# CODE-MIXING AND CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL/ESL CONTEXT: A SOCIOLINGUISTICS APPROACH

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**ABSTRACT:** Language and society are closely connected and cannot be separated as each has considerable impact on the other. Languages impact each other when they are in contact therefore variation or change in a language is a natural consequence. Code-mixing and code-switching are the consequent phenomenon of language contact and a marked feature of a multilingual society. The research related to the significant linguistic phenomenon, code-switching and code-mixing (hereafter CM and CS), has focused dominantly on two main aspects as its focus. The first is functional orientation towards CM and CS which aims to focus on the sociolinguistic perspective with its prime focus on the contexts of CM and CS. The other is theoretical orientation which focuses on the structural aspect of CM and CS and their types etc. Among multitude of these, the questions related to the reasons, motivations, functions of CM and CS as well as the attitude towards particular code have been of particular interest for sociolinguists. Providing a brief overview of the historical foundation of code-mixing and code-switching research, the present study thematically reviews the studies related to one of these questions i.e. the motivations that trigger CM and CS and the functions fulfilled by them in EFL/ESL context. The review of the previous research informs that there are social and socio-psychological motivations that trigger CM and CS; and many functions are served when they are employed as a linguistic resource and strategy.

## 1. Introduction

"Language is vital to understanding of a society and the promotion of that society" (Sultana, 2009: 89). Languages have great impact on each other when they are in contact therefore variation or change in a language is a natural consequence. Code-mixing (CM) and code-switching (CS) are the consequent phenomenon of language contact and a marked feature of a multilingual society. Mushtaq and Zahra (2012) pointed out that "code-hybridization" is a significant phenomenon and a "natural by-product of language interaction and evolution". Code-switching and code-mixing have been researched by linguists, sociolinguists and psycholinguists who view this phenomenon with their respective lenses.

Research in CS and CM has focused dominantly on sociolinguistic and grammatical perspectives (Ge, 2007; Bokamba, 1988). Bokamba (1988) has reported that the research related to code-switching and code-mixing can be categorized into functional and theoretical studies. The functional studies focus on the sociolinguistic perspective with its prime focus on the contexts of CM and CS. The theoretical studies focus on the structural aspect of CM and CS and their types etc. The questions related to the reasons, motivations, functions of CM and CS as well

as the attitude towards particular code has been of particular interest for sociolinguists. Where linguists would focus on the structure of code-switched items, sociolinguists will be more interested to probe functions of code-switching. The present study aims to focus sociolinguistic perspective particularly functions and motivations for CM and CS in EFL/ESL context.

Before a detailed discussion on motivations behind CM and CS from sociolinguistics perspective, a brief look at the ways the terms code-mixing and code-switching have been defined by scholars is important. These terms are used synonymously by some researchers (Gumperz 1982, Myers-Scotton 1993a), but some view the two distinctly (Bokamba, 1989; Kamwangamalu, 1992; Sridhar & Sridhar, 1980). Bokamba (1989) distinguishes the two as CS at inter-sentential and CM at intra-sentential level. Ritchie and Bhatia (2013) agree with Bokamba as they also believe that CM refers to "the mixing of various linguistic units (morphemes, words, modifiers, phrases, clauses, and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems within a sentence" (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013, p.376). Halmari (2004) views CM mixing of two codes at any level, as he defined it that "the mixing of two or more languages within the same conversational episode" (p.115) or "in the same discourse" (Nunan & Carter, 2001, p.59). According to Gumperz (1982) it is "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (p.59). As CM is an attribute specific of bilinguals, CS is also viewed as an attribute specific to bilinguals or multilinguals; monolinguals are unable to switch as they do not possess the linguistic treasure of another language to switch into (Wong, 2000). However, CS is considered to be different from CM by Ritchie and Bhatia (2013) who state that CS is "the use of various linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses, and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems across sentence boundaries within a speech event" (p.376). With these varied views, it is difficult to find an absolute consensus on defining these terms among the scholars.

It is also important to briefly elaborate the terms that have intrigued debates for the researchers. English as a Second Language (ESL) is defined as "the teaching of English to people, who are living in an English-speaking country, but whose first language is not English" (Longman's online dictionaries).English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is defined as "the teaching of English to people whose first language is not English, and who do not live in an English-speaking country" (Longman's online dictionaries). Therefore in this study the focus

will be on EFL and ESL where English is not the native language of the people such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Vietnam, Thailand, etc. (Adjei & Agbozo, 2014; Arumawanti, 2013; Erwin-Billones, 2012; Chantarothai, 2011; Bi, 2011; Carra, 2009; Li, 2000).

## 2. Justification and Objective of the Study

Research in CS and CM has focused dominantly on sociolinguistic and grammatical perspectives (Ge, 2007; Bokamba, 1988). The objective of the present study is to focus sociolinguistic perspective particularly functions and motivations for CM and CS in EFL/ESL context. Pakistan is a multilingual society where more than seventy languages are spoken (Ethnologue: Pakistan, 2015). In multilingual societies like Pakistan, several languages are spoken which come into contact and leave significant influence on each other resulting in CM and CS. There is need to probe the functions and motivations for CM and CS in ESL/EFL context to provide an insight into the multiple and diverse aspects of multilingual societies.

## 3. Methodology

The present study thematically reviews the studies related to one of these questions i.e. the motivations that trigger CM and CS and the functions fulfilled by them in EFL/ESL context. It employs text analysis approach to review previous studies conducted to probe CM and CS in ESL/EFL context. The previous researches were approached through available literature on the subjects and themes were drawn and discussed.

## 4. Historical traces of research on CM and CS

In the early fifties, according to Milory and Muysken (1995), Uriel Weinreich's work *Languages in contact* which was published in 1953 had great impact in the research on CM and CS. They report that the history of research on CS and CM which started from Weinreich, who investigated bilingualism and CS from multiple approaches such as psycholinguistic, grammatical, and socio-linguistic. Einar Haugen's *The Norwegian language in America* (1953) also had great impact in the studies on CM and CS while focusing on the language of the immigrants and borrowing. The work of Gumperz's (1982) in the early eighties in the area was also influential as he emphasized on viewing CS as discourse strategy than simply seeing it as a deficient behaviour. It was then considered an "additional resource through which a range of social and rhetorical meanings are expressed" (Milory & Muysken, 1995). Blom and Gumperz

(1972) drew distinction between "situational code-switching" and "metaphorical code-switching" which later became important for sociolinguists.In addition to grammatical (micro approach) and sociolinguistic (macro approach), Ge (2007) found out the third approach "checklist approach" to include the functions which do not fall in either of the two approaches. The focus of the present study will remain sociolinguistic approach.

## 4.1. Sociolinguistic approach

"Sociolinguistics", states Wardhaugh, (2010), emphasizes to investigate "the relationships between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and of how languages function in communication" (p.13). Callahan (2004) also elaborates that "sociolinguistic approaches to code-switching are concerned with the social and pragmatic functions it fulfils for individual speakers and for social groups".

The researchers claim that CM and CS are not due to linguistic deficiency but these are rule-governed phenomenon triggered by social, socio-cultural and psychological motivations (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013; Ndebele, 2012; Draemel, 2011; Kim, 2006). Motivation is a psychological construct but has been used by sociolinguists to discuss the phenomenon of CS and CM who refer to social motivations. One of the famous theoretical models related to sociolinguistic approach was proposed by Gumperz (1982). He categorized CS into situational and metaphorical CS. According to Gumperz (1982), CS is triggered by the speakers' choice of code appropriate for certain situations or topics. Another significant model proposed was Myers-Scotton's (1993) "Markedness model" which presupposes that the speakers choose to switch or mix code as "marked" or "unmarked" choice, that is, they switch or mix code consciously or unconsciously as each code is associated with different functions. The Markedness model can be used in explicating social and psychological motivations for choosing one code than the other thus further elaborating on why do bilinguals switch or mix code.

There are some universal factors that can motivate or trigger code-mixing and code-switching in all contexts therefore Kim (2006) found out why do bilinguals switch depends on so many factors including interlocutors, situations, messages, attitudes, and emotions towards a particular code (Kim, 2006). According to Bhatia and Ritchie (2013) the choice of a code or code-switching is also determined by the relationship between the interlocutors. This solely

determines when, where and why a bilingual will switch code, either to include or exclude the interlocutors for one code is more appropriate for a certain situation. Similarly, other d researchers have proposed the interplay of multiple variants that have an impact on motivations and functions of CM and CS, such as social class, gender, age, etc. (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2013). They further elaborate the reasons for CM that it "is constrained by grammatical principles and may also be motivated by social psychological motivations" (p.376). Bhatia & Ritchie (2013) emphasized that there are "social and psychological factors" in language- mixing which entail code-switching. They investigated the motivations of alternating between languages by bilinguals within a single speech or turn. They researched how do bilinguals perceive themselves when they mix language. They call this linguistic phenomenon of switching code "inter-sentential" which is specific to "discourse principles" and is triggered by "social and psychological factors" (p.376).

Obiamalu and Mbagwu (2008) noted that in Igbo, where English is used as a foreign language, CS and CM are triggered by some socio-psychological motivations. They state that some socio-psychological factors include: "language attitude", "subconscious linguistic behavior", "cultural disloyalty" (2008, p.34-35). The attitude of the speakers or users of language towards the language they use for different purposes motivates them to use either of the codes they are familiar with. As English is associated with social favor and respect, the speakers switch or mix English with their regional languages. Another significant factor behind motivation for CS and CM is the desire of the individuals to adopt foreign culture which may be considered "cultural disloyalty" for some, but it is of considerable attraction for the speakers to use language other than the regional ones (Obiamalu & Mbagwu, 2008, p.35). According to Obiamalu and Mbagwu (2008) speakers are unable to recognize when they switch code as they do it unintentionally or sub-consciously to manifest the prevalence of CS as a social norm.

There is ample research on CM and CS in spoken discourse and little is on written discourse. There might be difference in the form and frequency of CM and CS in written discourse as compared to the spoken discourse. Mareva and Mapako (2012) found out the motivation for code-switching and code-mixing in the written corpus such as the readers' comments in newspapers in Zimbabwe where English is used as a foreign language. They concluded that the motivations were varied including lack of competence of the language users, sign of in-group

solidarity and unison and the attitude held by the language users, readers, towards a particular language are some of the reasons for mixing code. Kia, Cheng, Yee and Ling (2011) identified the prevalence of CM in Chinese entertainment news in Chinese newspapers in Malaysia motivated by the sense of modernity English carries. Li (2000) reviewed studies conducted in Hong Kong to analyze the motivations for CS. He concludes that in Hong Kong Chinese newspapers the commonly found "context-specific motivations" are: "euphemism", "specificity", "bilingual punning", and "principle of economy" (p.312-317). Li's (2000) review of previous study manifested prevalence of English in the multilingual society in Hong Kong.

Bhatia and Ritchie (2013) state that code-switching and code-mixing are marked by "creativity and complexity" and "innovative multi-functions" thus leading to the idea that there might be some societal basis for mixing language. This is in contrast with the strongly held perceptions of people who regard any type of language mixing a threat to the purity of the concerned language and think that it is due to linguistic difficulty and lack in lexical treasure that leads bilinguals to switch code. Such a perception attributes "language-mixing" a negative light and bilinguals are merely seen as incompetent speakers who are not better in any of the languages. Bhatia and Ritchie (2013) dismiss such a view and conclude that there might be other motivations behind "language mixing". Weinreich (as cited in Muysken, 2000) has stated that it is the "intra-sentential code-mixing" which manifests speaker's linguistic deficiency. Muysken (2000) disagrees and states that speakers do not switch owing to linguistic deficiency rather they do it with certain fluency and for many it is "unmarked" choice. He also contends that it cannot be stated that "word-finding difficulty or cultural pressure lead to the mixture" (Muysken, 2000, p.2). Myers-Scotton (1993) also states that "code switching in general is a type of skilled performance with communicative intent" (p.6).

Apart from motivations that trigger CM and CS, there are specific functions performed by the phenomenon. One of the functions for switching or mixing code, stated Holmes (2000) is to mark in-group solidarity and exhibit unity in the group (Holmes, 2000). The researcher further discussed how metaphorical switching is particular to rhetorical reasons. Code-switching is thus motivated by the desire to show inter-group solidarity (Bradby, 2002). Jamil (2012) reported instances of CS and CM in religious discourse, such as religious speech, with its main function of emphasizing important significant themes and concepts as well as to manifest shared identity

with his listeners or interlocutors. Auer (1998) also reported that according to sociolinguistic approach, CS and CM are emblem of "group membership in particular types of bilingual speech communities" (p.3).

Chowdhury (2012) in her study on EFL classrooms in Bangladesh concluded that CS and CM serve multiple functions such as to exhibit membership or "solidarity" and also to facilitate learning in different ways suitable to fulfill the need of the teachers and the students. Ahmad (2009) pointed out that in EFL classrooms in Malaysia CM and CS are significant in providing "affective support" to the students with low-level of proficiency in the target language. Brandagh, Zoghi and Amini (2013) contended that in EFL classrooms in Iran CS and CM serve three major functions-academic, social and management purposes.

Appel and Muysken (1987) concluded that one of the functions of CM and CS is "referential" which implies that the motivation behind CS is lack of an appropriate word or item in a language (p.118). They also delineated "directive function" which presupposes to include or exclude the interlocutor using a particular code, "expressive function" to exhibit identity, "phatic or metaphorical function" to manifest change in the talk (p.118). They also discussed "meta-linguistic code-switching" which has its function of impressing the interlocutors (p.118-19). Using Jacobson (1960) and Halliday's (1964) works they proposed functions of CS and CM.

Many researchers in Pakistan have investigated the occurrence of code-mixing and code-switching from structural aspect or from socio-cultural one. Mohammad and Mahmood (2013) investigated the variation of Urdu as a result of its contact with English. They concluded that there is a pervasive influence of English on Urdu which is evident from the fact that there are frequent occurrences of English words in written Urdu text. They also contend that "Urdu is a flexible language and absorbing foreign vocabulary without facing any distortion in its very structure" (p.137-138). Qadir (2011), on the other hand, states that the occurrence of English words in Urdu textbooks leave a strong impact on the status and structure of Urdu. Some researchers have investigated the phenomenon of code-mixing and code-switching in classroom discourse or interaction (Gulzar, 2010; Sipra, 2009) or textbooks (Qadir, 2011), while others have seen it out of the class interaction which can fall into social discourse (Ehsan & Aziz, 2014; Rafi, 2013; Aslam, Rehman, Qasim & Abbas, 2012; Mohammad, Mahmood & Asim, 2012; Mushtaq & Zahra, 2012). Gulzar (2010) probes the functions of code-switching in EFL classrooms in Pakistan and concludes that it serves various functions. They include switching

code to clarify difficult concepts, to help students understand, to repeat or to build rapport with the students. Dar, Akhtar and Khalid (2014) have also pointed out that CS in Pakistani English language classrooms serves academic and social functions.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study reviewed the studies on the functions and motivations of CM and CS in EFL/ESL context where English is not the native language and there is prevalence of CM and CS from L1 to English due to multiple reasons. Looking at the history of CM and CS research it can be derived that the research has focused on the types, constraints and all the grammatical aspects and issues related to CM and CS; as well as functions and motivations which trigger CM and CS in discourse (spoken and written). In order to get an insight into the relationship between language and society, it is important to probe the functions that a language fulfils. This, therefore, has been the focus of the sociolinguists to examine the functions served by CM and CS and the social motivations to trigger the phenomenon.

Bilingual speakers are motivated to switch or mix code due to many social and socio-psychological factors. Although there are some universal factors which are in all the contexts and which motivate the speakers to switch or mix code, the social and socio-psychological factors are significant in EFL/ESL context including Pakistan. When the speakers want to show in-group solidarity or identity, they mix code to fulfil this function. CM and CS might not be due to linguistic deficiency of the speakers but these are considered manifestation of skilled performance by sociolinguists. It is the choice of the interlocutors to employ CM and CS as a social strategy to include or exclude the hearer with their marked or unmarked choice of code.

The studies in sociolinguistics have taken their data from spoken discourse and very little study exists on written discourse which further leads to the scarcity of theoretical models to analyze written CS. The functions and motivations for CM and CS will be different in spoken and written. As spoken discourse is spontaneous and written is a product of pre-planned discourse, there are more instances of CM and CS in spoken than in written language. In written text such as newspapers, magazines and other forms of print media, CS and CM reflects the influence of one language on the other as it might influence the readers as well. CM and CS in textbooks manifest prevalence of the dominant language which asserts its dominance on L1. In EFL/ESL classrooms as well CS and CM are led by specific motivations and to fulfill specific

functions. The studies in EFL/ESL classrooms have highlighted that CM and CS perform the functions which prove fruitful for the learning process. Woolard (2004) pointed out that there is a need to investigate why bilingual speakers do not use all the options related to the choice of code than merely focusing on why they prefer a particular option to choose one code. She contended, "It could be argued that linguists, with their focus on constraints against rather than motivations for code-switching, do ask this alternative question" (p.91). Alim (2009) suggests looking beyond merely studying relationship between language and society and the power that they assert on each other. It is necessary for sociolinguists, states Alim (2009), to attempt to change relationship between language, power and society.

It is significant to see how CM and CS have been under investigation by researchers from EFL contexts or background. Sridhar (1996) has stated that sociolinguistic perspective is significant in its own right. He states:

> "As a discipline sociolinguistics provides the methodology for analysis and description of interactional contexts: who uses what language, with whom and for what purposes? It provides frameworks with which to analyze the linguistic choices available to the multilinguals and their reasons for choosing one code from among the several available to them" (Sridhar, 1996, p.56).

In studying languages or linguistic phenomenon, such as CM and CS, sociolinguistic perspective can provide insights into practices and use of language in different discourses such as classroom discourse, media discourse, religious discourse, etc. It can also provide framework to analyze the choices which are there for the multilinguals and the answer and a possible answer to a frequently asked question by the researchers, that is, why do bilinguals switch or mix code?

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