ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

COMPREHENSION AT THE COST OF FLUENCY: CODE-SWITCHING AND ITS IMPACT ON SPOKEN ENGLISH DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR UNIVERSITIES OF KARACHI

Asifa Haroon Narejo
Content Specialist, Intersys Ltd., Karachi, Pakistan
asifaharoonbusiness@gmail.com
Shafique Ahmed
Academic Coordinator, High Rise Academy, Karachi, Pakistan
shafiquewrite@gmail.com
Husna Bano
Lecturer in English, People Nursing School, LUMHS, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan
murk.ujjan@lumhs.edu.pk

Abstract
Code-switching between English and Urdu constitutes an ubiquitous and largely unregulated phenomenon within the context of English language teaching in public sector universities of Pakistan. Although existing literature has analyzed the role of code-switching in terms of comprehension, vocabulary learning, and overall classroom involvement, the effect of the same on the spoken English proficiency of Pakistani undergraduate students still requires further empirical investigation. The present study aims at exploring how code-switching influences spoken English proficiency among undergraduates studying in public sector universities in Karachi through a combination of descriptive statistical and thematic analysis. Data were collected through the use of 50 respondents' completed questionnaires consisting of 17 items, 10 undergraduate students' interviews, 10 English language teachers' interviews, and non-participant observations carried out in the classrooms for two weeks. Comprehension-fluency paradox emerges from findings showing that code-switching positively affects comprehension and eliminates negative affective factors related to students' involvement in class activities, but, nevertheless, decreases their motivation for spoken English practice. Teachers apply reactive code-switching techniques in the classroom without following institutional recommendations for doing so, resulting in passive acquisition patterns. Based on the theory of sociolinguistics by Gumperz (1982), as well as Interlanguage Theory formulated by Selinker (1972), the study argues that unmanaged code-switching risks fossilising a comprehension-only orientation in learners whose academic and professional futures require genuine oral fluency. Institutional policy reform and targeted teacher training in bilingual pedagogy are recommended as priority interventions.

Keywords: Code-switching, Spoken English Development, Bilingual Pedagogy, Public Sector Universities, Interlanguage, Oral Proficiency, Fossilisation, Language Anxiety, EFL Classroom, Language Policy

1. Introduction

English occupies a structurally significant position in Pakistan's educational system, functioning as the official medium of instruction across disciplines, including business, engineering, the social sciences, and education at the tertiary level (Rahman, 1996). Despite this institutional mandate, a persistent and widely documented gap exists between students' written and spoken English competence, particularly among undergraduates in the country's public sector universities (Fareed, Humayun, & Akhtar, 2016). Students who demonstrate functional reading and writing ability frequently struggle to express themselves with fluency and confidence in spoken English, a disparity that carries significant consequences for academic performance and professional employability in an increasingly English-mediated labour market (Younas et al., 2020).

Code-switching serves as the main component that defines English language classrooms in this particular academic environment. The practice of code-switching in Karachi's public sector universities typically involves switching between English and Urdu, with teachers using bilingualism to help students who struggle to understand complex academic

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

material and participate in class (Dar, Akhtar, & Khalid, 2014). The practice that exists in classrooms today helps students understand content better, although it comes with negative effects that have not been studied in previous research about student development in English-speaking skills (Sameen, Farid, & Hussain, 2021).

The importance of this research gap increases when we consider the existing sociolinguistic patterns in Karachi's public universities. The majority of students who join the program through Urdu-medium schools have not learned spoken English in social or home situations before, which makes classroom learning their main method for studying spoken English (Mahboob, 2009). The classroom space, which contains unregulated language switching patterns, results in lower rates of student engagement with spoken English through listening activities, speaking exercises, and teacher evaluation. Bhatti, Shamsudin, and Said (2020) observed that excessive code-switching in Pakistani university classrooms can suppress oral proficiency development by limiting consistent target language exposure. The present study centers its investigation on this particular problem.

Drawing on sociolinguistics theories of code-switching by Gumperz (1982) and interlanguage theory by Selinker (1972), the present study aims at answering the following research question: "How does code-switching influence the acquisition of spoken English among undergraduate students of public sector universities in Karachi?" The present study follows a mixed-method approach by incorporating data collected from the integration of questionnaire surveys along with the results obtained from interviews and classroom observations to generate an understanding of code-switching in the context of spoken English teaching and its impacts on the language learners. The significance of this research can be seen in its focus on a specific socio-cultural setting, use of multiple instruments to collect data, and concentration on spoken English proficiency.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining and Classifying Code-Switching

Code-switching has been defined and theorised across multiple scholarly traditions. Weinreich (1953) described it as a feature of functional bilingualism, distinguishing it from interference and positioning it as adaptive rather than deficient. Poplack (1980) offered the most influential structural typology, distinguishing tag-switching, which involves the insertion of short formulaic phrases from one language into another; inter-sentential switching, which occurs at sentence or clause boundaries; and intra-sentential switching, which involves mixing within a single sentence or clause and requires high bilingual proficiency. Milroy and Muysken (1995) further situated code-switching within the broader context of bilingual interaction, emphasising that speakers draw on their full linguistic repertoire in response to communicative and social demands rather than from linguistic confusion or limitation.

In educational settings, Gafaranga (2007) argued that code-switching is a deliberate pedagogical act rather than a symptom of insufficient target language competence. Macaro (2005) distinguished between principled and unprincipled use of the first language in second language instruction, arguing that controlled, purposeful switching can scaffold comprehension without undermining language development, whereas unplanned and habitual alternation risks reducing learners' exposure to the target language below the threshold necessary for proficiency gain. This distinction between principled and unprincipled code-switching is central to the analysis presented in this study.

2.2 Sociolinguistic Perspectives: Gumperz's Model

The most influential sociolinguistic framework for analysing code-switching in interaction is that of Gumperz (1982), who proposed a distinction between situational and metaphorical code-switching. Situational switching occurs when language choice changes in response to shifts in the external context, such as a change in topic, participant roles, or the

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

formality of the setting. Metaphorical switching, by contrast, occurs within a stable situational context and is used to signal shifts in tone, solidarity, emotional register, or relational positioning. Both types carry communicative meaning that extends beyond the referential content of the utterance.

Gumperz's model has been productively applied to classroom interaction by researchers, including Auer (1998), who demonstrated how bilingual speakers use language switching to manage conversational alignment, contrast perspectives, and repair interactional misunderstandings. In Pakistani university classrooms specifically, Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) found that teacher code-switching is largely situational, tracking shifts between content delivery and comprehension support, while metaphorical switching is employed to build rapport, manage classroom affect, and signal solidarity with students. Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model complements Gumperz's framework by showing that speakers signal social positioning and relational distance through their language choices, with the unmarked code typically indexing in-group solidarity and the marked code indexing institutional authority.

2.3 Interlanguage Theory and Oral Development

Selinker's (1972) Interlanguage Theory provides the second major theoretical lens for this study. Selinker proposed that second language learners develop an intermediate linguistic system that is systematically structured but distinct from both the first language and the target language. This interlanguage is dynamic and developmental, moving toward the target language as learners receive input, produce output, and receive corrective feedback. However, when learners are not consistently required to produce the target language, or when feedback on spoken errors is absent or delayed, interlanguage development can stall in a process Selinker termed fossilisation.

Fossilisation is particularly relevant to the oral domain. Han and Odlin (2006) observed that incorrect spoken forms frequently go uncorrected in classrooms where speaking is not a primary instructional focus, allowing non-target patterns to stabilise through repetition and social acceptance. Ellis and Shintani (2014) further noted that spoken production is especially vulnerable to fossilisation because it occurs in real time without the planning and editing opportunities available in writing. Ortega (2009) emphasised that interlanguage development requires not just exposure to the target language but active output production, during which learners notice gaps between their own production and target norms. In classrooms where code-switching reduces the frequency of English-speaking practice, these noticing opportunities are correspondingly diminished.

2.4 Code-Switching and Speaking Skill Development

The relationship between code-switching and speaking skill development is a contested area in the applied linguistics literature, with studies reporting both facilitative and inhibitory effects depending on context, frequency, and instructional design. Alzahrani (2023) found that code-switching in EFL classrooms can support vocabulary acquisition and reduce speaking anxiety, particularly for learners with English-speaking lower proficiency levels. Othman (2015) reported that students in ELT classrooms were more verbally active when permitted to use their first language for initial idea generation, suggesting that L1 access can lower the affective threshold for speaking participation. These findings support the use of code-switching as a tool for inclusion, particularly in linguistically diverse university classrooms.

However, several studies identify significant risks associated with habitual code-switching for speaking development specifically. Chaudron (1988) and Ellis (1984) both cautioned that regular L1 use in language classrooms can reduce learners' motivation and capacity to process and produce the target language independently. Al-Adnani and Elyas (2016) found in a Gulf university context that students taught by language-switching teachers produced lower scores on speaking assessments than those taught in predominantly English-

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

medium classrooms, even though the former group reported higher comprehension and engagement. This dissociation between comprehension and production outcomes echoes the central finding of the present study and underscores the importance of distinguishing between receptive and productive dimensions of language learning when evaluating code-switching's effects.

Within the Pakistani context, Gulzar (2010) documented widespread code-switching in university English classrooms and found strong student and teacher endorsement of the practice for comprehension purposes. However, Fareed et al. (2016) noted that students in such classrooms tend to develop what they describe as a culture of silence, remaining passive in English while engaging actively when Urdu is permitted. Khan and Gul (2020) confirmed that while code-switching reduces classroom anxiety, it also reduces the pressure to engage in the productive struggle that drives spoken language development. These findings collectively suggest that the comprehension benefits of code-switching are real but partial, and that they must be weighed against the costs to oral proficiency development.

2.5 Code-Switching Policy and Teacher Training in Pakistan

A significant structural dimension of code-switching in Pakistani public universities concerns the absence of formal institutional policy governing language use in instruction. Coleman and Capstick (2012) documented the inconsistency between official English-medium instruction policies and actual classroom practice across Pakistan, noting that policy declarations are rarely accompanied by enforcement mechanisms, teacher training, or contextually sensitive implementation support. Manan, David, and Dumanig (2015) found that Pakistani English teachers operate largely without pedagogical training in bilingual instruction, relying instead on informal experience and peer observation to develop their language management strategies. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) argued that sustainable improvement in language teaching requires sustained professional development that includes classroom observation, mentorship, and collaborative reflection rather than one-time workshops. The absence of such support in public sector universities in Pakistan creates conditions in which code-switching remains reactive and unplanned rather than strategic and developmental, a condition that directly undermines its potential as a scaffolding tool.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Paradigm

This study employs a concurrent mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to produce a comprehensive and mutually illuminating account of code-switching and its effects on spoken English development (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). A pragmatic research paradigm underpins the design, prioritising the research problem over adherence to a single epistemological tradition and supporting the integration of diverse methodological tools to generate actionable findings (Morgan, 2007). Mixed methods are particularly appropriate for this study because code-switching operates simultaneously as a measurable classroom behaviour and as a socially embedded practice with subjective meanings for both teachers and students (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Triangulation across three independent data sources strengthens the credibility and interpretive depth of the findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

3.2 Participants and Setting

Participants were recruited from public sector universities in Karachi through stratified purposive sampling to ensure representation across linguistic backgrounds, academic years, and levels of English exposure prior to university entry. The student sample comprised 50 undergraduate students enrolled in English-speaking courses. Demographically, 54% of participants were female, 44% male, and 2% identified as other. The largest age cohort was 21 to 23 years (46%), reflecting the typical undergraduate age range. Native language

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

backgrounds included Urdu (34%), Sindhi (28%), Punjabi (22%), Pashto (8%), Balochi (4%), and other languages (4%), reflecting the genuine linguistic diversity of Karachi's public university population. Prior to university, 40% of participants had received English-medium instruction, 36% Urdu-medium, and 24% a mixed medium. Ten of the 50 student participants additionally participated in semi-structured interviews. The instructor sample comprised 10 English language teachers with experience in bilingual university teaching environments. All institutions involved use English as their stated medium of instruction while operating in a broader social environment in which Urdu is the dominant language of daily life.

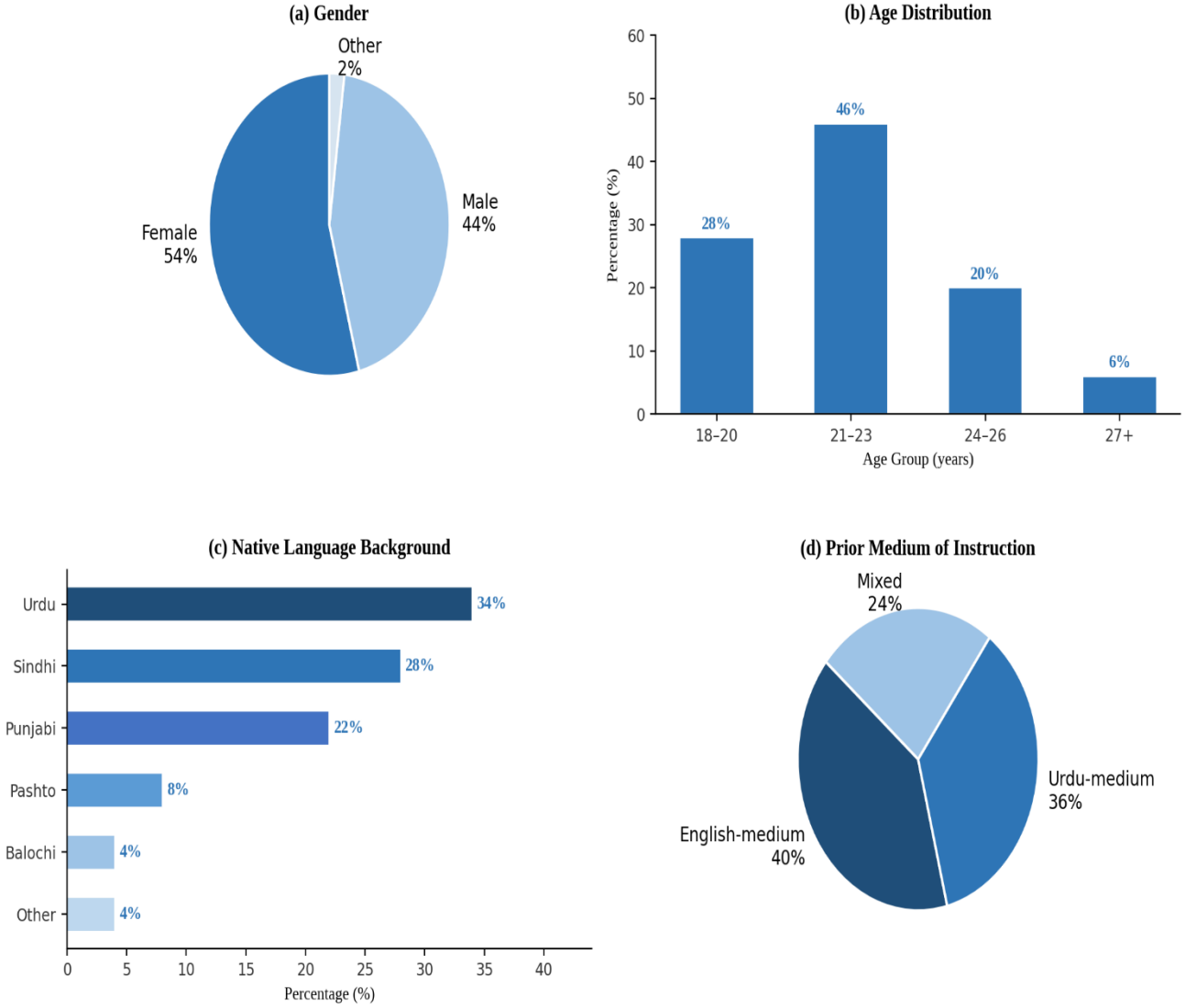

Figure 1. Demographic Profile of Student Participants (N = 50)

3.3 Instruments and Data Collection

Three instruments were developed and validated for data collection. First, a structured questionnaire comprising 17 closed-ended items organised across four sections was administered to all 50 student participants. Sections addressed background information, frequency and context of code-switching, perceived impact on speaking skills, and student preferences for classroom language policy. Items were generated from themes identified in the literature review and validated through expert review by three applied linguistics scholars. A pilot study conducted with four students and two teachers resulted in minor revisions to item

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

phrasing and the addition of time-stamp fields to the observation checklist (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Second, semi-structured interview guides were developed separately for students and teachers. Student interviews lasted 20 to 25 minutes and focused on perceptions of teacher language practices, speaking confidence, classroom participation, and preferred language policy. Teacher interviews lasted 30 to 35 minutes and explored instructional language choices, student engagement patterns, institutional policy awareness, and strategies for encouraging English use. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. Interviews were conducted in private settings to promote candour and reduce social desirability effects (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Third, a structured classroom observation checklist informed by Gumperz's (1982) sociolinguistic model was used to systematically record the frequency, type, and instructional context of code-switching instances, along with students' immediate verbal and non-verbal responses. Observations were conducted across multiple English-speaking classes over two weeks, covering different instructors, student year groups, and instructional topics. Where participants provided consent, audio recordings supplemented observational notes to support recall accuracy and data completeness (Robson, 2011).

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. While the sample size of 50 precluded the meaningful application of inferential statistical techniques such as regression analysis, the descriptive findings provide a clear empirical baseline for examining patterns in student perception and classroom language use. Qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations were analysed through thematic analysis following the six-phase framework of Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017): familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final analysis. Themes were developed inductively from the data and then interpreted deductively through the study's theoretical frameworks. Triangulation across questionnaire, interview, and observation data was applied throughout to identify convergent and divergent patterns and to strengthen interpretive validity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

4. Results

4.1 Frequency and Context of Code-Switching

Questionnaire data reveal that code-switching is a near-universal feature of English language instruction in the classrooms surveyed. When asked how often their teachers switch between English and Urdu during class, 42% of students selected often and 18% selected always, meaning that 60% of respondents experience switching as a routine feature of their instruction. Only 12% indicated that it happens rarely or never. These figures are consistent with Younas et al. (2020), who documented the pervasiveness of English-Urdu alternation in Pakistani university classrooms, and suggest that code-switching in this context functions not as an exceptional strategy but as a default instructional mode.

Table 1

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Frequency of Teacher Code-Switching (N = 50)

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1 (2%)	5 (10%)	14 (28%)	21 (42%)	9 (18%)

Note. Percentages reflect proportions of total respondents.

When asked to identify the situations in which teachers switch to Urdu, students' responses indicate that the practice is overwhelmingly pedagogically motivated. Explanation of difficult concepts was the most frequently selected trigger (36%), followed by encouraging participation from shy students (24%) and maintaining student attention (16%). Classroom discipline was selected by no respondent. These findings align with Gumperz's (1982) characterisation of situational code-switching as tracking shifts in communicative function. Teachers in these classrooms appear to switch in response to comprehension demands rather than for social or disciplinary purposes, a pattern confirmed by classroom observations in which switching episodes were consistently preceded by visible student disengagement or repeated error.

Table 2

Situations Prompting Teacher Code-Switching (Multiple Response, N = 50)

Situation	Frequency	Percentage
To explain difficult concepts	18	36.0%
To encourage participation from shy students	12	24.0%
To maintain student attention	8	16.0%
To give instructions	7	14.0%
To clarify cultural references	3	6.0%
To build rapport	2	4.0%
To manage classroom discipline	0	0.0%

Note. Respondents could select multiple options; total exceeds 50.

4.2 Perceived Impact on Comprehension and Participation

Students reported strongly positive perceptions of code-switching's impact on comprehension and classroom participation. Eighty percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that code-switching helps them better understand lesson content, and 76% agreed or strongly agreed that it supports their participation in class discussions. Sixty-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed that code-switching makes it easier to follow classroom instructions. These figures represent a coherent pattern of perceived comprehension benefit that is robust across different dimensions of classroom understanding.

Table 3

Student Perceptions of Code-Switching Impact on Comprehension and Participation (N = 50)

Item	SD + D	N	A + SA
Helps me understand lesson content (Q8)	5 (10%)	5 (10%)	40 (80%)
Helps me participate more in discussions (Q9)	5 (10%)	7 (14%)	38 (76%)
Makes following instructions easier (Q16)	8 (16%)	8 (16%)	34 (68%)

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

Interview data from students provided detailed qualitative evidence for these quantitative patterns. Across all ten student interviews, participants confirmed that Urdu explanations were most valuable during grammar-intensive instruction covering modal verbs, reported speech, passive voice, and complex sentence structures. Several students described moments of sudden comprehension when a concept that had remained opaque in English became clear through brief Urdu elaboration. Students consistently described switching as targeted and need-based rather than habitual, suggesting that teachers in these classrooms are engaged in the kind of deliberate situational switching that Gumperz (1982) and Macaro (2005) identify as potentially beneficial. Classroom observations corroborated this perception: in sessions where teachers offered bounded Urdu clarifications during grammar instruction, previously passive students became verbally active, raising questions and engaging in peer exchanges.

Teacher interviews reinforced these findings. All ten instructors confirmed that switching was triggered by observable comprehension failure rather than by planned instructional strategy. Several noted that participation increased noticeably after Urdu explanations, particularly among first-year students from Urdu-medium backgrounds. One teacher reported that English-only instruction in early weeks produced visible anxiety among students, with extended silences, avoidance of eye contact, and refusal to volunteer responses, all of which diminished when Urdu was used for clarification. These observations are consistent with Sert's (2005) analysis of first language use as a tool for managing affective barriers in second language classrooms.

4.3 Impact on Spoken English Development

The data present a considerably more complex picture with respect to spoken English development, specifically. While comprehension benefits were consistently endorsed, a substantial proportion of students acknowledged that code-switching simultaneously reduces their motivation and need to produce English independently. When asked whether code-switching leads them to rely too much on Urdu and avoid speaking English (Q12), 60% agreed or strongly agreed. When asked whether they try harder to speak English in English-only classes (Q11), an identical 60% agreed or strongly agreed. When asked whether they feel more confident when the teacher avoids Urdu (Q10), 46% agreed or strongly agreed, though 28% disagreed, reflecting a more divided picture regarding the relationship between English-only instruction and speaking confidence.

Table 4

Student Perceptions of Code-Switching Impact on Spoken English Development (N = 50)

Item	SD + D	Neutral	A + SA
I rely too much on Urdu due to code-switching (Q12)	8 (16%)	12 (24%)	30 (60%)
I try harder to speak English in English-only classes (Q11)	9 (18%)	11 (22%)	30 (60%)
More confident when teacher avoids Urdu (Q10)	14 (28%)	13 (26%)	23 (46%)
My speaking ability improved this course (Q13)	5 (10%)	10 (20%)	35 (70%)

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

Student interview data deepened these quantitative findings through five interconnected themes. The first theme concerned emotional safety and participation. Students consistently reported that Urdu-medium exchanges reduced their fear of public error and made them more willing to contribute to class discussion, especially in grammar-intensive sessions, a pattern consistent with the affective function of first language use established in the teacher interview data above. The second and more significant theme concerned what students described as cognitive retreat, a pattern in which the availability of Urdu reduced their motivation to formulate responses independently in English. Multiple students reported that they had learned to wait for Urdu clarification rather than attempting to construct meaning from English input, a pattern that directly illustrates the mechanism by which code-switching can suppress interlanguage activation.

The third theme concerned students' expressed preference for structured bilingual instruction. The majority favoured mostly English with some Urdu (42%) over equal use of both languages (36%), indicating awareness of both the support that Urdu provides and the risks of over-reliance. This preference for a decreasing bilingual scaffold is consistent with the principle that guided support should be calibrated to the learner's current level and progressively withdrawn to promote independent functioning (Vygotsky, 1978). The fourth theme concerned students' identification of preferred strategies for improving speaking skills. Speaking practice activities received the highest endorsement (44%), followed by group discussions (22%) and oral presentations (14%). The fifth theme was unanimous support for dedicated English-speaking sessions, with 82% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that such sessions would benefit their development.

4.4 Teacher Practices and Institutional Context

The teacher interview data reveal a professional context characterised by reflective individual practice operating without institutional support or formal pedagogical training. All ten instructors reported the absence of any explicit institutional language policy governing code-switching in English classrooms. While departments nominally require English-medium instruction, teachers confirmed that language choice is governed entirely by individual judgment, producing significant variation across classrooms. None of the participating teachers had received formal training in bilingual or second language pedagogy. All described their code-switching strategies as developed through classroom experience, peer observation, and trial and error, confirming that the structural absence of bilingual teacher training identified in the broader Pakistani literature persists in the specific institutional contexts examined here.

Despite the absence of formal guidance, teachers demonstrated considerable metacognitive awareness of code-switching's trade-offs. All ten acknowledged that Urdu use improved comprehension and re-engaged disengaged students, but the majority also expressed concern that habitual switching risked creating L1 dependency and reducing oral development. Several teachers described intentions to phase Urdu out progressively as student proficiency improved, though none had systematic procedures for doing so. Classroom observations revealed important variation in instructional effectiveness that mapped closely onto teachers' level of intentionality in managing code-switching. Teachers who bounded their Urdu use to brief clarification episodes and followed these with structured English-speaking tasks produced classrooms with both high participation and measurable English output. Teachers whose code-switching was more extensive and less bounded produced high overall participation but minimal English-speaking output, with students conducting peer interactions, task negotiations, and teacher responses predominantly in Urdu.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

5. Discussion

5.1 The Comprehension-Fluency Paradox

The central finding of this study is what may be termed a comprehension-fluency paradox: the instructional practice most widely endorsed by students and teachers for its comprehension benefits is simultaneously the practice most strongly associated with reduced spoken English development. This paradox is not merely a matter of degree but reflects a structural tension in how code-switching functions in these classrooms. When Urdu is available as a communicative resource, it fulfils its comprehension function efficiently, but in doing so it also removes the communicative necessity that drives learners to activate, test, and extend their English production. This dynamic is precisely what Selinker (1972) and subsequent interlanguage theorists identify as the condition for fossilisation: learners whose communicative needs are met through the first language have fewer occasions to push their interlanguage toward target-like forms.

This finding is consistent with but extends the work of Fareed et al. (2016) and Khan and Gul (2020), both of whom identified costs to oral engagement in Pakistani English classrooms but did not examine the comprehension and production dimensions simultaneously. Where previous studies in the Pakistani context have tended to report either the benefits or the risks of code-switching, the present study's multi-instrument design makes both dimensions simultaneously visible, revealing that they co-exist within the same classroom practices and are experienced by the same learners. This dual visibility is a methodological contribution of the mixed-methods approach.

The finding also diverges in an important way from the optimistic conclusions drawn by some international studies. Alzahrani (2023) and Othman (2015) reported that code-switching supports speaking participation and vocabulary retention in EFL contexts, conclusions that are broadly confirmed by the comprehension and participation data in the present study. However, these studies did not differentiate between participation measured as willingness to contribute in any language and participation measured as English-speaking output specifically. The present data suggest that when this distinction is maintained, a different and less favourable picture of code-switching's effects emerges. Sixty percent of students in this study acknowledged over-reliance on Urdu, and the same proportion reported trying harder to speak English only when the teacher removed Urdu as an option. These findings question the assumption, implicit in much of the facilitative literature, that comfort and participation in the bilingual classroom translate into oral proficiency development.

5.2 Gumperz's Model Applied

Gumperz's (1982) distinction between situational and metaphorical code-switching provides a useful analytical lens for interpreting the specific character of teacher switching observed in this study. The data indicate that the overwhelming majority of observed switching is situational in Gumperz's sense: it tracks shifts in communicative function from content delivery to comprehension support and is triggered by contextual cues such as student silence, repeated error, or visible disengagement. This situational character means that switching in these classrooms is, in principle, responsive and purposeful rather than habitual and undifferentiated. Teachers are not code-switching randomly; they are responding to identifiable instructional needs.

However, the absence of institutional policy and teacher training means that this situational responsiveness is not accompanied by the deliberate management that would make it developmentally productive. Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model adds a complementary perspective here: when Urdu consistently functions as the unmarked code for comprehension and Urdu-mediated interaction becomes the default relational register between teacher and student, students may come to experience English-only interaction as marked and

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

therefore effortful or even threatening. Over time, this markedness relationship can entrench rather than challenge the affective barriers to English speaking that code-switching was originally intended to lower.

5.3 Implications for Bilingual Pedagogy

The study results demonstrate how bilingual education needs to be developed and operated in Pakistani public universities. The evidence supports neither an English-only instructional mandate nor unrestricted code-switching but requires a structured approach which uses Urdu for comprehension purposes during initial teaching and decreases its usage when students reach higher proficiency levels (Cummins, 2000; Macaro, 2005). The more deliberate teaching approach, which the study observed through its teachers who restricted their Urdu speaking time before conducting English language activities, proves that this method can function successfully within the studied educational institutions.

The study demonstrates that public sector universities lack all essential elements needed to implement bilingual instruction programs, which require proper teacher training and institutional policies, as well as necessary teaching resources. Teachers need extended professional development that includes classroom observation and mentorship, and collaborative reflection in order to achieve permanent changes in their teaching methods (as established in the literature review). Teachers who intend to use reflective practices end up using code-switching in an uncontrolled manner because they do not possess institutional support and adequate resources to handle this situation.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

This study examined the impact of code-switching on spoken English development among undergraduate students in public sector universities in Karachi. Drawing on data from 50 student questionnaires, 20 semi-structured interviews, and two weeks of classroom observation, the study identified a comprehension-fluency paradox at the heart of English language instruction in these settings. Code-switching between English and Urdu demonstrably improves comprehension and reduces affective barriers to classroom participation, outcomes valued by both students and teachers. Simultaneously, however, frequent and unmanaged switching reduces the frequency, necessity, and quality of students' spoken English production, creating conditions in which interlanguage development stagnates and passive comprehension becomes the dominant mode of classroom engagement. Teachers employ code-switching reactively and without formal institutional guidance, producing instructional environments that are responsive to immediate comprehension needs but poorly equipped to support long-term oral proficiency development.

6.2 Recommendations

Four evidence-based recommendations emerge from the findings. **First**, professional development programs for English language teachers in public sector universities should include sustained training in bilingual pedagogy, equipping instructors with strategies for purposeful, phased code-switching that scaffolds comprehension in early instruction while progressively increasing English-only speaking demands as student proficiency grows (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). **Second**, institutions should develop explicit and contextually sensitive language policies that acknowledge the legitimate role of strategic code-switching while establishing expectations for its management across year levels and proficiency groups, rather than issuing blanket English-only mandates that are impractical and unenforced. **Third**, dedicated English-speaking sessions should be integrated into English language courses, providing regular, structured, and low-stakes oral practice opportunities that the current instructional model largely displaces. The 82% student endorsement of this measure in the present study constitutes strong evidence of learner appetite for such an initiative. **Fourth**, oral

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

assessment components should be formally incorporated into English course evaluation, incentivising speaking practice and providing teachers and students with structured feedback data on oral development over time.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations qualify the findings of this study. The sample is geographically restricted to public sector universities in Karachi and institutionally bounded to undergraduate English-speaking courses, limiting the generalisability of findings to other Pakistani cities, institutional types, or student populations. The two-week observation window constrains the longitudinal conclusions that can be drawn about how code-switching affects speaking development over a full semester or academic year. The descriptive statistical approach, appropriate for a sample of 50, does not permit the identification of statistically significant relationships between code-switching frequency and specific oral proficiency outcomes, a limitation that future studies employing larger samples and standardised speaking assessment measures should address. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs tracking individual students' oral proficiency development across a full academic year, controlled comparative studies examining outcomes in classrooms with varying levels of instructional code-switching, and experimental designs testing the effects of structured bilingual teacher training on both classroom language practice and student speaking outcomes.

References

Alzahrani, E. A. (2023). *The function of code-switching in EFL Saudi classrooms* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow).

Auer, P. (Ed.). (2013). *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. Routledge.

Bhatti, A., Shamsudin, S., & Said, S. M. (2020). EXTENT OF CODE SWITCHING IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS IN PAKISTAN.

Chaudron, C. (1988). *Second Language Classrooms. Research on Teaching and Learning*. Cambridge University Press, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011..

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. routledge.

Coleman, H., & Capstick, A. (2012). *Language in education in Pakistan: Recommendations for policy and practice* (pp. 1-181). Islamabad: British Council.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. P. (2007). Mixed methods research. *Thousand Oaks, CA*.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire* (Vol. 23). Multilingual matters.

Dar, M. F., Akhtar, H., & Khalid, H. (2014). Code-switching in Pakistani English language classrooms: perceptions of English language teachers. *Journal of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Research*, *2*(2), 16-26.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher professional development. *Learning policy institute*.

Ellis, R., & Shintani, N. (2013). *Exploring language pedagogy through second language acquisition research*. Routledge.

Fareed, M., Humayun, S., & Akhtar, H. (2016). English language teachers' code-switching in class: ESL learners' perceptions. *Journal of Education & Social Sciences*, *4*(1), 1-11.

Gafaranga, J. (2007). Interactional Order in Talk in Two Languages: Organisational Explanation. In *Talk in Two Languages* (pp. 116-150). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Gulzar, M. A. (2010). Code-switching: Awareness about its utility in bilingual classrooms. *Bulletin of education and research*.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies* (No. 1). Cambridge university press.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

Han, Z., & Odlin, T. (Eds.). (2005). *Studies of fossilization in second language acquisition* (Vol. 14). Multilingual Matters.

Jusoff, K. (2009). Teachers' code-switching in classroom instructions for low English proficient learners.

Kvale, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.

Macaro, E. (2005). Codeswitching in the L2 classroom: A communication and learning strategy. In *Non-native language teachers: Perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession* (pp. 63-84). Boston, MA: Springer US.

Mahboob, A. (2009). English as an Islamic language: A case study of Pakistani English. *World Englishes*, *28*(2), 175-189.

Manan, S. A., David, M. K., & Dumanig, F. P. (2016). English language teaching in Pakistan: Language policies, delusions and solutions. In *English language education policy in Asia* (pp. 219-244). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry. *(No Title)*.

Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *1*(1), 48-76.

Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for codeswitching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford University Press.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International journal of qualitative methods*, *16*(1), 1609406917733847.

Ortega, L. (2011). Second language acquisition. *The Routledge handbook of applied linguistics*, 171-184.

Ortega, L. (2014). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Routledge.

Othman, M. M. (2015). Functions of code switching: A case study. *Yüksek Lisans. Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim-Öğretim ve Araştırma Enstitüsü, Gazimağusa*.

Poplack, S. (2020). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en español: toward a typology of code-switching. In *The bilingualism reader* (pp. 213-243). Routledge.

Rahman, T. (1996). Language and politics in Pakistan. *(No Title)*.

Robson, C. (2011). Real world research: A resource for users of social research methods in applied settings. *(No Title)*.

Sameen, S., Farid, A., & Hussain, M. S. (2021). A critical discourse analysis of impact of code-switching on modern adult language learners' motivation in Pakistan. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, *17*(S1), 109-121.

Sert, O. (2005). The Functions of Code-Switching in ELT Classrooms. *Online Submission*, *11*(8).

Skehan, P. (2008). Interlanguage and language transfer. *The handbook of educational linguistics*, 411-423.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). Putting the human back in ''human research methodology'': The researcher in mixed methods research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *4*(4), 271-277.

Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.

Weinreich, U. (2010). *Languages in contact: Findings and problems* (No. 1). Walter de Gruyter.

Younas, M., Afzaal, M., Noor, U., Khalid, S., & Naqvi, S. (2020). Code Switching in ESL Teaching at University Level in Pakistan. *English Language Teaching*, *13*(8), 63-73.