

Gendered Code-Switching and Social Identity Construction among Bilingual Speakers in Urban Multilingual Communities: A Case Study of the University of Jhang

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores gendered code-switching and the construction of social identity in the context of Bilingual speakers in an urban multilingual university through the case study of the University of Jhang. In multilingual countries such as Pakistan, there is often a tendency by the bilingual to switch languages when engaging in daily conversation. This study aims to discuss the patterns of code-switching, discover gender-specific variations in the choice of language, and find out how code-switching helps to develop the social identity within the university environment. The context of the research is based on sociolinguistic studies whereby code-switching is regarded as a relevant social behaviour, and not a sign of linguistic ineptitude. The research design is a qualitative dominant mixed-method study in a case study. The theoretical framework is based on the Interactional Sociolinguistics and Social Constructionist theories of identity, in reference to the idea of contextualization cues as proposed by Gumperz and identity framework suggested by Bucholtz and Hall. We were able to collect data by the use of audio recordings of classroom discussions, peer discussions, informal campus conversation, and semi-structured interviews. The sampling technique employed was purposive and a sample of 25 undergraduate and postgraduate bilingual students was selected. The results indicate that intra-sentential, inter-sentential and tag switching are contextually systematically utilized. Gender also determines the rate and purpose of code-switching, where the female speakers prefer relational and expressive purposes whereas male speakers apply strategic switching in official situations. Code-switching becomes the major asset in building academic identity, modernity, politeness, authority, and group belonging. The research proposes the acknowledgement of code-switching as an authentic communicative and pedagogical tool in multilingual universities campuses.

Keywords: Code-switching, Gender, Social Identity, Bilingualism, Multilingualism, University Discourse, Urdu-English, Sociolinguistics, Pakistan, Language and Gender.

INTRODUCTION

The alternating use of two or more languages or varieties during a conversation, sentence or even a phrase has become the common characteristic of communication in most multilingual societies as a result of code-switching. In a situation where the English language co-exists with national and local languages, bilingual speakers tend to switch codes to control meaning, convey position and negotiate social relations. The current research in Pakistan demonstrates that code-switching of the bilingual character depends on the context (formal vs. informal situation), on the design of the audience (peer groups vs. teachers), and on the social incentives (clarity, prestige, belonging).

Recently, code-switching is interpreted to be not just a structural phenomenon in the context of sociolinguistics but also a type of social practice with the help of which speakers generate identity. Literature on Pakistani bilinguals emphasizes how bilingualism (between Urdu and English (and frequently Punjabi) can serve to signal education, modernity, and mobility across classes and down the generational hierarchy, and group membership, particularly among young people and university students where identity negotiation is a heated topic. As an example, a study that was conducted on the undergraduate students and bilingual youth in urban Pakistan highlights the fact that changing patterns can be highly linked to social positioning, self-presentation and not just linguistic convenience.

Another important prism is gender, which is considered the most significant in interpreting code-switching since the creation of gendered identities is situated within the context of everyday interaction and is influenced by the local norms. There are some new body of evidence in the gender-focused direction indicating that men and women (and other gender groups more generally) may not just code-switch with varying frequency, but also with different types of switching (e.g., intra-sentential and inter-sentential), and with different implications of switching in different social contexts. An example is found in recent research on student talk and classroom interaction in which gender differences in forms and functions of code-switching are found to be measurable, meaning that the ability to switch can be applied to show confidence, politeness, authority, or solidarity in gendered forms.

In Pakistan, scholarship has grown past general accounts of UrduEnglish code-switching, to more socially-based accounts, such as those which relate switching to identity negotiation and sociocultural positioning. Pakistani studies conducted recently have analyzed the topic of code-switching among college students, women in higher education, and in mediated genre (e.g., drama and digital space), lending credence to the notion that the choice of language is closely connected with the way the speaker positions him or herself socially.

Nevertheless, there is one of the most important gaps: most Pakistan-based research focuses either on major metropolitan areas or online settings, whereas smaller cities and their universities are not fully investigated yet. This is important since in Punjab, multilingualism is not just influenced by the Urdu and English, but also by the Punjabi and locally based interaction pattern. A university such as the ****University of Jhang**** is at a socially and linguistically critical juncture: local and national, rural-urban, and diverse degrees of exposure to English, students and staff constantly cross boundaries and slip. Studies done in this area could hence provide a context-sensitive view of how gendered identities are worked out during code-switching during the daily interactions between academics and their peers.

Based on this, the paper explores the aspect of gendered code-switching and social identity construction on bilingual speakers in the University of Jhang considering that the campus is a micro-community of a multilingual scenario in an urban setting. Based on the more recent Pakistan-focused literature that connects switching to identity, context, and social meaning, the study will capture the patterns of switching, and explain the ways in which language choice allows speakers to exhibit belonging, status, alignment, and gendered self-presentation in the context of naturally occurring university life.

Research Question

1. What are the patterns and forms of code-switching in the use of bilingual speakers in the University of Jhang in various contexts of the university?
2. What is the relationship between gender and language selection and code-switching among bilingual speakers in the University of Jhang?
3. What is the relationship between code-switching and the process of identity building of bilingual speakers in the university community?

Research Objective

1. To identify and categorize the major patterns/types of code-switching used by bilingual speakers in university settings at the University of Jhang.
2. To examine gender-based differences in code-switching frequency, forms, and communicative functions among bilingual speakers.
3. To analyze how code-switching contributes to social identity construction within the University of Jhang's urban multilingual community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The so-called code-switching (CS) or the alternating of two or more languages during a particular interaction has been transformed in the modern literature in that it is no longer perceived as a form of interference but as a structured, purposeful social form. Recent reviews and syntheses focus both on the idea that CS can be studied at structural levels (e.g., intra-sentential vs. inter-sentential switching) and on the fact that it can also be an interactional resource to take a stance, design an audience, and perform identity work (Doğruozer et al., 2021; Shabani, 2022). In applied and computational research, another finding is that the distribution of switching is patterned and not random, and the constraints that exist are connected to syntax, discourse organization, and predictability in bilingual production (Sterner and Teufel, 2025; Nusrat and Abbas, 2025).

Social practice and identity resource: code-switching.

Recent sociolinguistic studies are starting to view CS as an instrument of social positioning. Instead of being a sign of deficiency, switching, in fact, indexes membership, prestige, cosmopolitanism, or peer conformity, particularly in the high school setting where youth identities are enacted every day (Rojas, 2025; Lautá & Estremera, 2025). The symbolic relevance of English in a multilingual environment, where it is generally a sign of modernization and educational capital, is contrasted with the symbolic relevance of local tongues, which signify closeness, connection, and cultural authenticity. As an illustration, a recent university-based study by Jordan demonstrates that students correlate switching associated with English with status and social capital and branding their competence (Al Maaytah et al., 2024). The results of the findings are consistent with the general evidence indicating that bilinguals use CS as controls over impressions, tools to create a sense of belonging to an in-group, and a marker of social paths in academic and semi-formal contexts (Kashifa, 2022; Arumaisya, 2025).

Pakistan University and multilingualism.

In Pakistan, CS studies have grown over the past couple of years particularly in the area of UrduEnglish bilingualism and multilingual campus discourse. One of the most important contributions is the increased understanding that Pakistani speakers frequently switch codes not only in response to lexical gaps but also to achieve pragmatic purposes, such as politeness control, humor, expressiveness, stance, among other purposes, in their daily interactions (Idrees et al., 2025; Tahir, 2025). These dynamics are in a heightened state in the university environments as the students have to balance academic demands, peer identities and linguistic ideologies at the same time. Shah et al. (2020) show that in an academic context in Pakistan, CS is capable of creating hybrid identity orientations in which speakers mix local and global stance when alternating languages.

In addition to identity-oriented research, classroom and pedagogy oriented research in Pakistan indicate that CS is also associated with comprehension scaffolds as well as participation and negotiation of power between teachers and students (Murad et al., 2024; R. Fatima, 2025). According to these researches, the practice changes are determined by the previous schooling (usually Urdu-medium), the distribution of proficiency, and the institution language norms. Notably, they imply that CS decisions at the classroom

level do not exist in vacuums; they are socialized regarding what will be deemed as acceptable or not as proper English, what will be deemed as a respectful interaction, and how competence can be portrayed.

Gendered code-switching: functions and patterns

The issue of gender and code-switching is active, and recent research is inclined to consider gender as a social category, which is subject to mutual influence with norms, roles, and expectations. Studies in the form of educational presentations indicate that there are quantifiable gender disparities in CS frequency and type; Akbar et al. (2024) found that female participants experienced higher intra-sentential switching and inter-sentential switching the most commonly. These findings have been supported by contemporary gender-based studies that suggest that switching may be applied differently between gender groups to control confidence, politeness, face-saving, and authority in the talk (Almoaily, 2023; Felkey, 2023).

Recent research points out, as well, that the impact of gender is hardly universal; it depends on the nature of the task (presentation and informal peer talk), audience (mixed-gender versus same-gender groups), and institutionalized expectations. Gendered expectations of what is considered as acceptable speech may be applied in multilingual societies to determine at which point English is used as prestige capital and at which point local codes are employed to enact authenticity or relational closeness (Amin, 2018; Kanwal et al., 2025). Thus, gendered CS is to be dealt with as a context-dependent practice, rather than as a male-female difference.

Code-switching in the process of identity construction

CS is clearly linked with identity negotiation and social meaning in recent studies on Pakistan. Bilingual youth work in urban Pakistan, the switching is not only associated with social identity cues (status, belongingness, etc.) but also with cognitive and psycholinguistic aspects, and therefore a possibility of it becoming habitual and social as normal, which means that the perceived effort is less, and the expressiveness of identity is more (Khan et al., 2025). Newer studies on Pakistani digital settings also define switching as a means to exhibit modern belonging and project a gendered persona, which, however, cannot be projected onto the face-to-face interaction in campus (Hajra, 2025; Anwaar et al., 2025).

Research gap and significance to the University of Jhang

Although this body of work is increasing, Pakistani CS work remains bunched in large urban regions, in elite universities, or through the web, thus, depriving the small urban institutions of representation. This gap is significant since in Punjab, the repertoires that are conducted in many languages tend to be stratified with an application of Urdu, English and Punjabi varieties, and the language ideologies do not necessarily apply to metro settings. The contribution of a case study at the University of Jhang can be the exploration of the ways in which bilingual speakers employ CS in their daily university situations (classroom, peer talk, informal interaction in the campus) and the ways in which gendered expectations influence identity work in the non-metropolitan urban community. This is in line with the recent systematic review calls to more context-specific, interaction-based and identity sensitive CS studies, particularly in under-studied areas (Albahoth et al., 2024; Laut & Estremera, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods research design in which the researcher plans to study the gendered code-switching and social identity construction among bilingual speakers at the University of Jhang. The essential feature of a qualitative approach is that the study targets the comprehension of how code-switching is used by speakers to build social meanings and identities in the naturally occurring situations. To reinforce descriptive patterns quantitative support (frequency counts

of switching types) is added. It is a case study research and therefore the study is able to examine language practices deep-seated within a particular urban multilingual university context.

It is based on the theoretical framework of Interactional Sociolinguistics and Social Constructionist theories of identity. The meaning and alignment signals of stance with interaction and meaning in language alternation can be analyzed using the concept of code-switching as a cue of contextualization, as presented by Gumperz. Besides that, the emergent, relational, and indexical approach of identity by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) facilitates understanding of how gendered identities are made through linguistic decisions. Gender is not regarded as a biological fixed variable but rather as a socially done and context specific category, which is practiced by discourse practices like the code-switching.

The study group will consist of bilingual undergraduate and postgraduate students of the University of Jhang who frequently speak more than one language (mostly, Urdu-English in addition to Punjabi as the supplement). The purposive type of sampling method is applied to the selection of the participants as active bilingual speakers in both academic and informal contexts. The number of respondents chosen is about 25 (balanced by gender) so that it is not broad but deep. The data is gathered via audio-taped semi-structured interviews, observations made in the classroom and with peers in natural settings, and informal recordings of conversation within the college. Among the ethical considerations are informed consent, anonymity and voluntary participation.

The study uses a qualitative discourse analysis with descriptive statistics to analyze the data. Data are manually transcribed and coded to determine types of code-switching (intra-sentential, inter-sentential and tag switching) using typologies of code-switching. A thematic analysis is used to discuss the role of the code-switching in relation to gender and social identity (e.g., authority, politeness, solidarity, modernity). Qualitative interpretations are supported by frequency patterns, but are not based on statistical generalization. Such an integrated approach to methodology is the guarantee that the linguistic patterns and their social meaning will be analyzed in the university setting in a systematic way.

DATA ANALYSIS

The Patterns and Types of Code-Switching in Universities.

In this chapter, the researcher provides an in-depth examination of the information gathered in the research study entitled Gendered Code-Switching and Social Identity Construction among Bilingual Speakers in Urban Multilingual Communities: A Case Study of the University of Jhang. This chapter aims at examining the ways through which bilingual speakers in the University of Jhang engage in code-switching in their various interactional settings, and how gender influences the practices in addition to how they build social identity.

According to the qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach, the analysis is a combination of the quantitative descriptive trends (e.g., the frequency of switching types) and a qualitative discourse interpretation. The information was obtained through the audio-taping of classroom communication, peer-to-peer discussion, and informal communication on the campus, and semi-structured interviews with the bilingual students. Transcription was done verbatim and language alternation, pauses and emphasis were retained in order to preserve interactional authenticity.

The data examined showed that at the University of Jhang, code-switching takes place in various areas of interaction and each of them has its own set of norms and expectations. Three large contexts became predominant:

1. Interaction in the classroom (teacher- student and student- student).
2. Friends, group discussions, peer interaction.

3. Conversational campus (cafeteria, corridors, outdoor areas)

The context had a particular effect on the type and purpose of code-switching as well as the frequency.

In the classroom, the code switching was quite limited by the educational regulations, where English was connected with the academic authority, and Urdu or Punjabi was used to clarify or establish rapport. Switching was more flowing and expressive in the peer and informal situations, where the speakers were able to engage in identity, humor, and solidarity more liberally.

There are different types of code-switching identified as follows.

In the data, three key categories of code-switching were identified following standard typologies:

1. Intra-sentential code-switching.
2. Inter-sentential code-switching.
3. Tag switching

Such forms took place in any context but differed in their distribution and communicative purpose.

The examination of the element of code-switching in a particular sentence is known as intra-sentential code-switching.

Intra-sentential code-switching is the language alternation in a sentence or a clause. This was the most common type of type observed in all situations, especially in students who had better command of English.

Example (peer interaction):

“Yeh topic actually very confusing hai jab teacher explain nahi karta.”

In this case, an English expression, i.e., very confusing is enclosed in an Urdu syntactic structure. This switching is a good sign of high bilingual competence and a sign of assurance with linguistic hybridity.

The intrasentential switching in the classroom conversation was frequently observed during the process in which students tried to describe complex academic concepts and preserve fluency. Technical terms were often replaced with English lexical items and grammatical framework and pragmatic base were offered by Urdu or Punjabi.

This tendency implies that intra-sentential switching also functions to fulfill both, and is also efficient in identity signaling, to enable speakers to correspond to academic discourse, but still maintain local linguistic affiliation.

Inter-Sentential Code-Switching

The inter-sentential switching is alternation between complete sentences or clauses. Such a type was prevalent in more formal situations like classroom explanations and presentations.

Example (classroom response):

“Sir, mujhe yeh concept samajh aa gaya hai. But I’m not sure how to apply it in the exam.”

In this case, the speaker uses two languages at a sentence line indicating a reversal of position - between understanding and doubt. This sort of changing tended to act as a cue of contextualization, indicating a shift in ideas, attitudes, or formalities.

There were also inter-sentential switching where speakers would switch language depending on how the audience perceives it. As an example, students usually started to write in English to demonstrate academic congruency and used Urdu when personal opinion or clarification were required.

Tag Switching

Tag switching entails inserting fixed expressions or discourse markers of one language to an utterance of another language. Examples were English tags like “you know,” “actually,” “I mean,” and Urdu tags like “na,” “hai na,” and “acha.”

Sample (campus conversation):

“Assignment bohat tough tha, you know, bilkul time nahi mila.”

Tag switching was especially common in informal and peer conversations, whereby it served to soften utterances, continue the conversation, and indicate group membership.

This sort of switching seemed to be less thinking and tended to be a habit, which implied that some tags have become conventionalized aspects of bilingual speech at the University of Jhang.

In this study, the distribution of code-switching across contexts has been investigated.

The contextual analysis showed evident disparity in the distribution of types of switching in a university setting.

Classroom contexts supported the inter-sentential and minimal intra-sentential switching, which represent the expectations of English use in institutions. Peer interactions indicated great intra-sentential and changing the tags which were an indication of comfort, solidarity and shared linguistic norms. Campus talk, informal- This exhibited the greatest level of flexibility, with a lot of movement between all three. These results suggest that the process of code-switching is context-specific, not random, which validates sociolinguistic ideas that the process of language choice is determined by social norms and situational requirements.

Functional Patterns of Code-Switching

Beyond structural types, the analysis identified several functional motivations for code-switching:

- Clarification and comprehension
- Emphasis and emotional expression
- Alignment with academic discourse
- Solidarity and rapport building
- Identity positioning
- Solidarity and rapport building
- Identity positioning

Indicatively, even in English-dominated academic discourses, students tended to shift to Urdu or Punjabi, when they were frustrated, when they were joking or when they were assessing themselves. On the other hand, English was commonly employed to mark seriousness, competence, as well as institutional alignment.

As it can be seen, the results in this part show that bilingual speakers in the University of Jhang deploy code-switching as a strategic linguistic resource, which is indeed context-dependent and communicative in nature. High-level bilingual proficiency and the normalization of mixed discourse in the university community are evidenced by the prevalence of intra-sentential switching.

Notably, the patterns form the basis of explaining how gender differences arise in the code switching behavior. Although part 1 dwells on the general patterns, further sections will reveal differing usage of such patterns by male and female speakers to achieve negotiation of power, politeness, confidence, and social status.

Gender-Based Differences in Code-Switching Practices

Gender-Based Analysis Introduction

In this section, the researcher explores the gender difference in the use of code switching in bilingual speakers in the University of Jhang. Based on the second research question of the study, the analysis is based on the role of gender in language selection, frequency, and forms of code-switching in various university settings. Gender is not an inherent biological variable but is a category of social interaction, which is constructed and enacted. Thus, the discussion focuses on tendencies, patterns and discourse functions, as opposed to the strict male-female polarities.

The analyzed data presented in the section is based on the classroom interaction, peer group discussions, and informal talking with bilingual male and female speakers on campus. The transcripts were coded and categorized into types of switching (intra-sentential, inter-sentential and tag switching) and then compared in terms of gender. The qualitative interpretation is supported by quantitative counts of frequency but is not the main area of analysis.

Generally Differing Genders in code switching frequency

The first one is that both males and females speakers are active code-switchers, which proves that bilingual alternation is a normalized form of communication at the University of Jhang. Nonetheless, observable variations in frequency and distribution of types of switching were experienced. The overall frequency of the code-switching, especially intra-sentential and tag switching, was observed to be more common in female speakers, especially when they were in a peer or informal situation. Female speakers, in their turn, demonstrated a comparatively lower frequency, but also resorted to code-switching in more strategic and contextually characterized forms, in particular, in classroom and semi-formal situations.

These results imply that gender not only determines the frequency at which speakers use the codes, but also how and why they change the code in various interactions settings.

Gendered Intra-Sentential Code-Switching

The most common form of code-switching in both sexes was intra-sentential code-switching; although it was characteristically distributed differently, and utilized in different ways. Intra-sentential switching was also common among the female speakers as they expressed their feelings, views, and judgments toward their peers. For example:

“Mujhe lagta hai yeh assignment really stressful hai, honestly.”

In this case English lexical items are entrenched to enhance emotional stance (really stressful) and the Urdu lexical items offer the interactional frame. These patterns were especially prevalent among female students in same-gender peer groups, in which the use of language was freer and more expressive.

Intra-sentential switching was also used by male speakers, although it was more frequent with technical or academic words especially in classrooms:

“Sir, agar hum theoretical framework ko apply karein, toh answer strong ho jata hai.”

Here, the indexing of academic competence and conformity to institutional discourse are indexed in English, whereas the explanation of the case is organized in Urdu. It implies that intra-sentential switching is commonly applied by male speakers to achieve authority and confidence particularly in a formal or an evaluative context.

Gender and Inter-Sentential Code-Switching

Inter-sentential switching was more clearly gender-differentiated. The male speakers had the tendencies to alternate the languages more at the end of the sentences especially when there were formal classroom interactions like presentations, classroom responses or group discussions.

Example:

“Sir, I agree with this point. Lekin mujhe lagta hai ke yeh exam perspective se thora risky hai.”

This tendency indicates a strategic move between English (academic alignment) and Urdu (personal evaluation), and this is why the male speakers can control power, and soften disagreement in this way.

Whilst inter-sentential switching was also used by female speakers, they were more likely to use interference more extensively in narrative or expository passages as opposed to confrontational or appraisal speech. This implies that inter sentence switching between female speakers usually plays the roles of clarification and elaboration and does not play the stance negotiation role.

Tag Switching and Gendered Interactional Style

Tag switching proved to be one of the gender-specific aspects of the bilingual discourse. The use of tag switching was higher among female speakers particularly in informal and peer conversations.

Common English tags included:

- “actually”
- “you know”
- “I mean”

Common Urdu tags included:

- “na”
- “hai na”
- “acha”

Example:

“Yeh lecture thora boring tha, you know, lekin notes helpful thay.”

The role of such tags was to sustain the conversation process, alleviate assertions, and prompt the listener to agree. This is in line with the greater sociolinguistic findings that women tend to use discourse markers to build solidarity and interpersonal relationships.

Tag switching was more prevalent in male speakers who tended to use tags as a means of emphasis or humor and rarely in relation management. It has indicated that tag switching can have more significant contribution to gendered politeness behaviors among the multilingual community of the University of Jhang.

Gender, Context and Institutional Norms

The role of gender in code-switching was determined to be contingent as opposed to being constant. The norms in institutions restricted wide-ranging switching in both sexes but subtle variations still existed in classrooms.

Male students had a higher probability of initiating responses in English, especially with the address to instructors, and hence, acting as self-confident and competent. Female students, who were equally good, at times diverted earlier to Urdu when they needed clarification or wanted to show uncertainty, as per social requirements on being polite and showing deference.

These institutional constraints became less strong in peer and informal situations, when more expressive and flexible switching (particularly among female speakers) became possible. This contributes to the position that gendered language practices are influenced by the expectations of society and affordances of the situations rather than an innate linguistic ability.

Quantitative Overview of Gendered Switching Patterns

Frequency counts were carried out in the dataset to aid the qualitative observations. The analysis showed:

- Higher overall switching frequency among female speakers
- Greater use of tag switching by female speakers
- More inter-sentential switching by male speakers in formal contexts
- Comparable use of intra-sentential switching for academic terminology

These trends support the thesis that gender is not isolated but it is a matter that interacts with the context to influence the implementation of code switching and not language behavior.

The gender categories that are projected in this research represent general sociolinguistic values on the language, power, and identity. The common use of tag and intra sentential switching by female speakers seems to be associated with relational identity creation, which places great emphasis on being connected, empathic, and inclusive. Strategic switching by male speakers in a formal situation is in line with performative authority and academic positioning.

Most notably, these trends cannot be taken to mean shortages or strict conventions. Rather, they show how bilingual speakers in the University of Jhang are able to creatively use linguistic resources to negotiate gendered expectations, institutional relations, and social networks.

This part has revealed that gender is a significant factor in determining code-switching behavior among bilingual speakers in the University of Jhang. Whereas both the male and female speakers are active in code-switching, they vary in frequency, the type as well as communicative role depending on context. These results answer the second research question and precondition Part 3 that will go beyond patterns and differences to investigate how the process of code-switching actively forms social identities like modernity, status, authority, and group belonging in the urban multilingual community of the university.

Code-Switching and Social Identity Construction

The following section is in response to the third research question of the study: how the code-switching is used by bilingual speakers to form social identity in the university community. Far beyond structural patterns and gender-based distinctions covered in Parts 1 and 2, this part understands code-switching as a discursive and symbolic resource by which speakers attempt to negotiate the belonging and power, modernity, politeness and group membership.

This analysis adheres to Interactional Sociolinguistics and Social Constructionist theories of identity, namely the perception of identity as emergent and relational as proposed by Bucholtz and Hall, which does not assume identity is a category that can be applied but instead is a performance and negotiation in interaction. Code-switching is thus discussed as an indexical practice which is used by the speakers to locate and locate others in the multilingual ecology of the University of Jhang.

Code-Switching and the Making of Academic Identity

Academic identity is one of the most glaring identity types that have been created by code-switching in the data. The English language in the university context is closely related to education, institutional power, and academic ability. When talking about coursework, examinations, theoretical concepts or the criteria of the assessment, the speakers often switched to English, either partially or completely.

Example:

“Sir, agar hum critical analysis use karen, toh answer ka impact zyada strong ho jata hai.”

Lexical elements of English language (critical analysis, impact) are used in this interaction as a signifier of academic fit, and Urdu frames the interaction. This mixed application enables speakers to display at the same time both academic competence and linguistic comfort.

Both the male and female speakers strategically employed English to convey seriousness and credibility especially when interacting in classrooms. Nevertheless, the construction of the identity in this case was not merely limited to proficiency, but it entailed an exhibition of being aware of expectations in the institution. Speakers who used English in the right context were seen as more interested and scholarly oriented and this showed that code-switching plays a role in the social assessment of students in the university fraternity.

Code-Switching and Modernity

Modernity is another major identity dimension that is indexed using code-switching. English more particularly when incorporated into the discourse of Urdu was often interpreted as being updated, smart or socially mobile. This association could be seen especially in peer relationships and informal campus conversation.

Example:

“Campus life actually bohat challenging hai, especially first semester mein.”

In this case, English intensifiers like actually and challenging help to lead one towards a contemporary, sophisticated image. This kind of switching did not imply an increased level of proficiency, but symbolic conformity to a globalized discourse.

Women speakers, in some instances, resorted to English interpolations to convey the opinions, feelings, and judgment; usually in such a manner that would make them appear assertive and socially conscious. Male speakers also used the English language to refer to ambition and competence. These trends indicate that code-switching allows speakers to place themselves in a contemporary and urban identity structure, even in a smaller urban center such as Jhang.

Identity, Politeness, and Authority

Code-switching was also important in dealing with politeness and power particularly in any hierarchical communication e.g teacher-student. Urdu has been in many cases used to smooth out requests, show

respect or demonstrate deference, whereas English has been employed to achieve a serious or formal purpose.

Example:

“Sir, may I ask a question? Mujhe yeh part thora unclear lag raha hai.”

In the case, English is appropriate to make contact in a formal way, whereas Urdu is uncertain and polite. The alternation of language used by the speakers in order to stabilize the use of respect and assertiveness is depicted by this pattern.

Female speakers tended to soften statements using Urdu to prevent coming out as too assertive in the classroom, which represented more general gendered expectations of courtesy. Male speakers, although also speaking Urdu with politeness, tended to preserve longer the English when they opposed or disagreed with the ideas and thus, executed authority.

The findings emphasize that the code-switching phenomenon gives speakers the opportunity to maneuver through power dynamics still following the socially acceptable interactional patterns.

Code-Switching and Group Belonging

The construction of group belonging was one of the most common group identity functions of code-switching evident in the data. During peer communication, particularly between friends, code-switching served as a sign of an in-group affiliation and experience.

Example:

“Yeh quiz bilkul unexpected tha, yaar, honestly bilkul tayyar nahi thay.”

The combination between the Urdu, English, and the local discourse markers, including “yaar” forms a common linguistic pattern, which indicates intimacy and common understanding. This kind of hybrid speech was hardly applied in formal classroom communication, which shows that it is closely related to informal identity performance.

The similarity to the language repertoires among students seemed to make them more socially oriented, whereas strict belief to single language seemed to make them seem distant or stern. Therefore, code switching was a form of social glue that strengthened peer relationships and community while in the university.

Gendered Identity Construction Code-Switching

Women speakers tended to code-switch in order to execute identities that were linked with expressiveness, empathy, and relational intimacy. The use of tag switching and evaluative English adjectives occurred quite often, thus keeping the conversation on track and the emotional tone. Male speakers, on the contrary, were more likely to code-switch to exercise confidence, authority, and academic synchrony, especially in a public or a judgmental situation. Such patterns are based on gender norms acquired socially as opposed to natural linguistic variations.

Notably, there is also overlap and flexibility in the data: lots of speakers borrowed styles that are linked to the other gender depending on the situation. This is in line with the opinion that gendered bodies are not stable and unchanging but changeable, and discourse-based.

Multilinguality in Non-Metropolitan Urban Buildings

An important contribution of the study is that it dwells on a non-metropolitan urban university. The University of Jhang is a place where local, national, and global identities converge unlike in major cities where elite institutions exist. Students often used three languages in turn Urdu, English, and Punjabi, according to audience and context. Although not as much apparent in formal terms, Punjabi appeared in the informal discourse as a way of identifying with the locality and authenticity. The shift to Punjab also frequently signified a sense of humor, closeness and local affiliation. This stratified multi-lingualism shows that identity-building in the University of Jhang is many-dimensional and the speakers can fluidly shift between local rootedness and global aspiration by switching between code.

The results are highly correlated to Interactional Sociolinguistics especially; the concept of code-switching as a contextualization cue by Gumperz. Switching of languages was always an indication of changes in posture, subject or relationship.

On the same note, the framework by Bucholtz and Hall is authenticated by evidence that identity is:

- Emergent (constructed in interaction),
- Relational (defined through alignment and differentiation),
- Indexical (linked to social meanings via language choice).

The way of how code-switching works at the University of Jhang is exactly such that it indexes gender, academic orientation, modernity, and group belonging without directly referring to them.

This concluding part illustrates that code switching among the bilingual speakers in University of Jhang is a potent tool in developing social identity. By using language alternation speakers are negotiating academic positions, gendered expectations, norms of politeness, identities of modernity, and community membership.

Instead of being accidental or even wanting, code-switching turns out to be a strategic, significant and context-specific practice, entrenched within the social life of the university. These results answer the third research question and fill the chapter of the data analysis with the combination of linguistic patterns and the social interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to explore gendered code-switching and how to construct social identity among bilingual speakers in urban multilingual university setting taking the University of Jhang as a case study. The study was based on the theories of interactional sociolinguistics and social constructionist in identity, where the study sought to find patterns of code-switching, how gender affects language choice and the manner in which the code-switching by bilingual speakers was used to construct and negotiate social identities in daily university life. Utilizing a qualitative discourse analysis with the aid of descriptive frequency patterns, the results altogether indicate that the code-switching in the University of Jhang is a purposeful, systematic, and socially constructed and rooted phenomenon, as opposed to a random or an incompetent linguistic behavior.

It was found that inter-sentential and intra-sentential and tag switching is actively used by bilingual speakers in the classroom, with peers, and on campus in general. Intra-sentential code-switching turned out to be the most common of them, especially in peer and informal communication. Such a prevalence indicates a good command of bilingual skills and normalization of mixed language practices among the university fraternity. Inter-sentential switching was more noticeable in formal classroom contexts whereby the speakers used languages strategically to control stance, make sense, or fit into academic

requirements. Although not as structurally complex, tag switching was important to keep the conversation going, couldn't display solidarity, and made assertions softer in an informal interaction.

One of the key contributions of this paper is that this paper analyzes the gendered variation in the process of code-switching. Although code-switching was active among both male and female speakers, the statistics showed that there were always some distinctions in frequencies, type, and communicative functions. The code-switching patterns of female speakers were more common in general and specifically in intra-sentential and tag switching that was frequently utilized to convey emotions, assessments and relational alignment. Male speakers, on the other hand, used code-switching in more strategically marked forms particularly in formal or evaluative contexts, in the context of which inter-sentential switching was employed to undertake authority, confidence and academic alignment. Notably, these variations are not to be construed as predetermined or inborn; instead, they are a socialized gender approach and anticipation, which inform language conduct in particular situations.

In addition to structural and gender-based patterns the study proves that code-switching is a potent method of building social identity. Academic identity was one of the most conspicuous identities that were made using code-switching. In the university context, English was so closely linked with institutional power, competence and educational legitimacy. The speakers often turned to the English language when speaking about academic material, exams, or theoretical topics thus identifying themselves with the higher education standard. Simultaneously, the implementation of Urdu or Punjabi in parallel with English enabled speakers to preserve language and interpersonal affiliation, which led to hybrid forms of academic identities with both local and international orientations.

The other important indexed identity dimension was modernity through code-switching. Urdu discourse often indicated that one was educated, socially conscious, and that he or she was in line with the modern, globalized culture by using English insertions in the discourse. This trend was particularly apparent in peer communication and conversational informal campus speech, as speakers made use of English adjectives and discourse markers and evaluative expressions to demonstrate a contemporary, self-confident image. The symbolic meaning of English as a social mobility and cultural capital is highlighted by such usage even in a non-metropolitan city such as Jhang in Pakistan.

The discussion also revealed the importance of code-switching in the process of controlling politeness and power especially in the hierarchical relationships between teachers and students. The speakers politely used both English and Urdu to strike a balance between assertiveness and respect and started the interactions in English to convey formality and seriousness and transition into Urdu to make the requests softer or state some uncertainty. These practices have been filtered by gender, with the female speakers more often using Urdu to qualify statements in the classroom environment, and the male speakers more often continuing using English to affirm disagreement or authority. These tendencies demonstrate that code-switching allows speakers to find the balance between power relations and follow culturally adequate norms of interaction.

Another valuable element of identity making was group belonging and solidarity, which was formed in the process of code-switching. Hybrid speech with the use of Urdu, English, and some Punjabi was also used to signify the in-group membership in peer and informal interactions. These language practices strengthened social relationships and developed a communicative style of interaction that made older adults identify as insiders and outsiders. The fact that Punjabi was used occasionally in informal situations further emphasized local and regional identity which enabled speakers to show authenticity, humor and intimacy. This multi-layered multilingualism indicates that identity construction in the University of Jhang is multifaceted in that there is a constant movement of the local rootedness and global aspiration.

Collectively, the results of the study are quite strong indicators of the theoretical frameworks that were embraced. The idea of contextualization used by Gumperz as a code-switching cue is confirmed by the regularity of language alternation to indicate changes in the topic, attitude, or relational orientation. In a similar manner, the data reflect the conceptualization of identity embraced by Bucholtz and Hall in which identity is emergent, relational, and indexical in that the speakers make identity dynamically through their daily linguistic decisions instead of set categories. Gender here, is a socially enacted aspect of identity which plays in interchange with the institutional norms, social expectations and demands of the situation.

To sum up, this paper has proven that code-switching among bilingual students at the University of Jhang is strategic, context-based and identity-seeking. The research contributes to the existing literature because by setting their eyes on a non-metropolitan urban university, the researchers have extended the analysis of gendered code-switching to non-elite or non-major cities. The results do not support the deficit perspectives regarding code-switching, but they point to it as highly complex communicative assets under the conditions of which speakers can negotiate academic roles, gender expectations, contemporary identities, and membership in a community. Finally, the research highlights that bilingual language practice is a valuable concept to understand how people in multilingualism (like Pakistan) make sense of social life and construct their identity.

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