

**Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Pakistani English: A Sociolinguistic Analysis**

**Zafar Nazeer Awan<sup>1</sup>, Uzma Begum<sup>2</sup>, Mehran Khan<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> M.Phil English (Applied Linguistics) Hazara University Mansehra, KP Pakistan.  
[zafarawan985@gmail.com](mailto:zafarawan985@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer; Women Sub Campus, University of Malakand

<sup>3</sup> Department of English, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad Pakistan,  
ORCID: 0009-0006-9065-4332, [mkhan128050@gmail.com](mailto:mkhan128050@gmail.com)

**[DOI:https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i1.446](https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i1.446)**

**Abstract**

This work investigates one of the most intriguing and frequently used sociolinguistic phenomena—code-switching and code-mixing in Pakistani English—focusing on its patterns, triggers, and consequences in a multilingual setting. This research employs Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model and Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory to examine the influence of sociocultural variables such as gender, age, social status, and digital on language. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were acquired through naturalistic observations, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with people spanning a variety of demographic backgrounds. The results indicate that code-switching and code-mixing function as mechanisms for the construction of identity, facilitating the bridging of linguistic divides and the navigation of social environments. Relativization and related patterns within and between sentences are common, English is used where the formality or when the professional language is required, whereas Urdu is used to express culture or emotions. The research stresses about the importance of digital communicative media in developing these practices and portrays a continuum of attitudes for bi-lingual language use – right from the linguistic competence to the cultural insipidness. In doing so, this study expands the theory of sociolinguistics and brings crucial insights that will be helpful for educating policymakers and the general public in Pakistan and beyond. The sociolinguistic study particularly highlights the salient features of code-switching and code-mixing within the context of Pakistani these activities highlight the complexity of communicational interactions in a multilingual setting, illustrating how language and the self-intersect in a multicultural linguistic environment.

**Keywords:** Code-Switching, Code-Mixing, Pakistani English, Sociolinguistics, Multilingual Communication

## **Introduction**

Pakistan's linguistic environment is intricate, as evidenced by the coexistence of a diverse range of languages, including Urdu, English, and several regional dialects, including Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi, with other minority languages. Among these, English plays a significant role as the official language and a medium of instruction in higher education and professional domains (Rahman, 2010). Due to the rich linguistic diversity, people of this country use a lot of code-switching and code mixing; this means that during interaction, people switch from using English to many local languages and vice versa. This is more evident in areas that adoption of English is a pivot towards social reality, civilization and career advancement in urban centers (Baumgardner, 1993).

Consequently, code-switching and code-mixing were found to have several functions in the Pakistani culture where language deficiencies are corrected, as well as sociocultural and pragmatic requirements are fulfilled. These phenomena, coupled with individual lexical and phonological preferences, are examples of sociolinguistic pragmatic settings of power relations, self, and community (Spitz 1982). Even though this language phenomenon has been seen in Pakistan, research on the same topic has not received extensive studies in Pakistan. Hence, special attention should be paid to the general discussion regarding such patterns and their causes and effects as an appeal to do a more detailed analysis of aggressive behaviors as a phenomenon.

While code-switching and code-mixing have been explored extensively as common phenomena in bilingual and multilingual settings around the globe (Poplack, 1980; Myers-Scotton, 1993) there is comparatively very little investigation as to how this plays out in the context of Pakistani English. Modern scholarship generally pays insufficient attention to the fine-grained processes of sociocultural factors, such as gender, age and SES that shape these language practices. Secondly, there is still a lack of research into the voices of Pakistani speakers on these occasions and their importance to the formation of identity and group formation. This absence is conspicuous in the current research literature to stress the need of analyzing the pragmatic and sociolinguistic dimensions of code-switching and code-mixing in the context of Pakistani English.

## **Research Objectives**

This study aims to:

- Analyze the linguistic patterns and structures of code-switching and code-mixing in Pakistani English.
- Examine the sociocultural factors influencing these linguistic practices.
- Explore the attitudes of speakers toward code-switching and code-mixing in various contexts.
- Investigate the implications of code-switching and code-mixing on identity construction and group membership.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to the advancement of sociolinguistic discourse by providing a comprehensive examination of code-switching and code-mixing in Pakistani English, a context that has not been sufficiently examined. The study elucidates the linguistic behaviors in a multilingual society by analyzing the sociocultural foundations that are influenced by historical, political, and economic factors (Rahman, 1996). These findings are indeed quite applicable to language education, indeed in policy formation, and especially in the promotion of tolerance to linguistic difference in Pakistan.

This work aims at extending current sociolinguistic paradigms by situating them in a postcolonial, multilingual context. This will be very helpful for lawmakers, teachers, and linguists who are trying to understand and solve the problems that come up with bilingual and multilingual speech in Pakistan.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Code-switching and code-mixing are common in countries with many languages. They happen when two or more languages are used at different times in the same line, phrase, or conversation. When people move between languages on purpose, this is called code-switching. On the other hand, code-mixing is when people combine different parts of language in a less formal and flexible way (Poplack, 1980). These activities are influenced by sociolinguistic variables and fulfil many communication goals, including addressing lexical deficiencies, indicating group affiliation, or navigating social identity (Gumperz, 1982).

### **This research is based on two fundamental theories:**

**Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model (1993):** delineates the matrix language, which constitutes the grammatical framework, alongside the embedded language that enhances it with lexical elements.

**Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973):** explains how speakers adjust their language choices to either conform to or differentiate from their conversational partners, affected by many social or environmental factors.

### **Global Perspectives**

Research on bilingual and multilingual cultures worldwide reveals that code-switching and code-mixing are common phenomena. This is a very important way to keep people together and power in check, as shown by research in Africa (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Most academic research in the West has been done on Hispanic people in the US. Code-switching is an example of how different cultures can come together to make new languages (Poplack, 1980).

Code-mixing is important for building personalities and getting past language barriers. It has been talked about in schools and the news in many Asian countries, especially India and Malaysia (Kachru, 1983).

### **The Pakistani Linguistic Context**

Pakistanis who speak English are powerful and important. There are a few native languages and Urdu, which is the state language, living with it. The different languages have made conversation very different, and code-switching and code-mixing are normal parts of daily life (Rahman, 2010). Baumgardner (1993) says that Pakistani English is different because the users' first languages gave it different sounds, vocabulary, and words.

Socioeconomic factors have a big effect on how people in Pakistan use words. English language skills are often seen as a sign of how well someone did in school and how far society has come. This is why they are used in many places, like media, schooling, and the workplace (Rahman, 1996).

### **Research Methodology**

This research aims to explore the language and interactional features of code-switching and code-mixing into the domain of Pakistani English using an integrative research design. The qualitative integration with the quantitative combines the lights and cancels out the different events that may be related to such matters to make outstanding patterns, drivers, and effects. In general, this research is positioned largely within a sociolinguistic perspective, as it offers valuable understanding of the modality by which language use is influenced by social context and cultural practices.

### **Participant Selection**

Stratified sampling is used to make sure that people from a lot of different social groups are part of this study. The people in the group are different in age, gender, and level of income. Most of them live in cities and towns where English is the main language.

### **Tools for Data Collection**

#### **Naturalistic Observation and Audio Recordings:**

Recordings of conversations in natural settings (e.g., workplaces, universities, and social gatherings) to capture spontaneous instances of code-switching and code-mixing.

#### **Surveys:**

Structured surveys to gather data on participants' attitudes toward code-switching and code-mixing.

#### **Interviews:**

Semi-structured interviews with language experts, educators, and participants to explore the sociocultural motivations behind linguistic behavior.

### **Thematic Analysis**

The qualitative data gathered from interviews and observations will be subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the functions and triggers of code-switching and code-mixing.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

Quantitative data from surveys will be analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS) to determine the frequency and distribution of code-switching and code-mixing across different demographic groups.

### **Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis will be employed to examine the sociolinguistic implications of code-switching and code-mixing, focusing on how these practices contribute to identity construction and group dynamics.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Patterns of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing**

For Pakistani English, the current data analysis shows that code-switching and code-mixing patterns dominate the intra-sentential and inter-sentential categories. Intra-sentential switching means that some components of the English and/or the other language are interwoven within one and the same English sentence – as it is the case with the phrase “I need to buy some samaan for dinner. Though inter-sentential switching occurs between sentences and as for example in the following dialogues: I will call you later. Mujhe abhi kaam hai.”

Examination of qualitative information on specialized thematic appraisal reveals contextual stimuli of these language behaviors. For instance, English will convey erudite or formal ideas while Urdu conveys the ethnical or sentimental ideas. Tag-switching, defined as the short insertion of one language into another, commonly transpires in casual dialogue, demonstrating a flexibility of communication and a shared comprehension of cultural settings.

#### **Contextual Triggers**

##### **Sociocultural Influences**

Sociocultural variables significantly influence code-switching and code-mixing habits. Gender disparities are apparent, as women are more inclined to engage in code-mixing in informal contexts, frequently integrating English expressions to convey modernity or sophistication. In contrast, men primarily employ code-switching in professional settings to convey authority or expertise.

### **Domain-Specific Usage**

Language use differs substantially across several disciplines. English dominates educational Arena as the medium of instructions however, students switch over to Urdu when they are in free talk. Similarly, in the work place; English is used for official communication and Urdu is used to build friendship.

### **Media and Technology**

The upcoming of the social networks and informatics communication has enlightened code-mixing as in the cases of the WhatsApp or Instagram where users switch between the languages. English is used mainly for its concise and analytically precise character in the technical language, while Urdu creates a closer relationship and passion.

### **Sociolinguistic Implications**

#### **Identity Construction**

Code-switching and code-mixing serve as strategies for identity negotiation. Bilingual persons utilize these tactics to establish their presence within certain social circles or to differentiate themselves in varied cultural contexts. Urban adolescents often amalgamate English with regional languages to convey a global identity.

#### **Perceptions and Attitudes**

On this basis, it is clear that people have one perception or another of the code-switching as well as the code-mixing as revealed by the survey. To the former, the acts are viewed as belonging to language competence and attending biculturalism while, to the latter, the acts are viewed as pertained to language incompetence or marginalization.

#### **Cross-Contextual Comparison**

It can be observed certain differences in such phenomenon as flow between two languages in studied urban and semi-urban areas. It was also found that urban speakers position their instantaneous interaction with the English language more frequently as compared to rural speakers due to better education and media influence. Persons from semi-urban areas commonly used regional languages and there is less English language used only within the professional or in the pretentious scenario.

### **Contributions to Sociolinguistic Theory**

#### **Refinement of Existing Theories**

This study builds on Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model using data collected in multilingual Pakistan to demonstrate how matrix and embedded languages are dynamic. The results further develop the Communication Accommodation Theory by emphasizing that bilingual speakers adjust their communication not only to their conversational partners but also to the anticipated expectations of a wider social audience.

### **New Insights**

As this research proposes a novel concept for analyzing code-switching and code-mixing in South Asia – a region where language practices are profoundly linked to culture and economy – the significance of the topic in the region can actually be considered primary. They have underlined the importance of seeing social media and other technology-assisted channels as emergent spaces for language use, as well as constant (and rapidly changing) territories for linguistic creativity.

### **Practical Implications**

#### **Educational Policies**

The results call for practices in bilingual education that acknowledge code-switching as method, as opposed to a deficiency. To explain, code-switching can be an essential strategy through which teachers can help students overcome the barriers in their classroom as well as support an inclusive class.

#### **Language Planning**

Authorities may use these findings to increase cross cultural and at the same time address the discrimination associated with code-switching and code-mixing. Measures designed towards bringing some order of standardization to multilingualism in business and other working environments can hugely expand the accessibility and SKU width while at the same time cutting costs with a significant degree of effectiveness.

#### **Sociocultural Awareness**

It is for this reason that awareness programs can help in eradicating prejudices associated with bilingualism by raising successes related facets of bilingualism and encouraging a better assimilation of multilingually deficient Pakistan.

#### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Thorough studies designed to observe the progression of code-switching activities across time.

An analysis of comparative studies among South Asian countries to identify regional differences and commonalities.

Analysis of the impact of artificial intelligence and machine translation on code-mixing in digital communication.

#### **Summary of Findings**

Code-switching and code-mixing in Pakistani English: patterns, triggers and sociolinguistic implications is examined in this research. The research evidence points out that the investigated language behaviors are not random and are significantly embedded in the Pakistani social environment. Both intra-sentential and inter-sentential switching and

decided to a very large extent by other factors including gender, age, and socio-economic status in the choice of language. Relating English directly to Urdu and the regional languages is situational-needs driven and uptakes sociocultural-desire where using English is a symbol of identity, education, class, and power. This research explores the effects of digital platforms on code mixed communication, which indicates that code switching is not as rigid as it is once thought to be today. Analyzing the attitudinal data points, there is a wide range of positive attitudes based on the cultural creolization and negative ones associated with language deficiency or culturally debased.

### **Implications for Sociolinguistic Research**

First, the findings contribute to sociolinguistic theory by refining extant models, such as the Matrix Language Frame and Communication Accommodation Theory. The study therefore supports the development of micro-theories which recognize the contextual nature of language processes within post-colonial, multilingual contexts.

### **Conclusion**

This work therefore provides a clear description of the nature of code switching and code mixing in Pakistani English and a cross sectional view of the association between the social-cultural factors and language use. By using patterns, triggers and implications, as well as a mixed-methods case study approach, the study offers a dense understanding of these phenomena and their relationship to the context of Pakistan's Multilingualism and multiculturalism. Digital contexts extend these practices by creating new venues for semiotic creativity, thus intra-sentential and inter-sentential switching becomes prevailing trends, which respond both to the pragmatic necessities and social-community ideals.

Nevertheless, the results underscore the continuity of code-switching and code-mixing as tools for identity creation and linguistic and cultural intermediation as well as powerful tools for managing social and professional contexts. These practices are therefore multifaceted and depend with the environment or culture, and this is evident from the benchmarks namely, gender, age, and SES. Moreover, the diversified approach regarding bilingual language usage highlights the need to pay more attention to the other beneficial functions of language intertwining. In this respect, this work continues theory building within sociolinguistic theory in defining and expounding critical models like the Matrix Language Frame and Communication Accommodation Theory in relation to the tension between Language as Context Saturated and fluid use of language in Multilingual communities. Besides, it turns to the topic of the necessity of having localized frameworks for the analysis of the linguistic practices in the post-colonial societies of variable types, including Pakistan.

The work therefore holds practical relevance to language preservation, language use policy and language incorporation in to education systems. It rouses endorsing of linguistic diversity in the meaning of its potential impact on the opportunities to embrace diverse language as such; it destabilizes biculturalism prejudices; and it calls for bilingual and bicultural



education policies that encourage code-switching as the tool of teaching and learning. Bilingual communication should be explored in future research through qualitative and quantitative observational studies with different elderly populations longitudinally, across different geographical regions, and the effects of new technologies in modifying elderly linguistic behaviors. This research aims at contributing to the improved understanding and appreciation of the complexity of multilingual communities like Pakistan.

### **References**

- Baumgardner, R. J. (1993). *The English language in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.
- Giles, H. (1973). Accent mobility: A model and some data. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 15(2), 87-105.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kachru, B. B. (1983). *The Indianization of English: The English language in India*. Oxford University Press.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for codeswitching: Evidence from Africa*. Clarendon Press.
- Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en español: Toward a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics*, 18(7/8), 581-618.
- Rahman, T. (1996). *Language and politics in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.
- Rahman, T. (2010). *Language ideology and power: Language learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India*. Oxford University Press.