EXPLORING CODE-SWITCHING PRACTICES AMONG URDU–ENGLISH BILINGUAL SPEAKERS IN PAKISTAN

Muhammad Idrees
Department of English Linguistics, Foundation University, Rawalpindi Campus
idreeskh0071@gmail.com
Anum Razzaq
Department of English Linguistics, Foundation University, Rawalpindi Campus
anumrazzaq1990@gmail.com
Sana khan
Department of English Linguistics, Foundation University, Rawalpindi Campus
sanaizaz1234@gmail.com

Abstract
This study examines the social and emotional motivations underlying code-switching in everyday bilingual interactions in Pakistan. It aims to investigate why bilingual speakers alternate between languages in daily life and how such practices reflect identity construction, emotional expression, politeness, humor, and social relationships. The study challenges the perception of code-switching as a linguistic deficiency and instead frames it as a purposeful and meaningful communicative practice. A qualitative descriptive research design was adopted to explore natural language behavior. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews from 15 bilingual young adults aged 18–35 who regularly use Urdu and English in informal, educational, and professional settings. The data were analyzed thematically, drawing on the theoretical framework of situational and metaphorical code-switching to interpret social and emotional language choices. The findings reveal that code-switching is strategically employed to manage context, express emotions, negotiate identity, maintain politeness, build social bonds, and regulate power relations. Urdu was commonly associated with emotional intimacy and cultural affiliation, while English was linked to professionalism, authority, and formality. These findings contribute to sociolinguistic theory by reinforcing the view of bilingual language use as dynamic and context-sensitive.

Keywords: Code-switching, Bilingualism, Situational Code-switching, Metaphorical Code-switching

1. Introduction and Problem Statement

In multilingual societies like Pakistan, language serves not only the purpose of communication but also identity, relationship negotiation, and social control. Pakistan's linguistic situation provides an invaluable context for interaction and communication. At the same time, many interlocutors shift between three to four codes (languages), depending on the context (situation), the audience, and the purpose. Such behaviour, termed codeswitching, is common in the everyday speech of many people and is often misinterpreted as a linguistic deficiency, poverty, or inadequate language. Such a phenomenon is quite common, but there has not been enough scholarly work in Pakistan on how bilinguals use code switching in conversational (informal or non-official) discourse (Gumperz, 1982).

Language-related research has also examined the structural organization of narratives (Zubair et al., 2025a, 2025b). Prior studies have examined the role of different contexts, such as classrooms, media, and official environments, but have missed the portion of the understanding that pertains to the creative use of language in everyday conversations. The main gap lies in understanding the social and emotional frameworks of spontaneous code-switching. Many previous studies have focused on the grammar and set structures of code-switching and have completely ignored what the speaker allocates as the social value, cultural identity, and purpose that the act of code-switching serves. The purpose of this study is to understand the phenomenon of code-switching in everyday contexts and the reasons behind it among bilinguals. The study analyzes the functions of code-switching and how it allows

speakers to express themselves, manipulate social structures, and relate with them more flexibly and functionally.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What social and emotional motivations lead bilingual speakers to switch languages in daily life?
2. How do context, relationships, and social settings influence bilingual language choice?
3. In what ways does code-switching reflect identity, humor, politeness, emotional expression, or social belonging?

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To identify the situational and metaphorical reasons for code-switching in everyday bilingual interactions.

2. To explore how code-switching conveys identity, emotion, humor, and social solidarity.

3. To contribute to a broader sociolinguistic understanding of natural bilingual practices in Pakistan.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The research is of great importance for interpreting bilingual communication in the multilingual society of Pakistan. First, it fills a significant research gap by examining informal bilingualism, a topic about which little academic research has been available, although it is a key component of everyday communication. Second, it offers preliminary academic information on the operation of bilingual practices in natural and everyday contexts, as opposed to controlled or formal contexts. Third, the research paper emphasizes the creative and intentional language innovativeness that people engage in when negotiating multilingual communication. Fourth, it refutes the prevalent stigma that code-switching is an indicator of language incompetence or improper language use. Rather, this paper shows that language-switching is a typical, complex, and valuable behaviour that can have significant social and communicative functions.

Moreover, the study broadens the knowledge on how multilingualism can aid identity formation and self-expression, and how it affects personal and social identities. It also shows how bilingual speakers employ language strategically to control relationships, social roles, and interpersonal dynamics. Moreover, the paper demonstrates the role of language mixing in the regulation of emotions, and all speakers are able to reveal their feelings more descriptively and adapt to various situations. It also reveals the social flexibility of multilingualism, whereby individuals adapt flexibly to various social situations.

2. Literature Review

Investigations of language contact phenomena between 2005 and 2025 indicate a clear shift away from traditional structuralist conceptualizations of Code-Switching toward more dynamic, sociocognitive conceptualizations of multilingual practice. Previous literature has typically described Code-Switching (CS) as the use of two different language systems, which follow grammatical rules or conversational patterns. In the past twenty years, though, researchers have been paying more attention to the fact that multilingual speakers do not work within the strict boundaries of the languages. Rather, they rely on an amalgamated repertoire of language to create meaning and identity, and to engage in various social situations (García & Wei, 2013).

Classical models of the system considered CS a rational decision-making process in which speakers exchange social roles, rights, and obligations. Conversational strategies focused on the ways in which changes in codes serve as contextual messages that determine the direction and meaning of communication. Even though these models made a great contribution to the understanding of the social and sequential relationships of CS, they led to the assumption that

languages are separate and bounded systems. One significant change in the sphere was the emergence of the Translanguaging point of view. This comes as an objection to the notion of multilinguals alternating between autonomous languages. Rather, it claims that speakers will choose features that belong to one common linguistic repertoire based on the communicative needs at that particular time. This change positioned Code-Switching as a flexible, agentive practice rather than an alternation system-bound. The accent shifted to the limitations on switching to the capabilities of meaning-making, innovation, and positioning (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

One of the most evident themes in the current research is identity construction. The researchers demonstrate that CS and translanguaging enable speakers to build hybrid identities that cannot be categorized within conventional cultural or linguistic units. These behaviours enable people to perform various parts of the self, or to identify with a group or misidentify with a particular identity. In communities of practice, multilingual conduct commonly serves as a boundary marker, indicating belonging, non-belonging, solidarity, and opposition. In youth culture, such as the playful approach to language use, this serves to disrupt mainstream cultures and their standards in order to establish other forms of identity (Auer, 2004).

The practical and functional aspects of CS have also increased. The studies indicate that it is involved in the expression of feelings, the regulation of humor, the reinforcement of social ties, and the improvement of interpersonal relationships.

These findings illuminate that multilingual practices are not only structural phenomena but also effective communicative resources that characterize social relationships. The other momentous shift in the literature is the contribution of globalization and online communication. In the internet realm, multilingual users integrate language resources to act as networked subjects, which, at the same time, presents them to the global and the local worlds. The digital versions of CS have become an important mode of marking belonging, bargaining on cultural belonging, and discovering their place in transnational relationships. This school of thought holds that language practices are not merely an expression of social boundaries but also bring them about and reproduce them (Wei & Liu, 2020). Language is not only a way of communicating information but also a resource for strategic social types, as speakers address interpersonal needs in various contexts (Zubair et al., 2025).

The change has massive pedagogical implications. The monolingualism of past educational systems is increasingly being criticized by researchers who propose instructional techniques that would support learners' full linguistic repertoires. The application of trans-language in the classroom is shown to have a positive influence on cognitive engagement, power dynamics, and overall learning, as it allows students to use all the linguistic tools they have. To conclude, the recent sources demonstrate that both Code-Switching and Translanguaging are key mechanisms of multilingual communication. They are not only deviations or exceptions to standard language norms but also intentional, socially significant practices that help speakers find their way through the world in all its complexity and globalization (Gosselin & Sabourin, 2023). Although code-switching has been widely studied, there is limited qualitative research that explores the lived experiences and motivations of Urdu–English bilingual speakers in the Pakistani context.

3.1 Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative descriptive research methods. This is the most appropriate methodology for examining the natural language practices and lived experiences of the language pair. This methodology allowed the researchers to gain insights on how individuals utilize code-switching and the touch points of sociocultural and emotional aspects of their language decisions. The hallmark of qualitative description is to allow

participants to share their voices without excessive theoretical or complex interpretations. This is the most appropriate method for studying natural speech behaviour.

The participants of this study include bilingual adults who speak two languages: Urdu and English. The target audience is the metropolitan youth aged 18-35 years, since they are more likely to exhibit high levels of variable and fluid patterns of language use. This age group has greater opportunities afforded by a diverse community, education, and technology. Data were collected from 15 participants using convenience sampling. This is the most fitting method to use since it is easy to gain access to individuals in social, work, and informal network code-switching clusters.

Data is collected from participants through semi-structured interviews. This allowed participants to articulate their experience with ease while still giving the researcher the latitude to pursue various topics related to the research.

3.1 Theoretical framework

The current study is based on the theory of situational and metaphorical code-switching that explains the social motivation behind the language alternation of bilingual speakers.

3.1.1 Situational code-switching

Situational code-switching describes the phenomenon of code-switching that occurs due to variation in the social and physical context. These can be changes in the interlocutors, subject of discourse, context, formality level, or roles in the conversation. For instance, a speaker can be in a work context and talk in English, and then switch to Urdu while talking to a family member, or they may switch languages if the conversation is about a particular subject that is technical and requires specific jargon. In these instances, the code-switching is contextually relevant without social implications.

3.1.2 Metaphorical code-switching

Metaphorical code-switching is characterized by having the same context while changing languages due to various relationships the speaker may want to express. The switch may be done to show politeness, add humor, stress, soften criticism, strengthen relationships, or indicate a contemporary style. The shift works socially to shape the context and meaning of the discourse. This theoretical framework aids in systematizing and dissecting the reasons for the phenomena of code-switching or language switching. This framework offers a means of appreciating the intersection of situation, identity, and sociability with regard to the phenomenon of bilingual communication (Zhu, 2022).

3.2 Data Analysis / Tools

The qualitative descriptive approach was used in collecting data in this study, where the primary method of gathering data was the semi-structured interviews to examine the practices of natural language by these bilingual young adults. A 10-15-minute interview was conducted with the participants, where they were asked to explain their daily communication habits, language alternation contexts, and the social or emotional reasons that triggered the code-switch. The interview guide is divided into four parts:

(1) General information about the languages that the participants use in everyday life.

(2) Instances and situations, when the participants change languages

(3) Social, psychological, and emotional reasons why this shift occurs.

(4) The reflective questions about identity, self-expression, and communicative comfort.

The participants were asked to provide personal accounts of recent real-life scenarios in which code-switching occurred, whether in a conversation with a friend, family member, colleague, or an online interaction. At the explicitly agreed-upon option, additional data, such as a short audio recording of daily conversations or WhatsApp messages, were obtained to demonstrate more realistic switching patterns. This helped capture situational (context-based) and metaphorical (social-meaning-based) switches.

Each interview was recorded, audio-taped, and transcribed anonymously. The data collection process involved collecting rich, detailed accounts that accurately reflect bilingual speakers' use of language to negotiate identity, emotion, humor, politeness, and social belonging in everyday communication.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Theme 1: Situational Code-Switching Based on Context and Topic

In these fifteen interviews, there is a consistent pattern in which the participants characterize code-switching as a situational adaptive phenomenon based on where the communication is taking place, what topic is being discussed, and what role they are playing at that instance. English was spoken in institutional and task-oriented talk (the discourse in universities, meetings, and technical talks, and writing professional texts). On the other hand, Urdu was the language of informality, domestic life, and relational proximity. This tendency aligns with situational code-switching, in which the speaker changes language according to the social situation.

There is a significant contextual divide in how students contextualize their language use at home and at school. One university student explicitly stated that, "I mostly use Urdu and English in my daily life. At home, Urdu is dominant, but with friends and at university, English comes in naturally." A second undergraduate was more direct regarding the same domain-based distribution: "at home, I speak Urdu; at university, I speak English." This suggests that the educational environment is perceived as one in which English is not only spoken but also expected, and in which speakers see English as a suitable linguistic code through which they can achieve their academic career.

Another theme outlined by the participants is the influence of the topic on language choice, even within the same speaker and in a similar situation. Future and intellectual issues were kept related to the English language. One of the respondents explained how she switches to English when discussing serious matters: "I usually change to English when I speak about academic things, or very important things, such as assignments or future plans." Similarly, an English student also reported that English comes in with particular talk, such as aspirational or career-related: "When we talk about business or the future, English comes in." This indicates that the English language is not only associated with the educational environment but also associated with subject matter related to education, professional life, and personal development, topics that subjects frame as requiring greater formality or seriousness.

Professional settings enhanced this situational pattern. Some respondents mentioned that English is the default code of communication in formal workplace interactions, particularly in meetings or technical discourse. A software developer stated that even when Urdu is mutually intelligible, English is still the preferred choice, even though it is not mandatory: "At work, English is the default language, especially for meetings and technical discussions. Even when everyone understands Urdu, English feels more appropriate in professional settings." Likewise, a corporate manager clearly associated English with work legitimacy and competence: "English is what is required at work. It is an indicator of power and ability." These narratives illustrate the ability of English to be used as a professional standard, which indicates an approach level of seriousness, professionalism, and conformity to the organisational expectations.

Code-switching is particularly situational and becomes most evident when speakers explain micro-shifts within the same environment, such as the workplace. participants identified the formal and informal work talk and interaction among coworkers. Code switching occurs during breaks, the same software developer remarked: "When I speak to colleagues in an informal manner, particularly during the break, we switch to Urdu. This makes the setting friendly." In this case, the physical setting (workplace) remains unchanged, yet the

interactional situation shifts from formal task-based communication to casual social bonding. That shift is accompanied by language alternation, which suggests that situational code-switching is influenced not only by place but also by activity type, participation framework, and interpersonal goals.

The educational hierarchies had also reported similar adjustments of roles in languages. An example of an undergraduate who used English when addressing teachers as a sign of respect: "When I address teachers, I attempt to use English because it feels respectful." This means that English is used as a code of respect, whereas Urdu is used as the default when it comes to home life and personal communication. In this manner, language selection is turned into a means of conforming to the norms: student-teacher communication is framed as a situation in which English must be used, and peer and family communication allows the use of Urdu or mixed language.

another situational pattern was connected with professional spheres where the channel of communication (or spoken or written) was a concern. One of the journalists gave an explanation of language choice depending on the communicative activity: "Interviews are conducted in Urdu, yet writing drafts is more comfortable in English." This implies that situational code-switching cannot be confined to social settings alone but also applies in communicative modalities. Spoken interviewing is related to Urdu (due to its attentiveness to local communication rules and relationship comfort). On the other hand, English supports structured drafting and professional writing. The participant's framing implies that language choice is shaped by what each code affords in a specific professional task.

Situational switching also existed in teaching situations as a result of communicative requirements and the needs of the audience. One of the schoolteachers underlined that English is expected institutionally, but Urdu is required to reach understanding: "In the classroom, it is necessary to use English, but sometimes students understand better when I switch to Urdu." It means that code-switching is an instructional strategy and is employed in a specific situation.

Lastly, the community-based work environment pointed towards situational switching as a standard need of addressing diverse audiences. A worker of an NGO has commented, "When I work with various communities, I can change languages every minute." In this case, the environment is determined by the diversity of people and the need to build relationships. It indicates that the switch is not a one-time activity but rather a daily process, and it reflects the multilingual societal setting in which one must adapt to varying interlocutors and societal demands to communicate effectively.

4.2 Theme 2: Metaphorical Code-Switching for Emotional Expression

One of the most noticeable and frequent trends that comes through in all the data collected in the interview is the use of code-switching to express, control, and even manage emotions. The selection of language in such cases is not dictated by the change in the physical location, subject matter, or the personality of a conversation partner, but by the inner emotional choice of the speaker. This form of language switching is similar to metaphorical code switching, in which the meanings of the languages are symbolic and emotional. It is rather selected and inserted to add emotional overture. Throughout the interviews, the participants argued that they switched to Urdu for the warmth, emotional depth, closeness, and genuineness, but English was perceived as emotion-deprived, closed, or analytical.

Some of the participants particularly acknowledged that the occurrence of intense emotion is what made an automatic switch to Urdu. One student in the university describes it as follows: "When I am angry or very happy, I just automatically change to Urdu since I believe that it is more vocal." The word automatically implies that emotional intensity instinctively triggers

the choice of language rather than a conscious choice. In this case, Urdu is chosen to allow the release of emotions more powerfully, especially when emotions are intense.

This feeling in the languages was depicted by the participants with varied work and learning experiences. One of the marketing professionals noted a gap in emotions between the two languages, suggesting that "English feels in control and Urdu feels real." This sentence gives English the status of a language that enables people to restrain their feelings and emotions, and Urdu the status of a language that enables people to have pure, unfiltered emotions. The recurrence of the adjective real in the interviews suggests that speakers tend to believe that Urdu better corresponds to their internal emotional lives.

Another reason that became central to the motivation of the metaphorical code-switching was emotional regulation. Urdu was found to be a language of emotional release, whereas English was regularly used to say that it gives a sense of calmness at a time when one is feeling nervous or anxious. This dual role was described in a clear way by one of the first-year university students: "In case I feel nervous, I speak more English as I feel calm. However, when I feel emotional, I speak Urdu." This account suggests that bilingual speakers strategically or instinctively draw on the emotional affordances of each language, using English to maintain control and Urdu to express vulnerability. Code-switching thus functions as a psychological tool for managing emotional states.

Another trigger to emotional language patterns was found to be frustration and stress. A school teacher explained the way she feels. "When I am frustrated, Urdu just comes out naturally. It helps release emotions." The phrase "natural" emphasizes the unconsciousness of metaphorical code-switching. Urdu seems to serve as a release valve when emotionally stirred. In such circumstances, it is Urdu that is the language in which a speaker can express feelings that might otherwise feel bottled up or repressed in English.

Emotional safety and comfort also influenced the decisions made on the language to use during sensitive conversations. A few of the interviewees also mentioned that they feel at ease expressing personal emotions and feelings in Urdu. The difference was explained by a psychology student, who said, "When speaking of feelings, Urdu is safer. English feels analytical." This means that English is considered to be far more intellectual, but Urdu gives one a feeling of emotional protection in terms of self-disclosure. The fact that the Urdu language is preferred in these cases means that bilingual people do not base their perception solely on communicative effectiveness, but also on the language's ability to make them susceptible to their feelings.

Even in work and social life, there was metaphorical code-switching to express emotions. The emotional and ethical aspects of language use were pointed out by an NGO worker, who was asked about linguistic selection when engaging with individuals whose experiences were personal: "Urdu sounds more respectful when people have their story to share." In this situation, Urdu is linked not only to emotional sensitivity but also to respect and empathy to support its status as a cultural and emotional code of intimate or vulnerable interactions.

Similar patterns of emotional language were also reported among the participants who work in high-tech fields. One of the engineers justified that English is used in technical discourse, and normally, Urdu is used when one wants to talk emotionally, "When joking or complaining, Urdu comes naturally." This reinforces the idea that bilingual speakers compartmentalize languages based on emotional function: English for rational, technical, or controlled discourse, and Urdu for expressing dissatisfaction, humor, or emotional release.

4.3 Theme 3: Code-Switching for Politeness, Humour, and Social Bonding

Another salient theme that comes out of the interview data is the practice of code-switching as a social means of controlling the process of interpersonal relationships, especially in aspects of politeness, humor, and building social relationships. Throughout the data sets,

participants also repeatedly gave examples of how they make a language shift not due to the context, but to influence the tone of socialisation, tone down messages, provide humour, or establish solidarity with others. Under such circumstances, code-switching can be taken as a relational and an interactive resource, where code-switching enables the speakers to manoeuvre through the social requirements and also to ensure that harmonious relations stay intact.

The most frequent social roles of code-switching were the displays of courtesy and non-threatening face behaviors. Some of the respondents explained that saying something in Urdu, or in a mixed utterance rather than English, made the statements sound milder or less obnoxious. One example a marketing professional gave of this strategy was: "Sorry yaar, thora delay ho gaya, sounds a lot softer than saying the same thing in full English." In this case, placing the Urdu word in an English apology makes it less formal and less emotional, turning what would have been a cold and impersonal statement into a warm and sincere one. This shows how bilingual speakers can leverage language resources to manage politeness and maintain good social relationships.

Similarly, code-switching is applicable in most situations where discourse or criticism needs to be softened, such as in a professional setting. One software developer gave the reason that English is the language associated with authority. On the contrary, Urdu assists in reducing the importance of negative remarks: "When I need to minimize the impact of negative commentary, I switch to Urdu. It feels less harsh." This creates an opportunity to maintain interpersonal rapport, as the requirement to provide feedback is not perceived as offensive, and the speakers are potentially professional and accommodating. It is by virtue of this that code-switching is a negotiating device in social affairs.

Humor was another important factor that led to language switching. According to the respondents, jokes, teasing, and playful interaction are effective when mixed languages are employed. Jokes, as one respondent suggested, are even more enjoyable when put in mixed codes; English and Urdu. Another undergraduate also shared a similar feeling, saying, "When we are with friends, we combine languages so that it sounds funny or dramatic." All these facts suggest that code-switching can improve comic timing and expressiveness, helping speakers control tone and register to create comic intent. The alternation of language creates a sense of contrast and surprise, adding humor to the mutual amusement.

The interaction via code switching was commonly explained by a natural, unmarked process that builds social connectivity. It has been noted that some participants and their friends have made unconscious changes in language. One of the undergraduate students commented: "In the company of friends, I just use a mixture of Urdu and English." We do not even notice it." The fact that language mixing is normalized to this extent indicates that it is an expression of in-group identification, which in turn indicates proximity, familiarity, and social identity. Another feature is the lack of self-monitoring, which also implies that code-switching is no longer something that is manifested, but rather a part of the everyday social lives of urban bilingual youth.

Code switching also greatly contributed to creating a friendly and relaxed environment in a setting that would otherwise be viewed as formal or hierarchical. One of the interviewees who works in such a workplace has shared that the choice of language varies in such situations. "When we switch to Urdu or combine both languages, the environment becomes more open." This shows that language switching suspends institutional hierarchy and opens a more egalitarian interactional environment among colleagues, leading to the development of camaraderie.

Along with humor and politeness, participants also reported that code-switching played a more dominant role in relationship management. A respondent summed this point in a brief

manner, as he said, "Code-switching assists me in managing relationships. It is as though trying to pick the right tone for the right person." Such a statement reflects a high degree of pragmatic awareness, indicating that the speakers are consciously or unconsciously modifying their choice of language in response to the interpersonal dynamics of the interaction. Code-switching becomes a versatile tool for adapting to the concerns of emotional and social requirements of various participants in communication.

4.4 Theme 4: Identity, Power, and Professional Self-Presentation

The final notable theme identified from the interviews is the importance of code-switching in identity-making, power dynamics, and self-presentation in the profession. in the fifteen interviews, the interviewed respondents kept on claiming that the language option was an action of social positioning; it could be either a show of strength, command, novelty, admiration, or friendliness. Carrying out multiple versions of the self at the social, professional, and interpersonal levels is not just the work of a communicative tool in these interviews, but also the work of code-switching.

Most of the respondents associated English with professionalism, competence, and power, especially within the institution and the workplace. The connection was made quite explicit by a company manager: "English is a must in the workplace. It is an indication of power and ability." This is an expression of a standard view that English is symbolically endowed with capital in the workplace and serves as a source of legitimization and authority. Similarly, the use of English to convey expertise and seriousness was viewed by a participant employed in technical and corporate professions. Therefore, it acts as a method of self-representation at the workplace.

Other respondents noted that the use of English might lead to the development of social distance. Thus, strategic measures for the Urdu language must be implemented to make it more friendly and human-centered. The same corporate manager attributed this change to switching to Urdu among juniors to make it seem that he is friendly. Code-switching, in this instance, is one form of equalizing power: authority is based on English, and hierarchy on Urdu. This demonstrates that, instead of passively complying with institutional norms, bilingual speakers actively address the power dynamics mediated through language.

There was also the aspect of language-based identity negotiation among the students and young professionals, particularly regarding confidence and self-image. Other participants also discussed that English made them speak more articulately and assertively, especially in school or in a debate. According to one of the undergraduates, "English makes me sound confident in debate. Urdu helps me relax." The disparity suggests that English can enable speakers to access a confident, intellectually charged version of the self. On the other hand, Urdu can help speakers revert to a more emotionally and comfortably located self. Therefore, code switching helps speakers to freely cross over between identities without obliging them to a specific linguistic identity.

Respect and social hierarchy were other important elements of the identity-related code-switching. The respondents would frequently refer to how they have changed the way they use language towards older individuals or people in positions of power. One of the business students reported that when addressing older people, "I changed to Urdu to be respectful." In this regard, Urdu is seen as an indicator of cultural orientation and respectfulness, whereas the overuse of English is considered possibly unacceptable. Language thus becomes the method of delivering respect and moral status within culturally organized hierarchies.

Professional identity, especially among participants who practiced in fields involving interaction with people, leadership, or representation. In an interview, one of the journalists said he was required to speak different languages to fulfill different professional needs, and this is how he implicitly related the use of language to the maintenance of different roles. On

the same note, one content creator stressed that she uses code-switching as the key to her online identity, saying, "Code-switching is the core of my online identity." Her case involving the combination of Urdu and English was stylistically a conscious attempt to portray authenticity, relatability, and culture, but it still sounded modern and present-day. It is with this that bilingual identity performance is limited not just to face-to-face interaction but also to digital and mediated spaces.

Other respondents particularly referred to code-switching as adjusting their identity, speaking different languages to various audiences to adapt to new environments. That was best summed up by one of the respondents: "Code-switching assists me in making adjustments regarding whom I communicate with." This suggests the position of identity is dynamic and contingent, not fixed. Language sliding allows one to strike a balance between different social positions, such as student, professional, peer, subordinate, or leader, without being conflicted.

The fact that English is associated with modernity and Urdu is emotional and culturally grounded shows how identity is constructed through language. A student of media studies said that changing a language helps them to appear expressive and modern at the same time. The other participant, in a brief statement, explained the difference between the functions: "English provides clarity, and Urdu provides emotion." These observations demonstrate why bilinguals are not forced to choose between tradition and modernity; on the contrary, code-switching enables them to be both. Language alternation is thereby one way of using global and local identity within the same process of communication.

4.5 Discussion

Based on this study, it was found that code-switching by bilinguals is a guided and planned mode of communication that is determined by emotional, situational, social, and identity factors. The findings address all three research questions and align with current theories of bilingual language behavior.

To answer the initial research question, respondents related Urdu with emotional expression, comfort, and authenticity. English, on the contrary, was considered to be more controlled and analytical. According to the speakers, they used to switch to Urdu during emotional moments. This aligns with Auer's (2004) notion that code-switching serves as a cue for contextualization. This also aligns with the results of Romaine (1995), who assumed that the national language has a more emotional component than the international or colonial language.

In response to the second research question, the respondents showed a greater tendency toward English in academic, professional, and technical aspects, while toward Urdu in domestic and informal aspects. This anticipated change justifies the difference of situational and metaphoric code switching as discussed Gumperz (1982). The implications of English, professionalism, and power are considered in light of earlier findings on South Asian bilingual communities (Rahman, 1996; Mahboob, 2009).

In response to the third research question, the subjects managed politeness, humor, power relations, and social bonding using language alternation. These findings are consistent with Garcia and Wei's (2014) idea of the unification of a linguistic repertoire and Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) understanding of identity as interactionally constructed.

5. Conclusion

This research showed that code-switching between bilingual speakers in Pakistan is a purposeful, meaningful, and socially embedded practice of communication and not just a mark of linguistic deficiency. Based on qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews, the results indicate that bilingual speakers strategically switch between Urdu and English based on situational demands to express emotions, negotiate politeness, and humor,

establish social relationships, and negotiate identity and power relations. Urdu turns out to be a language of emotional intimacy, cultural affiliation, and relational closeness. On the other hand, English is linked to professionalism, authority, formality, and controlled self-presentation.

The analysis, based on the framework of situational and metaphorical code-switching, draws attention to the fact that language choice is influenced, on the one hand, by context, topic, interlocutors, and emotional states, and, on the other hand, by speakers' intention to social and professional positioning. Code-switching offers bilinguals a way to negotiate multiple identities by balancing local cultural rootedness and global modernity. Overall, the study strengthens contemporary views in sociolinguistics that view bilingual language use as a dynamic, resourceful, and context-sensitive phenomenon, and highlights the need for greater recognition of everyday multilingual practices in both academic studies and societal attitudes.

References

Auer, P. (2004) 'A postscript: code-switching and social identity,' *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37(3), pp. 403–410. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2004.10.010.

Creese, A. and Blackledge, A. (2010) 'Translanguaging in the Bilingual Classroom: A pedagogy for learning and Teaching?,' *Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), pp. 103–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x.

García, O. and Wei, L. (2013) *Translanguaging*, *Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks*. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137385765.

Gosselin, L. and Sabourin, L. (2023) 'Language athletes: Dual-language code-switchers exhibit inhibitory control advantages,' *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, p. 1150159. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1150159.

Gumperz, J.J. (1982) *Discourse strategies*, *Cambridge University Press eBooks*. https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511611834.

Wei, L. and Liu, X. (2020) 'Code-switching as a bilingual lexical strategy,' *Studies in Linguistics and Literature*, 4(4), p. p84. https://doi.org/10.22158/sll.v4n4p84.

Zhu, W. (2022) 'The nature of code-switching,' *Learning & Education*, 10(8), p. 237. https://doi.org/10.18282/l-e.v10i8.3142.

Zubair, M., Javed, M., & Ali, S. (2025). Labov's Narrative Schema and the Structure of Biography: A Linguistic Analysis of The Spy and the Traitor. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (JALT)*, *8*(4), 963-972. https://doi.org/10.63878/jalt1435

Zubair, M., Javed, M., & Wahid, M. A. (2025). A Labovian Analysis of Macintyre's A Spy Among Friends (2014). *AL-ĪMĀN Research Journal*, *3*(03), 79–92. https://doi.org/10.63283/IRJ.03.03/09

Zubair, M., Zahid, M., & Aleem, N. (2025). Language as a Resource for Survival: A Pragmatic Analysis of Beggars' Discourse in Islamabad. *Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies*, *3*(3), 5085–5103. https://doi.org/10.71281/jals.v3i3.457