

**CODE-SWITCHING PRACTICE OF EFL LEARNERS IN MULTILINGUAL  
CLASSROOM: LEARNERS PERSPECTIVE**Zarghona Bibi<sup>1</sup> and Ghulam Rasool<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of Literature and Linguistics University of Balochistan Quetta.

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**ABSTRACTS**

*The present study aimed at knowing the purpose of code-switching in EFL classroom among undergraduate EFL learners and between learners and teachers. The study also investigated whether code-switching helps or obstruct language learning development. Simple Sequential Mixed Method was employed for data collection using questionnaire and semi-structure interviews. Data was collected from 247 participants. Matrix Language by Myer-Scotton (1993) was applied as theoretical framework. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings of the data revealed that code-switching in language learning classroom is used for several purposes like, understanding the lesson, concept and difficult vocabulary, maintaining communication, expressing oneself better, and taking part in classroom activities. Code-switching was found as helpful strategy that facilitates language learning development. It was suggested that code-switching should not be discouraged in EFL classroom but it should be practiced to minimum extent.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Code-switching, L1, L2, EFL, Bilingual, Multilingual, Embedded Language.*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Code-switching is most commonly viewed occurrence, particularly observed in multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies. Code-switching is usually practiced by learners and instructors in language learning classrooms. There are several reasons for code-switching. It is therefore, essential to know the purpose of switching from first language to second or foreign language and vice versa, and its advantages and disadvantages (Sert, 2005).

According to Macaro (2005), code-switching refers to the shift between two languages during a single and same speech. In sociolinguistics context, the term is generally used for any kind of discourse based on language. Code shifting happens when the speaker and interlocutor have more than one languages in common. According to Scotton and Uray (1977), "Code-switching is the use of two or more varieties in the same conversation or



interaction” (p.5). Numan and Carter, (2001) cited in the study of Sert (2005), states that code-switching is “a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse” (p.16).

Code-switching serves different functions depending on the context in which people interact and the topic of the interaction (Alenezi, 2010). In educational institutions the function of code-alteration is usually to maintain communication as well as to explain and understand some complex phenomena. However, some educationists and learners are in favoure of code-switching while some are against it. Alenezi (2010) also states that, those who do not favor it think that, it is a kind of hindrance in the way of foreign language learning process. With reference to foreign language learning, English is learned as a foreign language in most of countries of the world due to its importance as an international language. In these countries switching of code mostly takes from English to their first language (L1) during communication. Similarly, Pakistan is one of those countries where code-switching is practiced in social interaction as well as in academic institutions. Pakistan is a multilingual country, and the switching of language mainly takes place from English to Urdu. Therefore, by analyzing the multilingual academic institutions situated in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, this study will see the practice of Code-switching in EFL Classroom and learners perception about it.

Rasheed, Zeeshan and Zaidi (2017) stated in their study that, Balochistan is a multilingual and multicultural province, where the major languages are; Urdu, Pashtu, Balochi, Brahaui, Punjabi and Persian. In this multilingual context, Urdu is used as language of interaction. Similarly, in educational institutions, Urdu is used as language of instruction. So, in this multilingual context, English is learned as a foreign language. Rasheed et al. (2017) also stated that in most of educational institutions, in foreign language learning classrooms, the teachers and learners usually switch from target language i.e. English, to their native language during conversation. Thus, it is imperative to know learners’ perception about code-switching in English language classrooms in government colleges and public universities of Quetta city.

### **1.1. Research Objectives**

The objective of the present study is to know purpose of Code-switching practice in EFL classroom and learners perception about it. The study focuses on the perception of undergraduate EFL learners in multi-lingual classroom in Quetta Balochistan. The study aims at to investigate undergraduate EFL learners in different universities and colleges of Quetta Balochistan.



## 1.2. Research Questions

- What are the purposes of Code-Switching practice in English Language Learning classroom?
- Does Code-Switching a helpful or obstructive strategy in EFL classroom for language learning development?

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

A study was conducted in Indonesia by Cahyani, de Courcy et al.(2018) to check the sociocultural and academic purposes of Code-Switching by teachers in tertiary bilingual classrooms in Indonesia. In these classrooms, the language of instruction was English whereas, learners were allowed to switch to Indonesian languages. Data was collected from one semester in three classrooms. The participants were three teachers from different classrooms who were fluent in both languages (native language and English). The tools used in data collection process were classroom observation, audio recording, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. The data revealed that, the teachers practiced Code-switching for four purposes; classroom management, knowledge building, interpersonal interaction and effective meaning.it was concluded that the frequent function of Code-switching in bilingual classrooms acted as translanguaging that is the integrated use of two languages for obtaining better communication and cognitively involving learners in language learning. They suggested that code-switching /translanguaging should be seen as a positive strategy for effective communication. They recommended that future researchers should conduct in-depth study on integrated use switching between languages in classroom(Cahyani, de Courcy et al. 2018).

Similarly, Manel, Hassan, & Buriro (2019) conducted a study on Algerian education system to reveal learners' attitude towards code-switching practice of the teachers. The teachers used to switch code from mother tongue into English language. In this study, eighty teachers and one hundred and twenty learners from sixty secondary schools participated. Quantitative method was used for data collection as questionnaires were constructed and distributed among the respondents. The result revealed that the teachers and learners switch from English language to mother tongue for pedagogical purposes.

Moreover, In a Malaysian multilingual primary classroom a study investigates a teachers and learners perspective about code-switching. It explores the benefits of code-switching in multilingual classroom. The data collection took place via recording four hours English lesson and classroom observation. Similarly, an individual interview session was conducted with teachers and group interview with learners. The result revealed the practice

of code-switching by teachers supported the learners in classroom activities, like making clearing students' doubts, making them to understand the content of the lesson, and explaining difficult concepts. However, the study concluded students should not rely on code-switching for understanding the lesson (Paramesvaran, M. D., & Jia, W. L. 2018).

Suteja and Purwanti (2017) carried out a research to analyze the perception of teachers and learners about code-switching practice in Indonesian language classroom particularly in primary level classes. Mixed method was used by conducting survey and interpreting interviews involving teachers and learners. Eighty four participants were taken for data collection in which forty were teachers while forty four were the learners. The findings indicated that, most of the respondents were supporting the practice of code-switching as they said that code-switching is unavoidable in language learning classes and both the teachers and learners found code-switching less threatening to English learning process.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

As code-switching is practiced in diverse languages in multilingual EFL classroom of Quetta Balochistan, I found Matrix Language Model of code-switching as a suitable theoretical framework. This model about the practice of code-switching is given by Myers-Scotton (1993). In this model, Myer-scotton explained code-switching practice in diverse language context in which one language servers as Target language and other language functions as added language. The target language is known as Matrix Language whereas, added language is known as Embedded Language (Wakasa, 2004). In the present study, also, the target language is English while embedded language is Urdu, sometimes local language.

## 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Simple sequential mixed method is used in the present study. According to Creswell (1999), "A mixed method study is one in which the researchers incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis in single study" (p. 455).

In this sequential method, quantitative and qualitative methods are followed respectively for data collection. The tool for quantitative data collection is paper based questionnaire whereas, Semi-structure interview is used for qualitative data collection.

### 3.1 Research Participants

The participants of the present study are undergraduate English Language Learners from government colleges and public universities of Quetta city where undergraduate (B.S) study program is fully functionalized. There are 247 participants both males and females for the



process of data collection. Except English, the participants were taken from all the major disciplines.

### 3.2 Instruments and Process of Data Collection

In first phase of data collection, questionnaires containing thirty two items were distributed among the participants to be filled carefully in a proper time. Before the distribution of questionnaires among the learners, the nature of research was explained to the participants. In second phase, twelve participants were interviewed from the same population who filed the questionnaire.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. According to Marshal and Jonker (2010), “These methods are numerical procedures or graphical techniques e.g. bar charts, histograms, frequency polygons and pie charts, used to organize, present and describe the characteristics of a sample”. In descriptive statistics, quantitative data was entered in SPSS and the analyzed using tables while in thematic analysis, themes were extracted from the interviews of the respondents and then those themes were analyzed.

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Descriptive statistics measurement was employed to know the findings of the quantitative data. The Mean values and SDs of all the scales were (4.99), (4.87), (5.04) and (4.36) respectively. Table 1 shows all means and std. Deviations.

**Table 1. Mean value and Standard Deviation of Scales**

| Scales   | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|------|----------------|
| Code-Switching for explaining the Lecture/ lesson /concept/and vocabulary        | 4.99 | .887           |
| Code-Switching for expressing oneself/ interaction/ filling gape of incompetency | 4.87 | .929           |
| Code-Switching for participating In class activities                             | 5.04 | .957           |
| Suggestion of Learners about The use of Code-switching In Classroom              | 4.36 | .991           |

#### 4.2. Code-Switching for Explaining the Lecture/ lesson/concepts/and vocabulary

Almost all the respondents stated code-switching in classroom is used for different purposes. They told that whenever they do not understand the lecture, the teachers switch from one language to other language to make them understand the lesson, difficult words and difficult concept. The mean values about Code-Switching for explaining the Lecture/ lesson/concept/and vocabulary remained **4.99**. This indicates that majority of the learners use code-switching for the above mentioned purposes. The findings of qualitative data also shows the same result. As the interviewer stated that,

**Student 4.** *“There are several reasons/ functions of code-switching but the main reason is that when students are unable to understand the lecture, they switch to Urdu or local language. Therefore code-switching helps in understanding the lecture better.”*

#### 4.3. Code-Switching for Expressing oneself/interaction/filling gape of incompetency

Another main purpose mentioned by the participants was that, it helps them to maintain the flow of communication. Whenever, the learners are unable to express themselves in target language, they switch to second language. The mean value about this point is **4.87**, which indicates most of switching in EFL classroom was by learners was for expressive purposes especially by those learners who were not competent enough in English. Similar, significance were expressed by the participants in interviews. For Example, the participant 6 expressed similar views;

**Students 6.** *“So, sometimes it is very difficult to convey our message may be due to lack of practice. That things are not coming in our mind what we are going to speak in English. So in order to maintain the conversation we switching between one languages to other”.*

#### 4.4 Code-Switching for Motivation / Participating in Classroom Activities

The mean value of the responses of the scale about code-switching for concentration in class was **(5.04)**. It means majority of the participants responded that code-switching helps them to concentrate in the class. They were found agreed that code-switching functions to encourage them while talking to teachers and classmates.

As stated by the participants:



**Student 5:** *“I feel more motivated, concentrated and attentive in class when there is code-switching. This is because I understand the lecture. If sometimes I don’t understand anything, I confidently ask the teacher as well as my classmates”.*

#### 4.4 Opinion of Learners about The use of Code-switching In Classroom

During investigating the utilities of Code-Switching in English as Foreign Language learning classroom, the participants were also asked about continuing the practice of Code-Switching by teachers. In this regard they responded that, code-switching should be practiced according to the requirement of class like for explaining the lecture, grammatical points, difficult concepts and vocabulary and for maintaining communication. However, the use of code-switching should be minimized because classroom will lose its true sense that is language learning. When the participants were asked to rank whether they opinion and suggestion to their teachers to practice code-switching in EFL classroom or to what extent Code-switching should be practiced in language learning classroom, most participants were found suggesting their teachers to use code-switching in classroom. This is shown through mean value mentioned in Table 2 which is (4.36). Similarly, while collecting qualitative data via semi-structured interviews, similar questions were asked from the participants. Almost all the respondents were found favoring the use of code-switching in language learning classroom due to its significant role in multilingual classroom. Regarding the suggestion about the use of Code-Switching in classroom, the participants articulated the following views;

**Student 4.** *“I would prefer the teacher to use both languages during giving the lecture so that the students who are weak in English can better understand the lecture.”*

The findings of both the qualitative and quantitative data revealed that code-switching is very significant in EFL classroom in multilingual context of Quetta Baluchistan. The learners reflected through their responses that they practice code-switching in classroom for several purposes. The major purposes of code-switching include; Code-Switching for explaining the Lecture/ lesson/concept/and vocabulary, Code-Switching for Expressing oneself/ interaction/filling gape of incompetency, and Code-Switching for participating in classroom activities.

Thus, the findings of both qualitative and quantitative data revealed that code-switching is used in English language learning classrooms especially in multilingual context

for pedagogic purposes. As the focus of this study was EFL classroom of Quetta Baluchistan where the education system is highly bilingual and the context of learners is multilingual, code-switching was found playing several functions including understanding the lecture, maintaining communication, motivating and concentrating learners in class. They concluded, that code-switching is a useful strategy in language learning classroom which supports language learning process and it is not obstructive strategy however, it should be practiced to minimum extent i.e. only according to the requirement of classroom.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

The findings of the study indicate that Code-Switching is a useful strategy, practiced in language learning classroom in educational institutions of Quetta Baluchistan. It shows that, code-switching facilitates language learning process in multilingual classroom where learners are from different linguistics background. The findings also reveal that, English is learned as foreign language and learners are not fluent enough in English language. Therefore, code-switching in such situation is unavoidable. It helps them to understand the lecture which include, grammar rules, difficult terminologies and concepts.

#### **4.6. Limitation of the Study**

The study was limited to reason of Code-Switching in EFL classroom of Quetta Baluchistan. The present study was conducted only in three public universities and in six degree colleges of Quetta Baluchistan. Only language learners were investigated about the functions code-switching and teachers were not included in the process of investigation. The participants of the present study were undergraduate EFL learners including both males and females. The study might had different result if it was conducted on broad level, like including more participants both teachers and learners, and investigating the functions of Code-Switching outside classroom.

#### **4.7. Suggestions**

The present study gives some valuable suggestions to future researchers in relation with the practice of Code-Switching in language learning classroom:

- As the focus of present study only functions of Code-Switching in English language learning class, the future researchers can take in depth study about the advantages disadvantages of Code-Switching in EFL classroom.
- In the present study only undergraduate learners were investigated, while the future research can be taken at broader level.



- The present study, investigated learners only from Quetta Baluchistan, however, the future research can be taken on province level or even on country level and more participants can be taken for data collection.
- The participants of the present study were EFL learners only, while in future only teachers or both teachers and learners can be investigated for data collection.
- Finally, in present study, Code-Switching was studied from educational point of view that is , code-switching practice in language learning classroom, while in future, Code-Switching can be studied from sociolinguistic perspective i.e. the study of Code-Switching in society.

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