CLASSROOM CODE ALTERNATION IN SOUTH PUNJAB: INVESTIGATING TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Abdul Sammad
PhD English Linguistics Scholar, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan
Tipu4772@gmail.com
Dr. Humaira Irfan
Associate Professor, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan
humaira.irfan@ue.edu.pk
Shahbaz Tariq
M.Phil English Linguistics Scholar, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan
Shahbaztariq144@gmail.com

Abstract
This is a mixed-method research paper done at Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) of Multan, South Punjab, on the functions and perceptions of the stakeholders of Code Alternation (CA) the flexible use of the English (L2), and Urdu/Native Language (L1) in the multilingual higher education setting of Pakistan. The study takes a definite step out of the traditional deficit paradigm of considering L1 use as an ideological failure and a dual theoretical model of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) by Vygotsky to legitimize L1 as necessary pedagogical support to clarify concepts and a Sociolinguistic Functional Framework to justify its vital affective and social functions. The quantitative analysis showed that there was a sweeping student support, with a near-unanimous 94 percent of students concurring that teacher led alternation aids in mastering concepts, that systemic use of L1 is a prerequisite rather than a preference. Moreover, the CA motivation is projected onto the sociolinguistic needs, as 85 percent of students have attested that it is useful in creating humor and rapport and 79 percent employ it to convey their cultural identity and affiliation, accordingly, the role of CA in identity negotiation and classroom cohesion is upheld. This empirical evidence proves that L1 is motivated by the most crucial cognitive and social needs that override anxieties regarding language incompetence. At the same time, faculty answers showed that everybody (100 percent) agreed that CA is a necessary component of understanding, but this idea is complicated by ideological issue of providing L2 exposure. Essentially, 100 percent of the teachers insisted on professional training to convert their reactive use of L1 into a strategic, research-based practice a requirement in Principled Code Alternation. All of this reveals an unsustainable PolicyPractice Gap between the monolingual Policy and multilingual Reality and forces the need to institute strategic L1 use as an academic equity action in under-represented ecology in South Punjab.

Keywords: Code alteration, South Punjab, Multilingual Education, L1 Scaffolding

1. Introduction

This paper will examine the language habit that is referred to as common language practice which is commonly known as code alternation commonly referred to as code-switching in university classes in South Punjab, Pakistan. Even though they are not supposed to use anything but English in universities, teachers and students both speak Urdu/their first languages in classes on a regular basis. This blending of languages is a natural phenomenon thus the classrooms are a significant and interesting research to study. It is created under the understanding of language as a technical tool of teaching but the deeper identification of language as a marker of identity, culture and understanding. This study aims to go beyond the classical deficit perspective of L1 use by performing a systematic analysis of the perceptions, preferences of faculty and students of Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) in Multan. We would like to present a practical and empirically based approach that affirms the importance of code alternation as an important pedagogical and sociolinguistic tool, which should be actively incorporated, not only tolerated, into the successful practice of multilingual education.

1.1 Background of the study

The debate about the English Language Teaching (ELT) has undergone an enormous transformation in terms of strict compliance to monolingual teaching to an expedient

amalgamation of multiple language resources. Traditional powerful methods of pedagogy, including the so-called Direct Method and subsequently Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), enforced the use of the target language (L2) only in the classroom context to maximize the exposure and linguistic input of the students (Cook, 2008). Though in a society with a complex linguistic background practical need to communicate delicate ideas usually overrides these tough policy provisions and thus in many situations, the first language (L1s) of the students get more frequent and sometimes spontaneous use.

The phenomenon of switching between languages known as Code Alternation in a context characterized by a complex multilingualism, like Pakistan, is an inherent attribute of both the educational and social interaction (Tahir et al., 2016). The practice has been witnessed in all levels of learning starting in primary schools to the university level (Malekela, 2004). This common dissonance is intensely accentuated: the ongoing headbang between the supposed official institutional policies, which dictate the use of only the English language of instruction, and the practical pedagogical needs that must be met in order to provide students with viable learning and conceptual mastery. The paper is devoted to the examination of the essence of this tension, which will be conducted by exploring the particular attitudes to linguistic flexibility in South Punjab universities in Pakistan.

Linguistic practices observed in this study should be differentiated to make the concepts clearer. Code alternation is the general term that may be applied to refer to the flexible application of more than one language in the same communicative event. In this general idea, code-switching (CS) is a process of switching between two languages, at sentence, or even clause, and even word boundaries. Jamshidi and Navehebraim (2013) define it as the switching of languages, at the discourse, clauses, or even words level. This can be in between sentences (inter-sentential switching) or within a sentence or a phrase (intra-sentential switching). Conversely, code-mixing (CM) is the imposition of linguistic parts like words, phrases or clauses of a certain language in the grammatical framework of another and described by Sridhar and Sridhar (1980). Altogether, these practices demonstrate fluidity and dynamism of multilingual communication.

Pedagogically, code-switching has a loose meaning of any functional switching of the L2 (English) or L1/local language (Urdu/Native language). This general functional position is taken in the present study, which allows considering in a systematic way how and why such alternations take place, and what effect such alternations may have on the student understanding and emotional involvement.

Pakistan is a country that has a very stratified post-colonial linguistic system where English is the official and the compulsory medium of instruction and Urdu is the national lingua franca and is still very common among those who are educated (Rahman, 2011). The languages below these hegemonic languages are a rural multiplicity of regional languages making up the actual First Languages (L1s) of students, leading to a complicated tri-lingual ecology in learning situations. The current investigation is located in Babauddin Zakariya University (BZU) in Multan, an area whose sociolinguistic topography is characterized by the high presence of the Saraiki an Indo-Aryan lingo that does not have tonal contrasts but instead, voiced aspirates are upheld (Shackle, 1976). The L1s spoken by students at BZU are often Saraiki or Punjabi creating a multilayered linguistic environment. Although Saraiki prevails regionally, Urdu serves as the main mediating language to educated people in the country, and code-switching out of English in classrooms, thus, is most often directed to Urdu, and not to the true mother languages of the students (Mansoor, 2004). This dynamic is the basis of considering the phrase of Urdu/native language in the research instrument. Language choice in this urban university setting is not only a pedagogical instrument but it is also the signifier of cultural identity, social

positioning and ideological orientation and hence the use of L1 in the classroom is very significant beyond the need to translate into a foreign language (Mahboob, 2009).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The ongoing issue with ELT in Pakistan is the gap between the official requirement of L2-only teaching and the need at the level of the L1 instruction to achieve the successful pedagogy (Tahir et al., 2016). This generates a fundamental policy-practice disconnection, in which the official policy is to teach only in English, but the reality in the classroom is that linguistic flexibility is necessary. It frequently happens that experienced teachers are under pressure to change to the L1 when they notice that students have not received the message that was transferred in English and the effect was not achieved, thus, the use of L1 becomes a reactionary intervention (Malekela, 2004). The need, nonetheless, arises without the institutional instructions, which results in uneven implementation and a strong tendency to be resistant to the ideological aspects of the concept of L1 use as an obstacle to L2 proficiency among the instructors (Tahir et al., 2016). This is the dilemma involving the compliance to monolingual policy and the success of pedagogical work that is the central issue of this study.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main goals of the study are to explore systematically the perceptions and the roles of classroom code alternation amongst the university stakeholders of BZU Multan:

1. To determine what particular pedagogical, sociolinguistic, and affective roles encourage students to use a code alternation.
2. To examine the beliefs stated by teachers and the reported practices on the need and effectiveness of using Urdu/L1 in teaching English language in multilingual classes.
3. To determine the perception of the students at the university concerning teacher and peer code-switching in various classroom settings.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What do teachers perceive to be the pedagogical rationale and distinct functions of teachers in BZU classroom that code alternate (English to Urdu/L1)?
2. How would the students feel about code alternation by their peers and the instructors in the classroom?
3. To what extent do students also use different languages in social contexts, not only to correct language failures, because of identity, humour, self-expression, etc.

1.5 Significance of Study

The implications of the present study have a doubly-fold meaning to pedagogical policy, curriculum formulation and professional practice in the higher education sector in Pakistan. The findings provide empirical evidence to the policymakers by demonstrating the dismal gap between the monolingual institutional language policies and the multilingual realities of real classrooms and informing them of the necessity of contextually based and strategically oriented multilingual policies instead of generalized and ambiguous guidelines (Tahir et al., 2016). To provide teacher training and professional development, the research indicates the difficulties of instruction as faculty members have reported, namely, the necessity to provide structured instruction a way as to how to use code alternation to advantage the learners, a change toward more spontaneous L1 use to planned scaffolding behaviors guided by the principles of mediated learning proposed by Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1980). Academically, the study will have an impact on sociolinguistic literature as it will provide the detailed attitudinal analysis of South Punjab, which is under-represented in such studies and has a distinct representation of the linguistic interactions of English, Urdu, and Saraiki (Yousaf, 2004), and provides the needs of disciplinary bilinguals students that value the material mastery over the language acquisition model, thus contributing to the knowledge of L1 functions in the paradigm of traditional

language acquisition (Rukh, 2014). To students, the research confirms their linguistic experiences and proves that code-switching regularly serves significant sociolinguistic roles of expressing cultural identity and establishing rapport, which is not merely the compensation of linguistic limitations (Tahir et al., 2016).

1.6 Rationale

eacher and student views can be important and systematic studies are required since perceptions define a matter of practical acceptability and educational efficacy of code alternation (Tahir et al., 2016). Past studies in the same Pakistani academic environments indicate an overall attitudinal divide: students are much more accepting and open to L1 integration than instructors, yet the latter tend to voice ideological opposition even though they frequently practice it themselves (Tahir et al., 2016). This research is justified in order to measure and explain this gap in attitude in the specific socio linguistic framework of South Punjab by use of questionnaire items which are specifically developed to investigate in-depth functions of the use of L1.

More importantly, the research does not ignore the fact that language mixing can have a much greater number of uses beyond remedying the deficit in understanding. The questions in the student questionnaire which explore cultural identity, humor and self-presentation indicate that code alternation is not just a compensatory mechanism of linguistic incompetence (the deficit view). Rather, sociolinguistic functionalities, including the need to add humor (69 percent agreement) or the need to identify with cultural connection (63 percent agreement) have high levels of endorsement and tend to override the drive of pure linguistic incompetence (51 percent agreement) (Tahir et al., 2016). This implies that code alternation is a significant linguistic tool that university students must have when negotiating their identities, creating a solidarity in the classroom and improving the affectivity. Thus, the analysis should be able to take into consideration a multi-faceted theoretical approach explaining such strong sociolinguistic and pragmatic functions and leave a fixed L2 acquisition paradigm.

2. Literature Review

The modern-day classroom research continuously places the first language (L1) as an essential pedagogical or communicational tool but not a barrier to English acquisition. It is agreed by scholars that the L1 has obligatory instructional roles like translation of complex ideas, elucidation of complex ideas and facilitation of smoother interaction between the teachers and learners particularly in multilingual environments (Turnbull and Dailey-O Cain, 2009; Cook, 2001). When teachers are faced with conceptually ambiguous, often cognitively challenging material, the code-switching to the L1 is often perceived as a pedagogical decision needed to stop the disintegration of understanding and to be able to provide correct academic content. Conceptual clarification in this respect becomes one of the most important instructional roles of code alternation. It has also been established that the teachers tend to alternate between codes when the students are found to be perplexed or less responsive, which implies that L1 is applied as a scaffold that is quick fix to address the situation especially among students with low English proficiency (Ahmad and Jusoff, 2009; Macaro, 2014). This tendency is even more noticeable in grammar lessons or when a teacher teaches some complex linguistic forms as many students state that they prefer the balanced mix of English and L1 as it would make it easier to understand, memorize, and think over (Johansson, 2014; Kumar and Arenda, 2012). In contrast to considering such integration as a failure of L2 pedagogy, the present day scholarship understands the use of L1 as one of the planned cognitive resources that contribute to learning.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265

JOURNAL OF APPLIED

LINGUISTICS AND

TESOL

JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL (JALT)
Vol.8.No.4 2025

Cognitively, the application of L1 in the learning of L2 brings more profound thinking. Lin (2013) states that when learners are exposed to information presented in both languages, they need to balance and restructure the meanings in the language systems thus enhancing the conceptual cognition. Other studies on bilingual education have revealed similar results that show strategic L1 can complement metalinguistic awareness as well as vocabulary growth and long term memory (Swain and Lapkin, 2000; Cummins, 2007). Nevertheless, the literature also cautions on the risks of unregulated or excessive use of L1 that can decrease the exposure of learners to English, decrease cognitive pressure that is necessary to acquire L2, and decrease motivation to communicate in the target language (Cook, 2008; Littlewood and Yu, 2011). Therefore, researchers suggest moderate, reasonable application of L1 one that helps learners to be understood without negatively affecting the continued use of L2. Good pedagogy is in striking a balance in the use of L1 so that it does not supplant target-language contact.

In addition to being used as an instructional tool, code alternation presupposes important sociolinguistic, interpersonal and affective roles. Several researches have shown that code-switching is an indication of those who are engaged in the communication, the context of the interaction and the emotional content of the communication (Hamers and Blanc, 2000, as cited in Tahir et al., 2016). The usage of L1 in language mixture societies like Pakistan, serves symbolic purposes as it is often used as a sign of cultural orientation, unity, and identity expression (Bullock and Toribio, 2009; Canagararaj, 1995). Empirical evidence shows that a large number of students use their L1 language to convey cultural affiliation and this proves that the use of native language is strongly emotion-linked and symbolic in nature (Zentella, 1997). On the same note, code alternation is widely applied to negotiate social status and handle perceptions, and many students are switching to Urdu to present themselves as learned or explain a discovery that makes it difficult to assume that code-switching is entirely based on language incompetence (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Myers-Scotton, 1993). Classroom affect L1 facilitates rapport development and barrier communication and provides humor, and teachers and students are aware of the fact that humor often does not translate in the L2 (Ferguson, 2009). The accent that these affective and relational dimensions make is that code-switching is the key to a supportive and socially cohesive learning environment.

Pragmatically, code alternation is also an effective device of solving the linguistic gaps. When the students require filling a lexical or structural gap in English, they usually resort to their L1 in order to maintain the flow of communication especially in a hectic academic conversation (Song and Andrews, 2009). Nonetheless, the extent to which L1 is used is very different in academic fields. The studies indicate that the disciplinary bilinguals students who study the sciences, engineering, and commerce as their major subjects tend to use L1 more due to its caring attitude to acquire knowledge of the content of problems, not the language, as their main academic objective (Probyn, 2009; Moore, 2013). Conversely, students whose majors relate to English or linguistics tend to oppose code-switching, as they want to be exposed as much as possible to the target language. The positive orientation to the use of L1 as a whole in BZU sample because students of various departments make part of it and, therefore, the numbers of content oriented learners who should use L1 to have effective access to disciplinary concepts are numerous.

Another theme evident in the literature is the apparent lack of connection between the student and teacher attitude towards code alternation in Pakistani universities. The attitude of students is usually flexible and supportive, and they would like L1/L2 mixes in description of concepts, as well as teaching grammar and in informal academic speech. As an illustration, researchers find out that 68% of students believe that when teachers use code switching, learning is simplified (Tahir et al., 2016; Shamim, 2011). However, teachers tend to explain ideological

opposition based on policies of monolanguage and the ideals of communicative language teaching (CLT), which are traditionally against using L1 (Coleman, 2010). Although these ideological stances, in practical use, teachers often move back to L1 in pedagogical need when students are having problems, and this creates an ideological practical tension between teachers. Their L1-based application is in a reactive and unplanned fashion, being effected by crisis management rather than a pedagogical plan. The fact that a research question is included that inquires of the teachers whether they should be trained to offer formal guidelines on how to code-switch because this would reflect the increased awareness among instructors that they need formulated, principled systems to integrate L1 in a meaningful, professional manner. The evolving academic field has come to agree that the use of L1 should cease to be an unsanctioned and incidental phenomenon, and instead be a planned, research-based aspect of teacher training (Macaro, 2009; Hornberger and Link, 2012). In this way, code alternation in the literature is theorized as a complex pedagogical, cognitive, sociolinguistic, and affective resource whose strategic application can have a considerable positive impact on the learning result in a multilingual higher education situation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Paradigm

This research is based on a mixed-method, descriptive, and concurrent design. The general methodology of the study is that the quantitative data will be collected through closed-ended questionnaires to derive the measure of the attitudes and practices of the students and teachers systematically. This will be accompanied by a qualitative element with one open-ended question about teachers, which will be aimed at obtaining more delicate philosophical opinions and justifications that will help frame the quantitative results. The descriptive part is designed to measure the occurrence and the distribution of certain attitudes, preferences and motivations towards code alternation in the BZU Multan environment.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Classroom code alternation analysis requires a well-grounded theoretical background that considers not only the cognitive ways of understanding how language is acquired but also takes into consideration the sociolinguistic side of language use. The present study is based on the Sociocultural Theory (SCT) of Vygotsky that is complemented by a Sociolinguistic Functional Framework.

The Sociocultural Theory (SCT) of Vygotsky:
- According to SCT, cognitive development is assumed to be essentially a social process, and this process is facilitated by cultural tools, the most prominent of them being language, in social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).
- Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): The fundamental principle here is the ZPD that establishes the gap between what a learner is capable of doing on her own, and what he or she can do under the supportive guidance of an even better informed peer or instructor (Vygotsky, 1980).
- Code Alternation as Scaffolding: In the ZPD, the strategic use of L1 (Urdu/Native Language) plays the role of scaffolding pedagogy. Scaffolding refers to a temporary and aided intervention that assists in closing the mental divide. In case of L2 understanding failures, the L1 provides the participants with the opportunity to overcome the language barrier and concentrate on the comprehension of the complicated academic material. The practice offers cognitive and affective medium, which lessens the anxiety and helps to transfer the knowledge to the L2 system more easily (Cummins, 2000). Because the same data shows that a significant majority of the experience of student was better when L1 was used (61% to 75% agreement) SCT is the key pedagogical reason why code alternation is

required to ensure effective learning in multilingual situations.

Sociolinguistic Functional Framework

Although the SCT deals with comprehension, the Sociolinguistic Functional Framework is necessary to explain non-pedagogic, social motives in the code alternation.

- Social and Affective Functions: This model recognizes that language alternation is applied to dealing with social variables, sustaining solidarity, defining cultural identity, realizing humorous effects, and bargaining self-presentation (Bullock and Toribio, 2009; Hamers and Blanc, 2000).
- Applicability to BZU: Since the student support of culture-related items (63%) and humor (69%) is high, this theoretical framework can be instrumental in the enthusiasm of making sure that the study can capture the entire socio-pragmatic reality of language use at the university level in South Punjab, where social accommodation and cultural orientation are key factors in communication.

3.3 Research Setting and Participants

- **Setting:** The research was carried out at the Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU), which is located at Multan, South Punjab, Pakistan.
- **Student Participants:** A total of 100 undergraduate students (N=100) were sampled; they were selected in other academic departments of BZU. Such a sampling method that includes students of different disciplines guarantees the representation of both special language learners and disciplinary bilinguals and gives a broader picture of the needs in L1 use among the entire university population.
- **Teacher Participants:** The members of the faculty who taught English-media courses at BZU were included in the study. This population also comprised of English Language and Literature teachers, as well as, possibly content-subject experts who use English as the instructional language.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments within this study will include questionnaires that will be administered to the study participants.

Two different questionnaire instruments were used to gather data mainly by adapting questions applied in earlier research studies. All the closed ended questions were to be answered on a three point Likert scale: Agree, Neutral, or Disagree, so that quantitative measurement of attitudes and preferences could be provided.

3.4.1 Student Questionnaire (n=100)

The student scale comprised 10 closed questions which were meant to represent the behavioral practices and attitudinal preferences in four functional areas, comprehension/scaffolding, linguistic gaps, sociolinguistic/affective goals and policy preference.

A close-ended questionnaire consisting of 10 Likert scale questions was used in the study to investigate the attitudes and practices of university students regarding code alternation in English classrooms. The items were concerned with various reasons to switch to another language and included enhancing the understanding, seeking support of a teacher or peers, expressing cultural identity, providing humor, coping with the lack of English proficiency, and covering the vocabulary gap. The students also rated their preference of English-only policies and how they thought L1 would be useful in learning, which was also measured in the questionnaire. The answers served the purpose of quantifying usage and motivation of students to use code alternation in different classroom scenarios.

3.4.2 Teacher Questionnaire

The teacher tool was designed in a way that it could elicit pedagogical assumptions and effectiveness in five closed questions followed by an open question to elicit elaborate

qualitative information of the fundamental philosophies of instructors towards L1 integration. It involved a teacher-oriented questionnaire comprising of five close-ended questions and a single open question. Close ended items were based on an Agree/Neutral/Disagree scale to test the beliefs of the teachers concerning the role of code-switching in English classrooms, effects of using code-switching on conceptual clarity and understandings, exposure to English and necessity of code-switching in multilingual classes. It also examined the perception of the teachers on whether code-switching was to be taught in teacher training programs. The open-ended question was able to give more comprehensive views of the teachers about the use of Urdu or other native languages in English language teaching. This questionnaire was useful to obtain quantifiable and descriptive information about attitudes of teachers and their pedagogical rationale of code alternation.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

The responses (quantitative data) obtained on closed-ended questions (Student Items 1-10 and Teacher Items 1-5) will be analyzed by the descriptive statistics. In this analysis, frequency distributions and percentages will be calculated in order to chart the central tendencies and variability of both student preferences and teacher beliefs in the utility, necessity and suitability of code alternation. This statistic method is critical in the measurement of the attitude disparity that is observed between the two groups of participants.

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data should be analyzed using a rigorous thematic analysis technique on the rich text data obtained as a result of the one open-ended question posed to the teachers. This process entails the systematic reading, coding and classifying recurrent perspectives, justifications and philosophical positions conveyed by the instructors. Thematic categories will involve: the inconsistency between practical need and ideological resistance, the effects of situational factors (e.g., student competence, academic discipline), affective processes (e.g., rapport-building), and future policy and professional training implications. It is a qualitative aspect that must be present to give the quantitative results depth, context, and explanatory strength, specifically with regard to the internal struggles that the teachers have between the institutional demands and the pedagogical reality.

4. Data Analysis

This section gives the empirical evidence collected by the use of closed ended questionnaires to BZU Multan (100 students and 10 teachers) and the thematic analysis of the open ended question responses as related to the role of L1 (Urdu/Native Language) in English Language Teaching (ELT).

4.1 Student Attitudes and Preferences for Code Alternation

The quantitative data (N=100) indicates that there is a massive and coherent student support of inclusion of the first language (L1) Urdu/Native Language into the English learning classroom as both pedagogical and critical sociolinguistic roles. The results are given below according to the functional domains that the questionnaire items explored.

Table 4.1: Student Attitudes Towards Code Alternation (N=100)

Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neutral %
Asking a friend in Urdu to understand English terms	70	15	15

better understanding in Urdu in class	82	4	14
Strict Use of English in Class	64	26	10
better Understanding with Code Switching (English, Urdu)	94	0	6
L2 learning is hard without L1.	84	10	6
Switching to Urdu due to limited English vocabulary	80	16	4
Expressing my cultural identity in Urdu.	79	14	7
Use of Urdu to add humor and make speech engaging.	85	9	6
Switching to Urdu for missing English words.	92	6	2
Switching to English to appear educated.	64	20	16

Pedagogical Utility and Scaffolding (Items 2, 4, 5)
There was almost a unanimous agreement by the students on the use of L1 as a pedagogical tool revealed by the fact that the students perceive it to be effective in helping them to acquire understanding and learn without difficulties.
Stunningly, a 94 percent of the students answered with a yes to the statement that they find learning easier when my teacher alternates between English and Urdu/native language to explain the ideas (Item 4). This massive agreement is the best indicator in the whole survey that sets code alternation not only as a taste but the perceived best way to conceptual mastery in the multilingual context of BZU.
In line with this observation, 82 percent assented to the statement stating that their understanding was better when their instructor used Urdu/native language when teaching English lessons (Item 2). This observation directly confirms the theoretical application of L1 as a cognitive scaffolding aid especially to the disciplinary bilinguals who do not understand language fluency but content comprehension (Vygotsky, 1980).
Moreover, according to 84 percent of students, they had a metacognitive conviction that it is not easy to learn a second language without sometimes switching to the first language (L1) (Item 5). This implies that the students perceive L1 integration to be a systemic prerequisite of L2 learning where the strict monolingual ideology commonly enforced in ELT is refuted (Tahir, 2016).

Linguistic Gaps and Deficiency (Items 6, 9)
Students were quick to admit that they used L1 as compensating mechanism in case of L2 capacity failure although, the need to fill lexical gaps was highlighted more than the mere sense of deficiency in general.

Very high of 92% also stated that they switch to Urdu/native language when they cannot find the right words to use in English to convey their thoughts (Item 9). This brings out the significant pragmatic role of the L1 in keeping the flow of the conversation and continuity of the message, which is known to be played by a code-switching process in the event that the linguistic resources are limited (Song and Andrews, 2009).

Large 80 percent said that they switch because they think that my English proficiency is minimal (Item 6). This confirms the deficit perspective of the code alternation and it reveals that although the students have a perception of the usefulness of L1 through a complex social motivation, they also have a strong awareness of their deficiencies in L2 production which compels them to revert to the Urdu/L1.

Sociolinguistic and Affective Functions (Items 7, 8, 10)

More importantly, the student responses revealed that their code alternation drive is much more than the compensatory learning experience as it involves deep social, cultural, and psychological levels.

The second largest percentage of agreement (85) was obtained regarding the L1 use to add humor or make my speech more interesting (Item 8). This result is critical, demonstrating that L1 is a strong affective tool that instantly creates rapport, decreases anxiety and creates a free and easy working environment in the classroom. This is in line with Sociolinguistic Functional Framework which acknowledges the role of L1 in the regulation of the emotional and social environment (Hamers and Blanc, 2000).

There was a great majority (79%), who said they use L1 to communicate a sense of affiliation to Pakistani culture (Item 7). This highlights the symbolic strength of the L1, and it is used not as a loss in the learning of L2 but as an intentional and affirmative statement of identity and cultural allegiance (Bullock and Toribio, 2009).

Funny enough 64 percent confirmed that they change to appear as an educated individual (Item 10). This multifaceted sociolinguistic role implies that, among a large minority, L1 use is a symbol of linguistic ability and social status, which has the capacity to control the perception among their equals and educators.

Preference and Policy Conflict (Item 3)

The student information demonstrated a delicate conflict between the desired and the actual state of their preferences. A massive majority of them (Items 2, 4) supported the practical advantages of using L1, but there was also parallel support of the policy ideal by 64 percent of them that they prefer to have the instructor promote them to speak only English (Item 3). This ironical outcome underscores the fact that students are cognizant of the fact that the official language policy demands L2 immersion to develop fluency, which is an aspirational objective. Nonetheless, their high agreement rate (80%-94% in all their other questions) in terms of comprehending, finding it easy to learn, and finding it useful in social interactions attests to the fact that their immediate linguistic actions are based on the pragmatic requirement as opposed to the aspirational policy. The L1 is considerably preferred when it comes to a challenging concept or even a social goal.

4.2 Teacher Pedagogical Beliefs

The close-ended questions of the teacher suggest high level of agreement with the pedagogic utility and the need of code alternation especially in the BZU setting, even though there is an overall ideal of L2 immersion.

Table 4.2: Teacher Attitudes Towards Code Alternation (N=10)

Closed Ended Question	Agree %	Disagree %	Neutral %
Code-switching helps students understand English better.	100	0	0
Using L1 improves English comprehension.	80	10	10
Too much code-switching limits English exposure.	50	20	30
Code-switching is necessary in multilingual classrooms.	80	0	20
Teacher training should cover code-switching.	100	0	0

Interestingly, 100% of the teachers confirmed that code-switching assists students to grasp tricky English concepts and 100% also opined that teacher training programs should also have formal instructions on code-switching. This points to a general understanding of the importance of L1 as a strategic pedagogical tool, and a need to have the practice institutionalized. Moreover, the consensus on the need to use code-switching in multilingual classrooms was 80% and the perceived minus side of using L1 as evidence of better comprehension was obtained (Tahir, 2016; Cook, 2008).

4.3 Qualitative Views on the Role of Urdu/Native Language (Open-Ended Analysis)
The feedback of the teachers on the single open-ended question of What are your personal views on the role of Urdu/Native language in English language teaching? gave comprehensive critical philosophical, contextual, and pragmatic reasons as to why L1 should be integrated, rather than the mere affirmation of its utility which is frequently quantitative. The thematic analysis of the responses obtained when talking to the 10 instructors showed that the necessity of the code alternation is caused by the challenges of the region and the professional requirement of the strategic control.

The Ideas as Understood with the First Language
The teachers always stressed that the L1 is not simply useful, but crucial in the access to high-level concepts and ideas. It is not just a mere vocabulary translation but is a need that touches on the essence of transfer of academic content. The answers to the questions revealed that the native language has a significant role to play in comprehending the intricate lessons in foreign languages, and the use of L1 is crucial to clarify concepts and ideas that otherwise cannot be understood by students in the English language. This perspective relegates the L1 as a pedagogical scaffold that cannot be ignored and this is well grounded in the Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky who affirms the fact that L1 facilitates content learning that would be otherwise stifled by the L2 linguistic barrier (Vygotsky, 1980). Moreover, a single teacher has extended the usefulness of L1, observing that there is a necessity of Code-Switching which has a very crucial role in the teaching of other courses and discipline, and the cross-disciplinary importance of Code-Switching in the university level.

Contextual Unavoidability: The South Punjab Challenge
One of the themes was the L1 regional and contextual inevitability. Teachers were highly

associated with the practice of code alternation to be associated with the particular difficulties of the students in South Punjab. The region was also many times termed as an education deprived zone where students come to the university with weaker basic English. To make this even more complicated, teachers have observed that students are typically not fluent in English in listening specially, therefore, L2-only delivery is not effective. That being the case with this general lack of proficiency and the variety of levels of students available, it was considered by teachers that the use of L1 is inevitable in achieving a success in communication and understanding among the students within the entire spectrum of the classroom.

Cultural Warfare and the Strategic Control Requirement

In promoting the use of L1, the teachers were aware of the ideological pressure to ensure L2 immersion. This struggle was mirrored in the fact that there were high demands of structure and professionalism of the practice. They underlined that there was a need to have a balance, which implied against over-dependence on L1 at the expense of L2 exposure (as detected in closed-ended Item 3, Table 4.2). This solution was strategic control, and the teachers insisted that code-alternating should be well in advance, but it was rather essential that the teacher knows how often and when to use native tongue in the classroom, that code-alternation is a complicated skill and it should be under the mastery of a professional, rather than an intuitive reaction.

The broader Benefits of L1 in Learning

The qualitative perceptions went further to include the L1 as beyond mere comprehension correction. The teacher noted that the L1 integration has a positive impact on student-teacher relationship and classroom learning environment. One teacher observed that the attitude of students towards code-switching is quite positive and it allows students to comprehend the main ideas of their disciplines which means that L1 creates a favorable affective environment and prompts students to take part. In a deeper sense, there are teachers who stated that the usage of the native language could actually in some cases serve to aid students learn the English language, and hence this justifies the fact that the L1 is a facilitative tool to facilitate L2 acquisition in itself and thus totally breaks out of the deficit view and adopts multilingual perspective, wherein both languages are required in the teaching and learning process of the English language.

5. Conclusion

This exploration on classroom code alternation in Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) in Multan supports the necessity of the presence of L1 (Urdu/Native Language) use as a multifunctional tool in multilingual higher learning institutions. Breaking clearly out of the old deficit perspective, the results put code alternation not as an alternative to good pedagogy, but as an essential, interdependent tool of supporting cognitive scaffolding, social linguistic negotiation, and affective interaction.

This study offers very good empirical evidence in favor of the contribution of L1 in conceptual mastery, 94 percent of the students supported this idea by stating that code alternation directed by the teacher helps in clarifying the complex ideas. This confirms L1 as a Vygotskian scaffold, which is necessary to gain access to the academic material within the framework of the problematic ecology of the region and a variety of levels of proficiency. More importantly, student motivation is non-understandable: There is a great consensus that L1 usage has a significant sociolinguistic processing role, with majority of students displaying agreement that L1 is effective at creating rapport, bringing out humour (85%), and demonstrating cultural identity (79%). It validates the fact that code alternation is an advanced mechanism of controlling cognitive access and the social climate of the classroom.

There was a universal agreement (100% agreement) amongst the teachers that L1 integration

is necessary to achieve clarity of ideas. This professional consciousness is however accompanied by ideological conflict as far as retaining the L2 exposure (50% concern) is concerned, resulting in reactive, unthoughtful L1 usage. The result of this conflict is a single demand: 100% of teachers need formal instructions and professional growth to transform their L1 practice into unsanctioned intervention into a controlled and research-based strategy a step towards Principled Code Alternation.

This research indicates that there is a policy-practice gap in which the formal institutional requirement of L2-only instructions is not credible in the classroom fact. Policymakers need to shift this gap by abandoning the vaguity, monolingual prescriptions in favor of contextualized and strategically-packaged multilingual policies that legitimize the use of L1 as an academic equity policy. This will necessitate institutional punishment and the implementation of L1 instruction immediately in the teacher training programs. Although the study offers the strong attitudinal data, future studies should use fine-grained, observational techniques to elucidate the ideal frequency and time of L1 use that would optimally increase the level of comprehension without adversely hindering the development of L2.

References

1. THE INFLUENCE OF CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING ON LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF ROMBO DISTRICT J - CORE, accessed November 22, 2025, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/79425367.pdf
2. Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan Code Switching In Classroom Discourse: A Sociolinguistic Study - Neliti, accessed November 22, 2025, https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/298801-code-switching-in-classroom-discourse-a-92f36a38.pdf
3. Saraiki language - Wikipedia, accessed November 22, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saraiki_language
4. From the Historical Archive - Kurdish Studies, accessed November 22, 2025, https://kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/download/3652/2505/7025
5. Sociolinguistics: Study of Language in the Social Context - Journal of Research (Urdu), BZU, accessed November 22, 2025, https://jorurdu.bzu.edu.pk/website/journal/article/5e83ad7fa1e51/page#!
6. Sociolinguistics: Study of Language in the Social Context | DefinePK, accessed November 22, 2025, https://m.asianindexing.com/article.php?jid=81&id=101262
7. The ambivalent role of Urdu and English in multilingual Pakistan: a Bourdieusian study - NIH, accessed November 22, 2025, https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8939399/
8. Code-Switching: A Useful Foreign Language Teaching Tool in EFL Classrooms - ERIC, accessed November 22, 2025, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1179229.pdf
9. Building Educational Technologies for Code-Switching: Current Practices, Difficulties and Future Directions - MDPI, accessed November 22, 2025, https://www.mdpi.com/2226-471X/7/3/220
10. Classroom code-switching in post-colonial contexts: Functions, attitudes and policies, accessed November 22, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233491895_Classroom_code-switching_in_post-colonial_contexts_Functions_attitudes_and_policies
11. Students' Attitudes towards Teachers' Code-Mixing/Code-Switching to L1 and Its Influence on Their L2 Learning: A Case of Business Students in Sargodha - Semantic Scholar, accessed November 22, 2025,

https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Students%E2%80%99-Attitudes-towards-Teachers%E2%80%99-to-L1-and-Its-Rukh-Saleem/d1b56c04bb0ca11261e275d45eac20589ed046d3

12. The logical problem of scaffolding in second language acquisition, accessed November 22, 2025, https://d-nb.info/1175008664/34

13. Using L1 in L2 Classroom - Paradigm Academic Press, accessed November 22, 2025, https://www.paradigmpress.org/rae/article/download/357/311

14. Socio-cognitive Functions of L1 Collaborative Interaction in the L2 Classroom | The Canadian Modern Language Review - University of Toronto Press, accessed November 22, 2025, https://utppublishing.com/doi/10.3138/cmlr.54.3.314

15. CODE-SWITCHING AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL FOR SCAFFOLDING IN ESL CLASSROOMS - Journal of English Language and Literature[JOELL], accessed November 22, 2025, https://www.joell.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/1-5-CODE-SWITCHING-AS-A-PEDAGOGICAL-TOOL-FOR-SCAFFOLDING-.pdf