English Code-switching: An Increasing Practice in Burushaski Discourse

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Abstract

This study mainly aims to explore Burushaski speaking students' behaviour towards English code-switching with regard to increase in their educational level. The study also aims to sort out the class of words which mostly become a source of code-switching. The data were collected from a total of 90 participants which were divided into three groups. Each group consisted of 30 participants. Group discussions between the participants in Burushaski language were held and were recorded for each group. The findings show variations in the amount of English code-switching within the conversation of each group which demonstrate that the amount of code-switching in conversation of graduation level students is greater than those of matriculation and intermediate level students respectively. Among the parts of speech, nouns were found to be highly switched in Burushaski discourse.

Keywords: Code-switching, Bilingualism, Discourse analysis, Adult ESL learners

Introduction

The English language has become a lingua franca across the world (Kuteeva, 2020). It is widely used as a language of instruction in educational institutions in various countries around the world, in addition to being used as an official language. Its popularity is increasing day by day which urges people to learn and use English language to interact with a wider community across the globe (Abbas et al., 2018).

The English language occupies a prominent position in Pakistan. It is used as an official language along with Urdu which is the national language of Pakistan. English is also used as a medium of instruction and is taught as a compulsory subject from primary to postgraduate level education in Pakistan (Shamim, 2008). It is also considered as a status symbol, which means having good communicative competence in English is a key to earn a

higher social status in Pakistan. Proficiency in English is regarded as a guarantee to obtain good jobs. Therefore, students are inclined to improve their English language proficiency to have a successful life in future (Akram & Ghani, 2013). These needs and importance of English, either intrinsically or extrinsically, urge the learners to use English in both academic and everyday life conversations as much as they can. Consequently, this turns out to be a source of infusing English vocabulary in Pakistani people's local languages.

Switching from one language to another is very common in a bilingual society (Heller, 2020). There is a difference of opinion about lexical to sentence level code switching. Some of the linguists call switching at the level of words as 'code-mixing' in which a word of a subordinate language is embedded in the structure of a dominant language, whereas switching at the level of sentences is called 'code-switching' in which a complete sentence of a different language is embedded in another language. Nevertheless, most linguists prefer the term 'code-switching' to describe all types of code transfer between two languages that are utilised at the same time. Hence, in this paper, I will use the term 'code-switching' to refer to all types of code transfer. Researchers have described several motivations for using different codes while conversing, including the need to keep the conversation moving without break, the desire to substitute a correct term or structure with a better expression, the want to show allegiance with a certain group, and so on (Hasselmo, 2020).

Regardless of the reasons for switching from one code to another, it compromises the purity of the language while assisting the speaker in effectively communicating the information. (Blommaert et al., 2012). The dominant languages gradually replace subordinate languages. According to an estimate all minor languages of the world, particularly in sub-continent, are at stake and there will remain only major state or provincial languages after a few decades. English is one of the main languages that is gaining dominance over all other indigenous languages spoken in Pakistan, regardless of the number of people who speak them (Rahman, 2010). One evidence of the dominance of English and the decline of local languages is the absorption of English vocabulary items into local languages.

Among other indigenous languages of Pakistan, Burushaski is one of the minor languages spoken in the Gilgit-Baltistan province with an approximate number of 60,000 to 80, 000 speakers (Tikkanen, 2020). Most of its native speakers are in Hunza and Yasin valley. With the advent of Karakoram Highway, tourism and education boosted in these areas which although strengthened the local economy but it also brought foreign culture and languages with

it which affected the purity of Burushaski language. Many foreign words became part of daily-life conversation and replaced local vocabulary. Thus, there is a threat of the extinction of Burushaski language like other minor languages of the area.

The present study is an attempt to find out the frequency of code-switching of English lexical items into Burushaski language. The study will help to estimate the overwhelming influence of English over Burushaski. As the frequency of different parts of speech of the English language will be studied, it will help determine the most affected area of the Burushaski language. In this way, the study will help English language teachers, local anthropologists, and linguists to improve the local language and to protect them from the invasion of foreign words. It will also help preserve the discourse in Burushaski language for the future to determine the language change over the period of time.

Research Questions

- What is the degree of acceptability of code-switching of English in Burushaski language?

- Does code-switching increase with the increase of educational level?

- Which constituent of words is most frequently switched by the Burushaski students?

Literature Review

It is very difficult to find a single definition for code-switching. As code-switching is linked with several related fields, such as linguistics, psychology and education, it has been defined according to the specific fields. According to Nilep (2006, p. 1), code-switching is "the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction". Almost similar definition was given by Bista (2010, p. 2) when he/she defines that "code-switching is the alternation of words and phrases between two languages or dialects and it usually occurs between people who share those particular languages". From these two definitions code-switching is the mixture of two languages aiming at making the language effective and clear to understand.

Types of Code-switching

Generally, two types of code-switching are described by the linguists. According to Lipski (1985), one is intra-sentential code-switching and the other is inter-sentential code-switching. Intra-sentential code-switching occurs at lexical level in which one or more lexical items are embedded within a sentence. Intra-sentential code switching is prevalent among

bilingual speakers, and it is done to keep the conversation run up and avoid interruptions. Usually, speakers switch to other language when they feel confident in using the switched language and find more suitable words to enrich their expressions. Most often, lexical items are borrowed from a dominant language and are embedded into the structure of a subordinate language. On the other hand, inter-sentential code-switching is a type of switching that occurs above the lexeme level, i.e., at syntactic level. In inter-sentential code-switching, a whole sentence from a dominant language is added to a subordinate language. Another sort of code-switching is tag-switching, which occurs when a speaker inserts a tag statement (such as you know, I mean, no way) from one language into another (Zirker, 2007).

According to Lipski (1985), although there are several reasons for code-switching, it is often done with a purpose to show off competence in the dominant language to gain a higher status in the society. Zirker (2007) states that inter-sentential code-switching requires more smoothness and proficiency in both languages than intra-sentential code-switching as in inter-sentential code-switching each sentence must be correct and in line with the corresponding rules of both languages that are being used.

Gumperz (1977) introduced situational and metaphorical code-switching. Situational code-switching occurs when new members join an ongoing conversation, but they are not familiar with the language being used for conversation. Consequently, the speakers of the ongoing conversation switch to a language which the newcomers can understand and speak. A group of Japanese-English bilinguals who speak Japanese within their group but switch to English when monolingual English speakers join them is an example of situational code-switching (Shin, 2010). Whereas, metaphorical code-switching is used as a conversational strategy either to enhance or mitigate speech acts, such as requests or denials, and it is most often done unconsciously and unexpectedly (Shin, 2010).

Similarly, Muysken (2000) identified three types of code-switching i.e., (i) insertion, (ii) alternation and (iii) congruent lexicalization. According to Kim (2006), in the case of insertion code-switching, either a lexical item or entire constituents are inserted from one language into another language and this happens with bilinguals when they do not have good command over the target language as happens in case of refugees. Alteration switching is a kind of process in which speakers do not insert any lexical item when speaking, rather the speakers keep conversation remain relatively separate. Whereas congruent lexicalization happens when two languages share partial or impartial syntactic structures of each other.

Functions of Code-switching

Code-switching is very common in a bilingual or multilingual society. Code-switching is primarily used for two purposes: academic and social functions.

Academic Functions of Code-switching

Sert (2005) conducted a study to explore teachers' and students' perspectives about the academic purpose of code-switching. He asserts that whether code-switching is conscious or unconscious, it serves a few fundamental purposes. He found that teachers do code-switching for different purposes. For instance, teachers embed words of an indigenous language into the target language in lectures to make the students understand the topic easily. This is especially common in grammar-translation method classes, where teachers demonstrate a grammatical topic by using examples from the students' native language. Secondly, teachers repeat difficult points in mother tongue during lectures to make the points clearer. Moreover, sometimes teachers have been found switching from the target language to the local language to build good relationships with the students and to create a friendly environment in the classroom.

On the other hand, the students were found switching for three main reasons. First, students switched to their native language to find appropriate words to keep the conversation moving forward. Usually this happened due to incompetency in the target language. Secondly, students reiterated their points in mother tongue to express their ideas clearly. Thirdly, students switched to their mother tongue to prevent any disagreement caused by a concern of using the target language incorrectly.

Ansar (2017) carried out a study in Indonesia to explore teachers' and students' perspectives about the academic functions of code-switching and code-mixing. She found that both teachers and students use code-switching for almost the same purposes as mentioned by Sert (2005).

Bhatti et al., (2018) conducted a study in Pakistan to find out code-switching as a teaching tool in classrooms. All the teachers were well-qualified having MA and MPhil degrees in language teaching and had more than five-year experience of teaching English as a second language. Diploma level ESL classes were chosen, and observation and audio-tape recordings were used to collect the data. In addition to the functions of code-switching as a teaching tool mentioned above, she found that teachers also used code-switching to maintain discipline in the classroom. She further explained that all types of code-switching (intra-sentential, inter-

sentential and tag switching) were used during the lectures.

Uys (2010) explored the functions of code-switching in a high school classroom in Northern Cape Province. Study found that teachers use code-switching in several ways to explain, clarify and interpret the lectures. Similarly, students also used code-switching to explain and clarify their point of view. The study overall stated the positive effects of code-switching on teaching and learning in classrooms.

Rahman (2010) conducted a study to find out the effects of code-switching on students in Pakistani ESL classrooms. Both male and female teachers of English, ranging from 5 to 15 years' experience of teaching English as a second language were the participants of the study. Findings supported the positive effects of code-switching in the classroom. It helped not only teachers but also students to learn English as a second language. However, the study suggested to have a clear policy about the extent of using code-switching for teaching, as unnecessary code-switching may not be good for second language learning.

Social Functions of Code-switching

Sert (2005) states that code-switching in a social context is a way to express solidarity among the speakers of different languages through self-expression by using a common language. Code-switching, in this case, is a source to join two different communities together. Ugot (2008) describes the reasons for code-switching in a social context and says that speakers may switch because either they want to emphasize a point, or they do not find an appropriate word in their language to express themselves. So, they seek help from another language by switching to that language. Children in a bilingual society most often find using more than one language simultaneously. It is considered that children switch to another language because they are incompetent in one language. So, in order to hide the incompetency and to keep the discourse moving on, children switch from one language to another (Köppe & Meisel, 1995). Köppe and Meisel (1995) also asserted that children switch to another language because they cannot differentiate between the two language and consider them as one language.

However, some other studies, such as Trebits (2021) and Zimmerman (2020) found that children do not switch because they are incompetent, rather, they switch for better expression. These studies found that children of 2 to 6 years old were able to differentiate two different language systems easily and they were also able to identify the individuals with a particular language use. Reyes (2004) carried out a study to explore the purpose of children's code-switching. Findings revealed that children usually switch to another language when they

change the topic. Moreover, children were also found using code-switching for clarification and emphasizing on the point. Yow et al. (2018) found code-switching as a helping tool for children to improve their second language and to communicate their messages effectively.

Burushaski Language

The Burushaski language is spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan which is a province of Pakistan. Most of its speakers live in Hunza and Yasin valley. According to Grune (1998), almost 50,000 native speakers of the Burushaski language live in Gilgit-Baltistan. The Burushaski language is considered a minor language in Pakistan and attempts are being made to preserve the language for future. The opening of Karakoram highway boosted the economy of the area. However, tourism and the continuous influence of local dominant languages, such as Urdu and English, have affected the Burushaski vocabulary a lot (Salim, 2019). Further, the vast majority of Burushaski speakers live in other regions of the world for educational and economic reasons. These people are constantly exposed to the prevalent local languages which is posing a danger to the Burushaski language. Due to the constant influx of foreign languages, Burushaski speakers have unwittingly begun to abandon their own vocabulary in favour of English (Salim, 2019). So, there was a compelling need to assess the level of code-switching in the Burushaski language to assess the future of the language.

Research Methodology

As the purpose of the study was to find out the level of code switching of English words in the Burushaski language, the quantitative research paradigm was used. The study also aimed to explore if the increase in one's education level has any impact on code-switching, i.e., does code-switching increases with the increase in one's educational level? For this purpose, quantitative paradigm was used as it would help quantify the differences between the various levels of education.

Participants and Data Collection Tools

For this study, 90 students both male and female, age ranging from 14 to 22 years were selected from different institutions of the Hunza district. The participants were divided into three groups (Group–A, –B, and –C) which represented matriculation, intermediate and graduation level of education respectively. Each group consisted of 30 students, having both male and female participants.

The data were collected through group discussions. The discussions were recorded. The purpose for recoding was to listen the audio time and again for analysis purposes. The

audio-recording for data collection has been used previously in several studies, such as Abalhassan and Alshalawi (2000). The topic for discussion in this study was 'the problems encountered by the citizens of Pakistan,' which was assigned to each group. The participants were informed to use their natural way of communication when discussing the topic. Fifteen minutes were given to each group for the discussion.

Data Analysis

Once data were collected, the words and utterances were calculated for each group. The data were first analysed to find out the code-switching of English into the Burushaski language. At the second step, the total code-switching of the English language was classified into different parts of speech. This was done to have a clear idea about which parts of speech of the English language the participants mostly embedded in the Burushaski language.

Calculation of Words

Findings show a constant increase in the number of code switching of English words into Burushaski language with the increase of educational level. The lowest amount of code-switching of English words was seen in Group A, which consisted of matriculation students, with 141 words out of 1498 and a percentage of 9.40. Whereas group C, which was consisted of graduation level students, witnessed the highest level of code-switching of English words, with 284 words out of 1765 and a percentage of 16. The group B, which had intermediate students, witnessed a code-switching of English words in between the groups A and C that was 206 English words out of 1698 and a percentage of 12. Notably, although all the groups were given equal amount of time for the discussion, but it can also clearly be observed that the total number of words also increased with the increase of educational level. It shows that the students of higher level of educational had more knowledge of the subject and used more words during the discussion.

Table 1: Amount of English Code-switching in the Burushaski Discourse

Group	English words	Total words	English code-switching percentage
A	141	1498	9.40%
B	206	1698	12%
C	284	1765	16%

Classification of Words

After quantifying the amount of English code-switching in the Burushaski discourse, the next step was to classify code-switching into the parts of speech of the English language. The purpose to calculate the parts of speech was to know which parts of speech of the English language were more used in the Burushaski discourse. The percentage of the use of different parts of speech can be seen in Figure 1 below.

The findings (see Figure 1 below) show that English nouns were the most commonly used parts of speech by all three groups. The noun category accounted for 62 percent of the total words, whereas the verb category accounted for only 16 percent, which is significantly lower than the nouns. In terms of the groups, Group–B which consisted of intermediate level students used nouns in the highest number, while Group–C which consisted of graduate level students used nouns the least. Group–C students used verbs in the highest number (21%), while Group–B students used verbs in the lowest number (11%). Overall, nouns, verbs and adjectives are the most common used parts of speech by the Burushaski speakers. Apart from these, rest of the categories of parts of speech were barely used by the participants.

Figure 1*: Number of English parts of speech in the Burushaski discourse
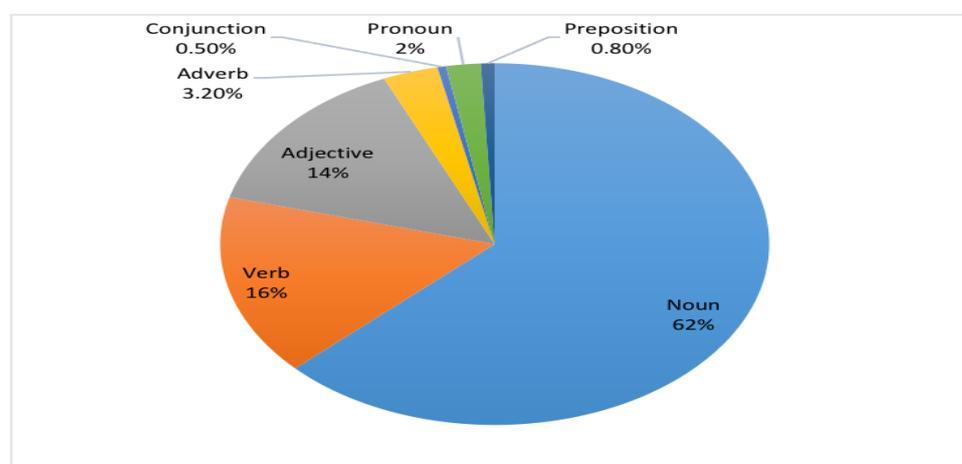
Discussion

The primary focus of the present study was to find out the infusion of English lexical code-switching in the Burushaski discourse. The findings show that the sum of all English code-switched words in the discourse of all groups was 631 out of a total of 4961 words, which makes the code-switching of the English language as 12% of the whole conversation.

All the participants shifted to English to a certain degree. However, it was interesting to see that none of the participants appeared to utilise English as their primary language

throughout the chat. All the speakers used Burushaski as their main language and it was supplemented by the use of English. In other words, speakers used Burushaski as the primary language which is also called a Matrix language and used English as an embedded language. The reason for this could be that the participants since their childhood lived and worked at Hunza valley where Burushaski is the native and dominant language and is used everywhere. These findings are similar to those of Abalhassan and Alshalawi (2000) who studied the level of English code-switching in Arabic discourse in the United Arab Emirates. However, Barhoum (1989) found different results. In Barhoum (1989) the speakers appeared to use English as a primary language and Arabic as an embedded language. The reason for this difference may be the participants, as in Barhoum's (1989), the participants were immigrants and had been living in the United States for a long time and thus were more fluent in English than Arabic.

The second most important question in the study was to find out whether the English code-switching increases with the increase of education level. The findings show that Group–A (which consisted of Matriculation level students) switched 141 lexical items of English out of a total of 1498 words (i.e., 9%) in the discourse. Group–B (which consisted of Intermediate level students) switched 206 words of English out of a total of 1698 words (i.e., 12%), and Group–C (which consisted of Graduate level students) switched 284 words of English out of a total of 1765 words (i.e., 16%). These findings clearly show that there is a direct relationship between education level and code switching. Code-switching increases with the increase of educational level. A simple explanation for this phenomenon may be the learners' exposure to the foreign language (English) in this case. As the class level increases, the students are more exposed to the English language either through books or through teachers' use of English. Hence, the amount of code-switching increases (Fachriyah, 2017). The findings are supported by Reyes's (2004) study, who found that a child of 10 years who is exposed to English for 3 years, uses 33% code-switching. On the other hand, a child of 10 years who is exposed to English for less than 3 years does 15% code switching.

The next step in the research was to determine which parts of speech are frequently switched to English. Nouns appeared to be the most frequently switched constituent with a percentage of 62%. This high percentage indicates that the speakers are more familiar with the English names of the things than the Burushaski names, and they commonly substitute the Burushiski names with the English names. Hunza is a major tourist destination in Pakistan's

northwestern region, with many foreign visitors throughout the year. They undoubtedly purchase local products, such as souvenirs and various other items of daily usage. This may be one of the reasons for the higher rate of noun code-switching. These findings are similar to those of Berk-Seligson (1986) who also found noun as the most frequently switched part of speech.

The next most frequently switched parts of speech are verbs and adjectives with a percentage of 16% and 14% respectively. It is also worth noting that adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns and prepositions are the rarely switched parts of speech. The findings are again similar to those of Berk-Seligson (1986). Further, the present study found more intra-sentential code-switching than inter-sentential code-switching. In intra-sentential code-switching, nouns, verbs and adjectives are mainly switched, whereas in inter-sentential code-switching, the switching of prepositions and conjunctions mainly takes place as these are used to join the sentences. This may possibly be the reason to have the present ratio of code-switching of different parts of speech.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Through the findings of the study, it is easy to conclude that with the increase of education level the level of code-switching increases, and it mainly happens due to increased exposure to the target/foreign language (i.e., English in this case). Additionally, in intra-sentential code-switching, nouns, verbs and adjectives are the most frequently switched parts of speech as these parts of speech can easily be embedded in sentence than others.

This study explored the relationship between code-switching and speakers'/ learners' level of education. Future research might investigate the phenomenon of code-switching in illiterate people. Further research can also be carried out to explore how the use of English with the Burushaski language can be minimized, as this would help to maintain the purity of the Burushaski langauge. If this issue is overlooked and no attempt is taken, the integrity and ultimately the existence of the Burushaski language may be lost with the passage of time.

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