

NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES THROUGH CODE-MIXING: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN PAKISTAN

Maida Muneer

Department of English, University of Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: maidamunir026@gmail.com

Muhammad Sabboor Hussain

Professor, Department of English, University of Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: dr.muhammadsabboorhussain@uskt.edu.pk

Abstract

This study examines the role of English-Urdu code-mixing in Pakistani multilingual classrooms, particularly how it helps in negotiating identities. This research incorporated Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA and concentrated on the dimension of Discursive Practice, which investigates the production, distribution and consumption of discourse. The data was collected through interviews from students and teachers who provided insights into their practices, experiences and perceptions of English-Urdu code-mixing in classrooms. The analysis of the study has revealed that teachers in Pakistan employ English-Urdu code-mixing deliberately to enhance the understanding and comprehension of students. They believe it helps to negotiate the identities of students in multilingual classrooms. The study concludes that code-mixing is a discursive norm and strategic practice that is believed to sustain inclusive pedagogical practices, negotiate identities and facilitate English language learning in Pakistan. The findings also challenge the deficit notions about code-mixing, highlighting its significance in multilingual pedagogy.

Keywords: negotiating identities; three-dimensional model; code-mixing; multilingual classrooms

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, specifically the classrooms of Punjab, the monolingual instruction is few and far between. The instructors and learners specifically in semi-urban areas sail in a complex linguistic spectrum which includes English, Urdu and Punjabi. In this setting, code mixing surfaces as a strategic discursive practice. Code mixing is basically the blending of two or more languages within a single conversation or interaction. English language carries organizational and institutional distinction and serves as a medium of instruction in Pakistani English discourse, and Urdu acts as a lingua franca, and Punjabi signals the cultural familiarity, social affiliation and solidarity. So, this interrelation among languages creates an opportunity to explore the phenomena of how students negotiate meaning as well as identities in the classroom.

Identity negotiation signifies the sustained process of asserting and constructing the sense of self while interacting with others. Language is an evident tool to construct identity in multilingual classrooms. Teachers and students may shift from one medium of instruction to another. Studies have investigated these bilingual practices in Pakistani regions, denoting that code-mixing is widely used in multilingual classrooms (Manan, David, Dumanig, & Channa, 2017). Teachers may switch between English and Urdu to express influence and accessibility, and students may mix the codes to show their linguistic competence, academic excellence and maintain their cultural association. This code-mixing is not only functional but also carries a symbolic interpretation which denotes their cultural association and social role. Resultantly, code-mixing is not just a linguistic habit but a way of manoeuvring the sociocultural strata in Pakistani multilingual classrooms.

Background of the Study

Code-mixing helps us comprehend language interaction as an effect of communication, which yields an innovative aspect of linguistic capacity. Basically, code-mixing refers to any case when grammatical and linguistic features of two different languages appear in one talk or sentence. This phenomenon usually comes as a result of language interaction or bilingualism, and according to Weinreich (1953), the intra-sentential enrichment of many grammatical

and lexical items that coexist in it is a menace and a malady at the same time. So, switching from one language to another is ideal bilingualism, but studies have elucidated that bilingual people frequently produce mixed sentences, which come on the insertional and alteration levels. On the contrary, it can be helpful as such sentences are uttered with fluidity, which shows how the speaker finds it meaningful and convenient to convey his/her message. In light of this argument, we acknowledge that code-mixing can negotiate the identities of individuals, specifically language learners.

The Sociocultural linguistic research recognizes the fact that identity is a discursive construct which emerges as the result of communication and interaction. The code-mixing and code-switching between English and Urdu have become collaborative strategies that help the students to comprehend the lesson in Pakistani ESL and EFL classrooms (Haque, 2019). It shows that these strategies are now common practices in Pakistani multilingual classrooms.

This paper examines how this practice of code-mixing between English and Urdu influences identity negotiation in Pakistani classrooms, particularly focusing on the pedagogical practices in these multilingual classrooms. This study takes into account pedagogical practices such as explaining concepts, addressing certain cultural content and participation of students. So, it tends to elucidate the role of English-Urdu code-mixing as a pedagogical practice contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the roles of language in shaping identities in Pakistani multilingual classrooms.

Statement of Problem:

Identity can be constructed through code-mixing in classrooms. In Pakistani multilingual classrooms, code-mixing is immensely incorporated. Moreover, the education policies prefer English as a medium of instruction when it comes to English discourse. However, the impact of the realities of code-mixing is overlooked in classrooms. So, this study investigates the role of code-mixing in classroom pedagogical practices. Specifically, it tends to answer how identities can be constructed through code-mixing and what kind of pedagogical practices are implemented in Pakistani classrooms.

Scope and Significance:

Code-mixing as a discursive tool negotiates identity for individuals, so we found a need to investigate its role in the initial process, i.e., in classrooms. This study specifically probes the relation of code-mixing as a discursive tool in the construction of language learners who mix languages on the basis of their cultural association and prefer the language which they find meaningful. We often find code-mixing in the classrooms where learners acquainted with the first language often mix it in English-medium instruction, specifically in Pakistani English discourse.

This study is limited to English-Urdu code-mixing in Pakistani multilingual pedagogy, focusing on higher secondary levels in specific selected institutes of Punjab. It also gives evidence about the function of code mixing and its role as a tool rather than a linguistic setback. It also denotes the practical strategies to integrate and incorporate multiple languages while teaching. Moreover, it offers insights into designing curriculum according to the realities of classrooms. Additionally, this study has certain limitations and delimitations, including sample size, scope of research and cultural association of the learners.

Limitations and Delimitation:

This study solely focuses on code-mixing as a discursive tool negotiating the identities of language learners. It is limited to a specific area and population. The size of the sample is small, and the findings would not be implemented and applicable for learners of all cultures and languages. Moreover, it only focuses on the code-mixing in Pakistani English discourse of a specific area. Furthermore, it does not address all the factors and strategies which construct the identity of language learners. The investigation assumes that the learners and instructors are efficient in languages and are deeply engaged in classrooms. The data may be affected because the teachers may modify their behaviour. Moreover, the comprehension level of students may also vary, which may affect the outcomes of the study.

This study is confined to English-Urdu code-mixing, and the use of the Punjabi language has been noted, but the study has not focused on its analysis. Additionally, the teacher-based practices of pedagogy have been investigated, and only the pedagogical practices have been under consideration, rather than identity construction on a broader social level.

Aim and Objectives:

The study aims to assess the pedagogical role of English-Urdu code-mixing in shaping the identities and facilitating the student engagement, participation and delivery of knowledge in Pakistani multilingual classrooms. English-Urdu code-mixing is incorporated in Pakistani multilingual classrooms, and this study aims to reveal how this linguistic strategy helps to shape the individual or social identities of the students.

- 1) To evaluate what kind of pedagogical practices teachers incorporate employing English-Urdu code-mixing in English discourse
- 2) To assess the effect of code mixing on the participation of students in classrooms
- 3) To investigate how code mixing shapes the identity of the students

The objectives have been turned into the following research questions:

- 1) What kind of pedagogical practices do teachers incorporate when employing English-Urdu Code-mixing while teaching English discourse?
- 2) How does code mixing affect the participation of students in classrooms?
- 3) How does code mixing shape the identity of the students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent Studies:

Many researchers and studies have delved into code-mixing and its role in the identity construction of individuals. Hussain, Nayab & Zahra (2025) investigated code-mixing and code-switching and their role in identity construction by incorporating Gumperz's (1982) interactional sociolinguistics, which assumes that code-switching is a contextualization cue in the conversation and its meaning. Maysken's (2000) typology of code-mixing provides a structural view of speech patterns in bilingual speech. Moreover, the results indicate that language use influences the development of identity, having crucial effects on the language policy, the system of education and social interaction in a multilingual setting. It means that mixing codes may affect the identity construction and social interaction in an educational setting. Similarly, there is another study conducted by Shah, Phillai & Sinay (2019) focusing on code-mixing of Pushto and English and its impact on identity construction, which contributes as evidence of the relation of code-mixing and code-switching with hybrid identities of individuals associated with multilingual backgrounds. The findings of the study suggest that the social environment affects the behaviour, perception and identity orientation of the speakers.

The role of using multiple languages can enhance the understanding and comprehension of content. Nawaz, Yousaf and Jabeen (2023) conducted a study on code-switching patterns in ESL. This study focused on the perception of students and teachers about code-switching and its patterns and functions in the ESL classroom. The results indicate that code-switching has a very positive impact on teaching and learning the English language.

Code-switching practices of teachers in the classroom may play a crucial role in pedagogy to understand the role of their practices in the classroom. Aftab, Subhan & Rahman (2024) investigated and conducted a case study of the University of Swabi. Communication Accommodation theory was incorporated in this study, and the findings indicate that teachers used code-switching to translate and discuss the difficult topics, control the classroom environment, and advise and encourage the students. It shows that using multiple languages can influence the students and their behaviour and perception patterns in the classroom.

Identities can be negotiated through code-mixing in multilingual classrooms. To investigate this, Haseeb & Ali (2025) conducted a study which revealed that students used code-switching to implicitly tell about their cultural association, and they switched to their native languages with those who shared the same language. It signifies that language plays a significant role in expressing cultural association.

Language can be shaped through the identities of individuals through their interaction and conversation. To investigate how language helps shape the linguistic and social identity of bilingual people, Batt and Anwar (2025) conducted an analysis, and the results reveal that code-switching is not a linguistic flaw but a linguistic strategy. Youth use code-switching to explain their emotions, sense of socialization and contemporary identity. It means that language has an essential role in shaping identities, and switching between languages can construct the identities of people and help them display their sense of socialization.

Research Gaps:

- Multiple research studies have been conducted documenting the pedagogical benefits of using multiple languages and code-switching, and how it helps maintain classroom order and clarify the concepts, but they have not extended research into the role of code-mixing in classrooms and what types of pedagogical practices are being incorporated employing English-Urdu code mixing. Only a few studies explored identity negotiation, but their analysis was broader and was not confined to a certain aspect, which leaves an evident research gap to understand the pedagogical practices of the classroom and to unfold the role of code-mixing in identity construction.
- There are many studies investigating the phenomenon of code-switching, and even some studies focused on the broader content of code-mixing and its role in shaping identities. Still, there is a scarcity of content-specific work on Urdu-English code-mixing in higher secondary institutions and how it affects the participation of students in classrooms, leaving a significant research gap.
- Several studies have investigated the sociolinguistic functions of mixing codes in Pakistan, but very few have studied its function in a classroom setting, focusing on certain aspects, such as its role in identity construction. Moreover, they have overlooked the Post-structuralist lens, specifically Foucault's concept of the interrelation of language and identity negotiation. The existing studies treat identity as a fixed category, ignoring the shifting, fluid and dynamic nature of identity construction. Resultantly, it leaves a significant gap because Post-Structuralist theory allows for a more nuanced comprehension of how multilingual speakers put themselves in relation to code-mixing and identity construction.

Theoretical Framework:

This research is based on post-structuralist theory, which says that identity is not static but is fluid. It can be constructed through language and social relationships. As the title reflects social interaction and language, this theory provides a lens to discover more areas. This theory emerged in the 20th century and assumes that certain structures may help to understand human culture. Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Roland are the contributors of this theory.

Foucault highlights the interrelation between language, power and knowledge and also emphasizes how discourse can control and create what is "truth" in this society. In this study, Post-structuralist theory does not view code-mixing of English-Urdu as a fixed phenomenon but as a negotiated practice present in teaching. Foucault argues that language is not only a means of communication but also a system to exercise power and construct knowledge (Foucault, 1972). It means that classroom interaction shapes the way knowledge is considered valid.

Derrida argues that meaning is not fixed; rather, it can be interpreted differently in different contexts (Derrida, 1978). It means that students may interpret the linguistic cues in order to construct their identities influenced by language.

Conceptual Framework:

The conceptual framework of this research is based on terms like code-mixing, which is a technique used in multilingual classrooms, and identity construction, which is a factor influenced by the individual's social association, language and cultural background. So this study focuses on specific pedagogical practices of English-Urdu code-mixing used in instruction, management of the classroom, students' engagement, questioning and understanding their influence on the participation, engagement and comprehension of students during teaching in the classroom.

Analytical Framework:

On the basis of the nature and objectives of this research, Norman Fairclough's 3D model has been implemented. This model helps to analyze text, discursive practices and social practices shaping the discourse, given that our study deals with pedagogical practices, so that the discursive practice would be the focus of the analysis. It will help to understand how teachers use English-Urdu code-mixing in their teaching and how students react and respond to these practices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

This research takes on a transformative philosophical Worldview, taking into account the qualitative research to discover the references in policy documents and classroom settings, evaluating it on the basis of the developed framework. It aims to generate new knowledge by locating the identity construction through code-mixing, cultural and

language associations and social interactions of language learners and instructors, and underlying pedagogical practices and strategies in Pakistani classrooms.

Population and Sample:

For this qualitative study, purposive sampling is chosen to focus on teachers and language learners meeting certain criteria and different cultural and language associations from Pakistani schools, which are engaged in English instruction. The sample consists of Teachers with at least one year of experience and students in 11th and 12th grades. Ethical considerations have been taken into account during the data collection through informed consent and a promise of confidentiality and anonymity.

Research Tools:

The research tools used in this study are interviews with language learners and language instructors, and scholarly journals.

DATA ANALYSIS

The second dimension of Fairclough's 3D model is "Discursive Practice", which emphasizes how a text is produced, distributed and then consumed in a certain context. The interview data of this study revealed that learners and teachers see code-mixing as a pedagogical strategy and a discursive norm in multilingual classrooms.

Discourse Production:

The primary producers of code-mixed discourse are the teachers. Sometimes they mix codes unintentionally, but occasionally they do so deliberately to scaffold learning. T-1 stated, *"I mix English and Urdu to explain the complex ideas, and the students grasp the idea quickly, and they find English language more accessible when it is mixed with Urdu."* It evidently elucidates that teachers do not mix Urdu and English languages randomly, but they do so strategically, which mitigates the challenges of comprehension and increases the class participation of the learners.

Teachers mix English and Urdu languages in pedagogy, taking into account many teaching strategies such as translation, explanation and exemplification. They mix both languages while employing these teaching strategies so that students may comprehend the meaning and concept of intricately woven ideas and lessons. In Pakistani English discourse, translation is a very crucial practice in the classroom, and it becomes necessary to employ English-Urdu code-mixing. As stated by T-7, *"I employ English-Urdu code-mixing while translating the English paragraphs and explaining the stanzas of poems."* It clearly explains that English-Urdu code-mixing is employed deliberately in Pakistani classrooms to make the lesson more comprehensive for the students.

Similarly, teachers mix English and Urdu to make English more accessible to the students. They see English as more accessible when the Urdu language supports it. So teachers mix codes while giving examples. As T-4 stated, *"I mix English with Urdu while giving examples and explaining lessons so that students may understand things easily. For example, I give examples of literary devices used in the Urdu language, which offer the learners a good opportunity to understand their use in English literature with the help of their own language."* It elucidates that explaining a concept with the help of their native language may help the learners to grasp the ideas more vividly. Moreover, it deteriorates the ambiguity and vagueness. Students are multilingual as they use Urdu, Punjabi and English. When it comes to the English language, they find it difficult when classrooms are monolingual or based on an only-English approach. They find English more accessible when it is mixed with the Urdu language, and they seek to comprehend the lesson easily.

Distribution of Discourse:

When teachers incorporate English-Urdu code-mixing, it circulates among the students, develops a new linguistic habit, and they adopt it in their interactions, discussions, debates, presentations and classroom activities. They find it an easy and approachable idea to express their point of view and thoughts with clarity. S-1 stated, *"My English teacher uses both Urdu and English languages while teaching, so I also use both languages when I give presentations in my classroom. It helps me to convey my idea in an easier way."*

The discourse extends beyond the teacher's speech. It becomes a shared practice in the classroom that shows how English-Urdu code-mixing is widely used and turned into a discursive and pedagogical norm in Pakistani Multilingual classrooms.

Code-mixing helps to convey feelings and emotions. Sometimes a word, a phrase, or a sentence in Urdu feels more expressive and intense than in English. T-9 said, *"I mix both codes when I need to put emphasis on something when students are not performing well. I usually motivate them with a warmer tone, 'betay, focus on your studies.' It evokes a sense of care and emotional engagement with my students, and they act upon my advice."*

English-Urdu code-mixing not only conveys ideas more clearly but also helps to use expressions that carry emotional weight, which are in the Urdu language and cannot be captured fully in English. S-7 stated, *"I find myself mixing both English and Urdu languages when I speak because I cannot express certain words or feelings in one language, and I seek help from another."* Code-mixing allows the speaker to emphasize certain expressions to convey emotions vividly. For example, a speaker may utter, "This is very difficult, yaar!" Here, the word "yaar" adds a sense of emotional resonance and friendly tone that English lacks. So it also works as an emotional amplifier.

Consumption of Discourse:

The consumers of code-mixing are the students, and most of them have expressed that it is beneficial for their comprehension, understanding and confidence. S-4 commented, *"When the teacher mixes Urdu with English language, it helps me understand things easily and motivates me to speak English."* Code-mixing helps the learners to be more comfortable in understanding the idea, as well as find English more accessible. They feel motivated and inspired to use English. It also explains that their own language is being valued, which gives them confidence, inclusivity and a sense of belonging. It also builds a sense of their identity in the classroom.

Students view code-mixing as a supportive learning strategy rather than a linguistic deficiency. The way they speak both languages shows their sense of belonging and cultural identity. Moreover, exposure to Urdu along with English provides them a sense of belonging as they feel connected to their culture and language, and at the same time learn a global language, English. Additionally, it can positively impact their cultural and linguistic identity.

Code-mixing also entails cultural resonance and identity construction. Feelings and emotions are not separate from cultural identity. T-13 stated, *"I use many Urdu words like 'dua' and 'izzat' as it is in English speech as they carry more emotional weight than their alternative English words."* Many emotions cannot be captured in one language. There are many Urdu words, such as 'Taqwa', 'Sharam', 'Beta', and 'Barkat', etc, which appear naturally in code-mixed classrooms and carry more emotional intensity and sense of belonging. It also expresses their linguistic and cultural identity.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Data analyzed through interviews brought to the surface some striking findings revealing that English-Urdu code-mixing is a productive pedagogical tool rather than some temporary practice or linguistic deficiency. It basically plays a crucial part in Pakistani multilingual classrooms and also constructs the academic, cultural and emotional identities of the learners.

- **Code-mixing as a Pedagogical Strategy:**

Teachers deliberately employ code-mixing in the classrooms to manage lesson comprehension and understanding of the students. It reflects that English-Urdu code-mixing is a choice, a pedagogical strategy that values approachability and accessibility over the rigidity of language separation. So code-mixing is a teaching tool rather than a linguistic deficiency, which enhances lesson comprehension and classroom engagement and participation of the students.

- **Code-mixing a Discursive Norm in Classrooms:**

Students use code-mixing in their classroom activities, discussions, presentations and interactions. They find it accessible to use both English and the Urdu language while interacting with peers and teachers. Additionally, the distribution of discourse shows that it extends beyond teachers' code-mixed speech and becomes a shared discursive practice in Pakistani Multilingual classrooms because students also tend to use code-mixing when they see their teachers employing this pedagogical tool.

- **Code-mixing and Identity Construction:**

Code-mixing is a source of identity construction and confidence-building for students. They find it a part of their multilingual identity and a way of connecting with their cultural identity. They also find the English language

accessible without losing their connection to the Urdu language. So code-mixing is more than just a linguistic phenomenon.

It is a discursive practice and a means to construct their identities as they feel belong and are included with the use of the Urdu language in English classrooms. It also reveals the role of code-mixing in second language acquisition and affirms the multilingual identity. Furthermore, mixing their first language, Urdu, with English exhibits their association with both cultures and the global world. Consumption of discourse also shows their multilingual identity and how they can navigate through different linguistic spaces without any difficulty.

English-Urdu code-mixing builds the academic as well as emotional identities of the students. Using English may induce distance, but when they use the Urdu language, it allows them to exhibit and negotiate their academic knowledge and to express their emotional selves more naturally. So identity is like fluid and not fixed, which shows students' lived reality in a multilingual world.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this analysis revealed that the teachers are the primary producers of the code-mixed discourse and students are the consumers. Teachers use code-mixing deliberately as a pedagogical tool and strategy to simplify complicated ideas, reduce students' hesitation, and enhance their participation and engagement in classroom discussions. This strategic production of code-mixing is a productive strategy rather than a linguistic deficiency. This pedagogical strategy helps to bridge the gap between English as a medium of instruction and the linguistic concerns of the students. Moreover, this produced discourse moves beyond the individual's speech and becomes a shared discursive norm in classrooms. Through the distribution of the code-mixed discourse, it circulates in classrooms and becomes a part of student interactions and communication. With the development of code-mixing, it has become an accepted register which reflects the linguistic hybridity of Pakistani multilingual classrooms. The consumption of this code-mixing by students was incredibly positive. The students consistently explained it as a tool of building their confidence, constructing their identities and reducing the pressure of English as the only medium of instruction. So they consider it an enabling resource instead of a weakness. Both the students and teachers acknowledged that code-mixing helped them to maintain cultural identity and authenticity.

Overall, the findings of the study suggest that code-mixing is a discursive strategy which teachers use and students redistribute among their interactions, and it is a positive classroom strategy rather than a temporary practice. Ultimately, this study is a powerful resource rather than a linguistic barrier in education.

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