
18. Code-switching increases mental ability to learn second language.	MALE	47	2.4468	.92803	
		53	2.4528	1.02968	
	FEMALE				.976

After Independent Samples Test was performed on the six items presented in the cluster, all the values including Mean, Std. Deviation and Sig. (2-tailed) are given in the table. All the Sig. (2-tailed) values are greater than the required value which is 0.05, it shows that there is no significant difference in the scores of the given items on the basis of the gender of the participants.

But the Sig. (2-tailed) value of one of the items given in the table (Code-switching makes the instruction of second language more effective.) is 0.014 which is lesser than the required value which is 0.05, it simply signifies that there is a significant difference in the score of the given item on the basis of the gender of the respondents.

Table 8 **Inferential Statistics on the base of gender (Statements 19-24)**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
19. Code-switching removes hesitations of second language learners.	MALE	47	2.2340	1.06756	.301
		53	2.4528	1.02968	
	FEMALE				
20. Code-switching helps to remove confusions related to the concepts of second language learning.	MALE	47	2.4681	1.10042	.853
		53	2.5094	1.12014	
	FEMALE				
21. Code-switching gives students the confidence to learn a second language.	MALE	47	2.5745	1.07834	.112
		53	2.2453	.95888	
	FEMALE				
22. Code-switching helps to reduce mental stress in second language learning.	MALE	47	2.1915	1.07619	.334
		53	2.3962	1.02544	
	FEMALE				
23. Code-switching supports the logical reasoning of second language learning.	MALE	47	2.4894	1.01879	.603
		53	2.3774	1.13046	
	FEMALE				
	MALE	47	2.6383	1.00921	

24. Code-switching		53	2.2453	.93861	
regulates the structural					
process of brain					.047
smoothly in second	FEMALE				
language learning.					

In this data all the values of Mean, Std. Deviation and Sig. (2-tailed) are listed in the table as a result of Independent Samples Test. Sig. (2-tailed) values of all the item in the up given table are greater than the required value which is 0.05, it simply signifies that there is no significant difference in the scores of the given items on the basis of the gender of the participants but in last item there is significant difference which is lesser than the required value.

**Table 9 Inferential Statistics on the base of gender (Statements 25-30)**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
25. Code-switching is a	MALE	47	2.0000	.93250	.838
genuine need in a		53	1.9623	.89791	
bilingual society.	FEMALE				
26. Code-switching is easy	MALE	47	1.9787	.92052	.990
to use in a bilingual		53	1.9811	.99015	
society.	FEMALE				
27. Code-switching	MALE	47	2.3617	1.05141	.318
develops communication		53	2.1509	1.04507	
skills in social setting.	FEMALE				
28. Code-switching creates	MALE	47	2.1489	.90838	.510
friendliness between		53	2.2830	1.11592	
students and teachers.	FEMALE				

29. Code-switching helps explaining socio-cultural items/ideas in a better way.	MALE	47	2.3617	1.05141	.746
		53	2.4340	1.16865	
	FEMALE				
30. Code-switching is conversational approach in second language learning.	MALE	47	2.5319	1.15817	.333
		53	2.7736	1.32493	
	FEMALE				

In this last cluster comprising all the items based on questionnaire, values of Mean, Std. Deviation and Sig. (2-tailed) are listed above. After observing it can be said that Sig. (2-tailed) values of the given item up in the table are greater than the required value which is 0.05, it simply shows that there is no significant difference in the scores of the given items on the basis of the gender of the participants.

## DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

This study shows the relationship between code switching and second language learning/teaching as it is found in the data collected through questionnaire from English language teachers of the various public and private institutes of the Lahore. It is also observed in the data that code switching is the integral part of second language learning/teaching. Code-switching increases the reliability of a second language learning/teaching. Moreover, it helps in translation in second language class. The current study explored the perception of code switching in second language learning. Through the analysis of the collected data in the form of frequencies and inferential tables in which mean score, standard deviation and sig. (2-tailed) values are given, it is found that code switching enhances the students' second language comprehension and the relevant performance of the learners in English language classrooms. Code-switching also augments the performance of the teachers because it helps the teachers to meet learner's level of understanding. It ensures the linguistic competence of the learners. So, code switching is an effective process of providing feedback to learners.

The data reveals that code switching sounds very handy in handling the individual difference very effectively among learners in second language learning. Dominant majority in the data is of the view that with the help of code

switching individual differences within the class can be managed very smartly. Code-switching improves classroom management in second language learning. It also helps to control student behavior easily.

Thorough analysis of the data exposes that undoubtedly, code switching increases mental ability and reduces mental stress and anxiety to learn second language. Code-switching also removes hesitations of second language learners. It helps to remove confusions related to the concepts of second language learning. It gives students the confidence in the scheme of the things. Response of the participants signifies that code switching regulates the structural process of brain smoothly in second language learning/teaching.

A very sagacious investigation of the data highlights that code switching is a conversational approach in second language learning/teaching. Moreover, it is also found that code switching is a genuine need in a bilingual society because it is easy to use in such scenario. It develops communication skills in social setting. Keen observation leads to some more traces in the existing data as code-switching creates friendliness between students and teachers. Furthermore, it helps explaining socio-cultural items/ideas in a better way.

Profound study of the statistical data shows that the value of mean, std. deviation and sig. (2-tailed) was determined for all the variables. Through the analysis and empirical observation of the collected data, it is found that the code switching enhances the students' comprehension of second language. There is no negative effect of code switching on the language learning process. The researcher reached at this conclusion by conducting a survey through a questionnaire comprising thirty items on Likert scale. Opinion was collected from the English language teachers of various public and private sectors institutes of Lahore. For the analysis of the data SPSS twenty one version was used. Descriptive statistics was applied on the data and after that some more valuable tests were applied to determine the values of mean, std. deviation and sig. (2-tailed). Thus, the researcher proved that code switching improves the performance of second language teachers. On the other hand students can furbish their ideas and concepts in a much better way with the assistance of code switching. Moreover, in learning second language not only the students but the teachers also have more than positive attitude towards code switching. The teachers usually execute code switching in teaching and they claim to get positive results.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study justifies that code-switching gives students the confidence to learn a second language, on the other hand it also improves the performance of second language teachers. This proves that teachers should switch the codes in English language classrooms. This investigation also reveals that code switching can be helpful for the students to remove

confusions related to the concepts of second language learning and it helps to reduce mental stress in second language learning. Researcher finds that code switching supports the logical reasoning of second language learning. This study has marked glaring results to point out that teachers understand the utility and importance of code-switching in the bilingual classroom discourse. Keeping in mind the whole investigation and its objective, if we narrow down the issues of bilingual classrooms in connection with Pakistani scenario, it can be confidently claimed that code switching can satiate the needs of the students.

On the basis of this investigation some of the points are recommended by the researcher as under:

1. Keeping in view the level of the students, a strategy of code switching should be introduced for teaching English in bilingual classrooms.
2. A clear-cut language policy should be streamlined in this regard.
3. Students and teachers should be aware of the limitations of code switching because an unwise exploitation of code switching could have long-lasting harmful subsidiary consequences.
4. Code switching should be used in bilingual classes because it helps explaining socio-cultural items/ideas in a better way.
5. To develop the interest of the second language learners, code switching should properly be utilized in the classes.
6. Teachers should employ positive attitude towards code switching as a tool.
7. It is also suggested that code switching should reflect linguistic competence of the English language teachers.
8. Code switching should be objective-based and context-based as far as the needs of the learners and context are concerned.

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