A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: A STUDY OF BS ENGLISH STUDENTS IN DISTRICT BUNER
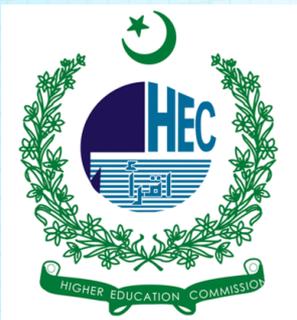
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Abstract

This study examined code-switching and code-mixing practices among BS English students in higher education institutions in District Buner, Pakistan. The aim of the study was to investigate how multilingual language alternation operates within academic interaction and how students interpret these practices in relation to learning, identity, institutional ideology, and linguistic legitimacy. The major objectives were to identify patterned forms of code-switching and code-mixing, to analyse the socio-educational and ideological forces influencing language choice, and to examine students' perceptions regarding the academic and identity implications of multilingual discourse. The study adopted a qualitative multiple-case research design grounded in Interactional Sociolinguistics and Identity and Investment Theory. Purposeful sampling was employed to select 26 BS English students from different semester levels across four institutions within the district. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations. The data collection procedure included institutional permission, informed consent, audio-recorded interviews, systematic observation protocols, and verbatim transcription preserving instances of language alternation. Data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, allowing systematic coding, cross-case comparison, and interpretive theme development. The findings revealed that code-switching functioned as a structured interactional strategy for managing meaning, facilitating participation, negotiating symbolic power, and balancing academic aspiration with cultural belonging. Students perceived multilingual practices as cognitive scaffolding that enhanced comprehension and confidence; however, they simultaneously expressed ambivalence shaped by internalized English-only ideologies. The study challenges deficit interpretations of multilingual academic discourse and argues for a context-sensitive understanding of language alternation as socially embedded academic practice.

Keywords*: code-switching, multilingual classrooms, identity negotiation, English-medium instruction, qualitative sociolinguistics*

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is not only a medium of meaning, but also a principle of organisation of social relations, one that codes power structures, and a mediator of identities. In societies of multilingualism, communication practise will often not be in line with the monolingual assumptions of institutional policy. Therefore, speakers are guided through stratified linguistic repertoires which are influenced by the historical, aspirational and communal pressures. It is code-switching and code-mixing that therefore come out not as aberrations but as patterned responses to complex sociolinguistic realities.

Code-switching refers to the shift between two or more languages or language varieties in a single discourse and code-mixing referring to the incorporation of lexical or syntactic elements in a language into another. The first structural descriptions (Poplack, 1980) focused on grammatical limitations of such alternations. Later literature, though, turned into social meaning, contextualization, and identity building (Gumperz, 1982; Gardner-, -Chloros, 2009; Wei, 2018). Modern studies are coming to acknowledge the fact that code-switching is a communicative strategy, a symbolic positioning tool and a practical adaptation and not a linguistic inadequacy.

Official English-medium policies are complicated by multilingual practises in the higher education environment throughout the world. Evidence of this can be found in the empirical research carried out in Asia, Africa, and Middle East, where the use of English-only instruction is often accompanied by multilingual negotiation at a classroom level (Lin, 2013; Mazak and Carroll, 2017; Rasman, 2018). These alternations tend to be pedagogical - in the process of explaining complicated concepts,

reducing anxiety, promoting inclusion, and controlling power. However, the ideological opposition between institutional monolingualism and lived multilingualism has not been settled yet.

Pakistan is a very complex linguistic ecology. The symbolic highest point of prestige, social-economic mobility and academic legitimacy is occupied by English. Urdu is used as a national lingua franca. The regional languages, like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa whose Pashto language has strong cultural legitimacy and emotional resonance. The students in English major programmes thus live in a sociolinguistic bridge: they are supposed to achieve English competence at the same time, they are supposed to be a part of the local community with languages.

Pakistani scholarship is an established fact that supports the prevalence of code-switching in higher education classrooms. Much of this research, however, is urban-based, survey-based and teacher-based. Little qualitative research has been conducted to investigate the experiences and perceptions of the English-major undergraduates in rural or semi-rural areas with respect to their own practises of multilingualism.

District Buner is one such interesting area that can be investigated. Pashto dominates over daily intercourse; Urdu over official and inter-group intercourse; English over academic evaluation and professional ambition. The BS English students, who will become teachers, scholars, and language professionals in the future, have a lot to lose. Their language preferences are not merely convenient to communicate but they are symbolically placed within systems of academic validity.

To know code-switching in this respect, it is necessary to go beyond number of frequencies, and to practical involvement with lived experience. What is the implication of switching to students? Does it authorise participation or reveal insecurity? What is the impact of English-only ideology in classroom interaction? These are the questions that put code switching into perspective as a social action as opposed to linguistic deviation. This paper is the result of such interpretation gap.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Even though English is the officially designated medium of instruction in BS English programmes in Pakistan, the practise of multilingual alternation between English, Urdu and the regional languages like Pashto is frequently seen in the classroom interaction. The current literature recognises the pedagogical and social possible purpose of code-switching (Lin, 2013; García and Wei, 2019). Still, there is an ongoing controversy as to whether the practises improve conceptual knowledge or limit the growth of the target language (Macaro, 2018). This tension is seen in District Buner in a particularly sharp way. English is an academic capital and Pashto has the authenticity of culture and social solidarity. Students hence work within rival symbolic hierarchies. Although code-switching among Pakistani higher education institutions is a common phenomenon, few studies on the basis of qualitative research have investigated the way in which English-major undergraduates in rural settings conceptualise their own multilingualism. Under these conditions, code-switching is either misrepresented by lacking inquiry or highly uncritically applauded fluidity. The key issue that this investigation will focus on is that the limited knowledge about how and why BS English learners of District Buner are involved in code-switching and code-mixing in the academic context and how they manage to negotiate the symbolic and pedagogical implications of the practises is insufficient.

1.3 Research Questions

1.   What were the BS English students in District Buner code-switching and code-mixing behaviour in the classroom and peer interactions?
2.   Which social, academic, and identity-related factors had an effect on their language choices?
3.   What was the perception of students regarding the role of code-switching in their learning, confidence and academic positioning?

1.4 Research Objectives

1.   To detect and examine the code switching and code mixing trends among BS English students.

2. To decode the socio-educational and ideological pressures that influence the practices of the multilingual in the classroom.

3. To compare the perceptions that students have of multilingual discourse to identity, legitimacy, and academic development.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The article also adds to the field of sociolinguistic research by establishing the multilingual classroom practise in the context of a rural Pakistani community, thus broadening the spectacle of current studies. It enriches the theoretical discussions related to the field of code-switching, translanguaging and linguistic identity because it is based on empirical research. The implications of the study in the pedagogical context are that the deficit perceptions of multilingualism are challenged and that fixed ideologies of English only should be rethought. Above all, the research anticipates the student discourse, which is insistence on the fact that language alternation is inherent to the lived reality instead of the abstract policy.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

Code switching as a phenomenon has experienced a significant intellectual development, which started as a language anomaly and has now evolved to the modern notion of a social based means of communication. Although there has been a lot of academic investigation; its pedagogical validity, ideological implications and theoretical foundation remain the issues of debate. Code-switching in multilingual higher-education contexts The role of code-switching at the intersection between the linguistic structure, symbolic capital and identity negotiation is especially apparent in postcolonial states.

This chapter critically evaluates early and recent literature on the topic of code-switching and code-mixing, contextualises the concept of the phenomenon in the context of education, and outlines the research gap that the current study aims to address. This review does not summarise the existing research, but rather challenges theoretical contradictions and research gaps in the literature.

2.2. Rule-Governed Alternation Structural Foundations:

Some of the initial research on code-switching focused mainly on structural constraints. Poplack (1980) has shown that bilingual speakers manage their linguistic to alternate languages based on systematic grammatical principles; hence, breaking the notion that switching languages is an indication of linguistic incompetence. Her differentiation of inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching provided a typological foundation which has since been used to direct the work of other linguists.

Structurally enlightening, however, these methods were subsequently denounced as putting syntax out of context. Structural studies marked the loci of switching but tended to ignore the reasons that led to such alternation. By making syntactic compatibility more important than social meaning, early studies were in danger of depoliticising language alternation. Purely structural accounts are inefficient in educational institutions where language acquires a symbolic value.

As a result, structural research, even though useful in terms of describing linguistic patterns, is not, in it, able to explain the ideological and interactional processes that contribute to classroom multilingualism.

2.3 Interactional Sociolinguistics: Meaning outside Grammar.

A dramatic change came with the interactional sociolinguistics approach of Gumperz (1982). Gumperz theorised code-switching as a contextualisation signal- a communicative signal identifying a change in alignment, tone, authority or participation. This lens re-focused the need to shift the process of grammatical alternation to social action.

In a classroom, switching can be a sign of clarification, solidarity, mitigation or assertion of authority. Interactional sociolinguistics thus locates the language alternation in discourse-level semantics, but not sentence-level construction.

However, critics also believe that interactional approaches occasionally do not give enough attention to power structures over the macro level. Although they help to shed light on micro-level communicative role, they might not be critical enough to challenge wider institutional discourses that give certain languages an advantage. This restriction is of great acuity in the postcolonial English-based situations where language is impinged and interspersed with the movement of classes and symbolic supremacy.

The current research paper is based on the interactional sociolinguistics and at the same time acknowledges the need to contextualise the interaction within ideological frameworks.

2.4 Code-Switching in the Educational Process.

The use of multiple languages in the classroom is not only a tool for academic success but also for fostering intercultural competence. According to Abdullah et al, (2026), multilingual classrooms can serve as spaces for cultural exchange, where switching between languages supports mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue.

Multilingual classroom studies show that code-switching is often used pedagogically. Lin (2013) claimed that first-language strategic use scaffolds the understanding and approaches classroom involvement. Other researchers in Asia and Africa have recorded the fact that multilingual alternation contributes to clarity of concepts, and lessening of affective barriers (Mazak & Carroll, 2017; Rasman, 2018).

But still pedagogical discussions are polarised. Those who support teaching English only argue that overuse of the first language can limit exposure to the target language (Macaro, 2018). This stand is an indication of input-based second-language acquisition theories that put importance on immersion and exposure level to the maximum.

But such immersion assumptions tend to be blind to sociolinguistic facts. In a situation whereby students have the same dominant local language, making monolingual policy cannot enhance the use of authentic English but can instead inhibit the participation. The English-only and uncontrolled switching binary frame simplifies the complicated classroom dynamics.

Recent research, informed by the theory of translanguaging (García and Wei, 2019), suggests that multilingual speakers operate on an integrated repertoire instead of moving between some closed codes. Translanguaging is seen as a way of flattening the linguistic boundary, but critics believe that it leads to ignoring symbolic and institutional differences between languages. The students in English-major programmes often interpret the limits between the English and the local language as a social meaning.

The discussion regarding the difference between code switching and translanguaging therefore goes beyond the issue of the terminology; it is whether languages constitute discrete systems of symbols or repertoires of fluids conditioned by ideology.

2.5 Pakistani Ideology of Higher Education and Language.

The language situation in Pakistan is stratified. English is related with elite schooling, the power of bureaucracy and ascendancy; Urdu as a national integrating language, regional languages such as Pashto, preserve the cultural and emotional centrism.

Past Pakistani research has affirmed ubiquitous classroom code-switching, but much of the research work is based on questionnaires which measure attitudes as opposed to a qualitative examination of lived experience. Furthermore, scholarly focus is concentrated on urban universities, which is why the rural or semi-rural districts are underrepresented.

Sociolinguistic ecology of District Buner is a unique dynamic. Pashto is the dominant community language, whereas English has an institutional legitimacy. Students who take English based

programmes thus face an increase in symbolic pressure: they are not only learners of English but experts in it. This increases the ideological content of switching.

However, there is still limited literature to investigate the ways in which such students perceive their multilingual practises in English-major conditions. The divide is not in the need to record the existence of switching but to comprehend what it means to switch.

2.6 Identity, Investment and Symbolic Capital.

Identity cannot be separated with language choice in academic settings. Norton (2013) identifies the concept of identity and investment by Norton as an expression of learning language as a socially facilitated process of acquiring symbolic resources. Student investment in English does not just happen as a communication tool, they invest in English with prospects in their minds.

In English classrooms, speaking the English language can be construed as competence, ambition, or intellectual legitimacy. On the other hand, the revival of local languages can be associated with solidarity, authenticity, or emotional security. Changing therefore is a kind of identity bargaining.

This relationship is in line with wider sociological concepts of linguistic capital. The use of English as a representative currency in academic hierarchies, however, makes the purely instrumental interpretation of English difficult due to the attachments of students to local languages. Switching depicts a bargaining between aspirations and identification.

To learn about multilingual classroom practise, however, one will be forced to look beyond cognitive and pedagogical aspects and take a closer look at the identity tensions that are inherent in language hierarchies.

2.7 Research Gap

The literature demonstrates a number of limitations:
1. Too much attention paid to structural or quantitative methods.
2. Lack of focus on higher-education in the countryside.
3. Very little qualitative research has been conducted to examine the lived realities of English-major undergraduates.
4. The interactional and identity frameworks are under-theorised.

The current paper fills these gaps by performing an interpretive multiple-case research based on the interactional sociolinguistics and identity theory in District Buner.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The current research paper has a two-fold theoretical background, which includes Interactional Sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982) and Identity and Investment Theory (Norton, 2013). Interactional sociolinguistics was taken as a tool of analysis to inquire the role of code-switching as a contextualization marker in classroom conversation. By means of this theoretical framework, switching has been approached as a communicative alignment strategy, clarification strategy, and the management participation tool. The Identity and Investment Theory illuminates on the symbolic aspects of language choice within the framework that English is a source of aspirational investment and local languages as grounds of belonging. In this paradigm, code-switching cannot be understood as a mere strategy in language use, but it is a negotiation of identity in the larger context of institutional power relations. Together all these theoretical frameworks provided a holistic analysis that was able to include micro-level interaction and macro-level ideology. Instead of making the structural and the fluidic viewpoints exclusive to each other, the combined approach explained the stratified meanings of the multilingual academic practise.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative multiple-case study to research on code-switching and code-mixing in the higher education Master of Science (BS) English students in District Buner. Qualitative approach was considered to be suitable because the research aimed at understanding the meaning

which the students give to the multilingual practises as opposed to the number of multilingual practises. Creswell (2014) argues that the qualitative research can be used when the aim is to determine the explanation and experience of people in relation to a social phenomenon. The individual educational institutions were considered as closed-case studies, allowing one to analyse in depth, case-specific issues, and allowing cross-cases comparison. According to Patton (2015), qualitative inquiry is especially effective in exploring complex, situation-specific practises in which the perspectives of the participants are core. No quantitative techniques were used, as the emphasis was not on the statistical generalisation, but on the interpretation of the social and academic roles of the code-switching in particular institutional context.

3.2 Population and Sampling
The study population included BS English students studying in four institutions of higher learning in District Buner. The emphasis on English-major students was purposeful, a factor that was related to their linguistic place of residence, where English is not only the object of study, but the marker of academic authority as well, further exacerbating symbolic pressures on the use of language. Deliberate sampling was used to sample information-rich respondents who are able to describe their multilingual experiences, which is in line with the claims made by Patton (2015) that qualitative inquiry is more about depth than representativeness. Criterion sampling guaranteed that all the participants were involved in English medium instruction and that maximum variation sampling across semesters was used to demonstrate the variations in academic exposure and linguistic confidence. Overall, 26 students participated in semi-structured interviews and the data collection process continued until thematic saturation was achieved that is, when no new conceptual information emerged with the further interviews (Creswell, 2014). There was no use of random sampling since the study intended to understand interpretively instead of generalising (statistically).

3.3 Data Collection Instruments
Two major tools were used: semi structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations. The interviews were carried out using semi-structured interviews in order to assess the perceptions of the participants towards code-switching, emotional reaction, and decoding of the institutional language expectations. Such format allowed consistency among the interviews, as well as, flexibility to probe emerging themes, which is a strength of qualitative interviewing as defined by Creswell (2014). Actual multilingual practises occurred in the classroom setting, whereby observations were made to ensure that the data is not necessarily self-reported, which might not necessarily be accurate in terms of interactional behaviour. Patton (2015) reminds of the significance of triangulating the interviews through the observations in order to increase credibility and depth of context. The observation protocols recorded the cases of language alternation, patterns of participation, teacher position, and peer reactions. Audio-recorded all the interviews and transcribed word-to-word in order to retain code-switching to achieve the analytic authenticity. In translation cases, the original language passages were left in order to preserve interpretive value.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure
Data collection was pre-emptively followed by institutional permission. The purpose of the study, confidentiality measures and voluntary nature were explained and the written consent was obtained. The interviews took place in a quiet academic environment and were done within duration of 35 to 60 minutes. The observations were conducted in regular classroom lessons and without interfering with the learning process. Procedural logic followed the data management paradigm of Creswell (2014) in the qualitative analysis process: data organising, holistic reading of transcripts, coding data segments, service development themes, and the meaning. Thematic analysis per se adhered to the six-phase structured approach by Braun and Clarke (2006).

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process involved:

1. Familiarization through repeated reading and memo-writing.
2. Initial coding across the dataset without forcing pre-existing categories.
3. Collapsing related codes into candidate themes.
4. Reviewing themes across institutions for coherence and divergence.
5. Defining and naming themes to reflect patterned meaning.
6. Producing analytic narrative supported by excerpts.

Rather than counting responses, the analysis focused on interpretive depth. Cross-case comparison was used to examine how institutional culture influenced multilingual practice.

Conversation analysis was not adopted because the study sought to integrate interview meaning with observed behaviour rather than conduct micro-level turn-by-turn analysis.

3.6 Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexivity was upheld in the course of the analytic process admitting the interpretive contribution that the researcher makes. The contextual sensitivity of the researcher, being accustomed to the sociolinguistic context of District Buner, was, on the one hand, the reason to be aware of possible assumptions about English prestige and local legitimacy of language. Reflexive memoing questioned analytic judgments in order to reduce bias.

4. Findings and Data Analysis

4.1 overview

The thematic analysis generated nine major themes organized under three overarching analytic domains:

1. **Interactional Functions of Code-Switching**
2. **Ideological and Institutional Pressures**
3. **Identity Negotiation and Emotional Positioning**

These domains did not operate independently; rather, they intersected across classroom discourse. Code-switching emerged not merely as linguistic alternation but as socially regulated academic practice embedded within symbolic hierarchies.

4.2 Domain One: Interactional Functions of Code-Switching

4.2.1 Switching at Conceptual Thresholds

The phenomenon of periodic switching which might be described as taking place at the conceptual thresholds was a constant in institutions, i.e. a point where abstract academic content required cognitive anchoring.

As an illustration, one of the students, at some point, during a literature discussion, began explaining a metaphor in English:

After further explaining in Urdu and Pashto, the student came back:

"*The poet uses imagery to represent isolation…*"

The student paused, hesitated, and then shifted:

"*Yahan wo jo tanhai ka concept hai na… da da matlab da che…*"

After elaborating in Urdu and Pashto, the student returned:

"*So basically, it reflects emotional separation.*"

This trend was repeated in the several sessions. Switching was done not by chance, but at the exact moment the conceptual density rose.

Linguistic activity that was witnessed in this study served as a cognitive stabiliser. Instead, students did not drop English but switched to Pashto or Urdu so that they could give more detailed descriptions and to elaborate further when they were faced by cognitive complexity. English was still used as the official school language, but Pashto and Urdu provided a sense of emotion and familiarity. This trend coincides with the findings of similar experiments which approach code-switching as a cognitive resource that is used to cope with cognitive load as opposed to a symptom of linguistic incompetence.

The results are consistent with the literature of the wider bilingual classroom dynamics and the contribution of linguistic flexibility towards conceptual understanding. As an illustration, both Lin (2013) and Macaro (2018) posit that, when learners are exposed to difficult academic concepts, they will tend to shift to a more familiar language so that they will be able to understand the academic material and in order to re-normalise their cognitive activity.

4.2.2 Repair Sequences and Face-Saving

Switching is often used during self-repair.

Example:

"*The main argument is… uh… actually iska matlab ye hai…*"

The transition was commonly followed by the reduction of the vocal register or laughter. Some subtle body-language changes were observed and noted by the observation: avoiding eye contact, nodding with the peer, and slight chuckling.

In this case, switching played the role of a face saving measure. Students also would switch between the linguistic codes to get back in control and thus to avoid the embarrassment of not knowing English in front of people. The classroom was thus reconstructed as a testing field where changing relieved the pressure of individual performance in English. The observations made here show that code-switching are not only a cognitive strategy but also an affection mechanism of regulation. Future research by Wei (2018) and Gardner-Chloros (2009) has demonstrated that code-switching tends to be a tool of emotional and social control, as well as guarding the face and identity of the speaker in the sphere of evaluation.

4.2.3 Peer Solidarity and Linguistic Alignment

Language switching was aggravated in peer group conversations. Sometimes, English-only conversation even brought derision:

"*Wah, professor ban gaya hai!*"

Students who continued to overdepend on the English language were sometimes socially repositioned. The hierarchical group was controlled by language. English was a symbol of aspiration, but, there was a risk accompanying this option which was the possibility of creating a feeling of arrogance. In comparison, the Pashto was used to strengthen the unity, and cultural solidarity. This is why, the switch process was used as a means of social alignment, thus, reducing the symbolic distance and facilitating the cohesion of peers. Such results support the idea that code-switching is often used to govern the social process as Gumperz (1982) and Gardner-Chloros (2009) claim and underline the necessity of code-switching as the means of signalling affiliation and balancing the power relationships in multilingual settings.

4.3 Domain Two: Institutional and Ideological Pressures
4.3.1 English as Academic Legitimacy

In the semi-structured interviews, the participants referred to English using terms like future, *confidence*, *professional*, and *respect*. The respondents directly related fluency in English to employability and upward mobility.

However, this idealistic framing was paralleled with practical multilingual pressures.

English was a kind of symbolic capital and learners intelligently used it to suit academic and professional goals. However, such a symbolic investment did not presuppose the rejection of local linguistic registers instead, students retained the practises of using Pashto and Urdu to travel between social, cultural, and affective situations. This fact is consistent with Norton (2013) who assumes that the choice of language is both a manifestation of investment in social capital and negotiation of identity in the identity hierarchy based on sociolinguistic statuses.

4.3.2 Hidden Multilingualism at the University

Cross-case analysis has revealed a distinctive difference: at the university, code-switching is less evident during the whole-class communication and more common when it comes to covert communication between peers.

Students reported:

"*In presentation, I try full English. But in group work, we mix.*"

It was not institutional pressure that removed code-switching, but it moved this type of linguistic alternation to more discreet spheres. The given observation highlights that it is ideological pressures that influence the visibility of the linguistic behaviour but not its existence. These findings are further supported by Abdullah et, al. (2026), that language choices in educational settings often reinforce power relations, with switching acting as a tool to mitigate these imbalances.

4.3.3 Ambivalence and Internalized Hierarchy

The most analytically important theme was, perhaps, ambivalence.

Switching has been described as beneficial, but also humiliating, by students.

"*Mixing helps me understand, but I feel like I should not.*"

The identified duality is an example of an internalised and language hierarchy, in which the ideology of English-only has become psychologically embedded. As a result, code-switching is viewed, simultaneous as a linguistic empowerment process and a sign of perceived ineptitude. Norton (2013) argues that this kind of ambivalence is a common situation where the learners invest in a language on the basis of its social worth and at the same time struggle against both cultural and institutional forces. This inner struggle highlights how the behaviour of language is influenced by the external ideologies as well as the process of shaping individual identity.

4.4 Domain Three: Identity Negotiation
4.4.1 English as Future Self

The learners explained that they spoke English as a future representation of themselves. English was a symbol of elevation, career and promotion. Some of the respondents related English fluency to employability and social respect outside the classroom. One participant has explained this position clearly:

"*When I speak English, I feel like I am already in my future job. It gives me confidence, like I am becoming something bigger than my current situation.*"

Another student noted:

"*English makes you look educated. Even if you are still learning, when you speak it, people treat you differently.*"

According to these statements, English was not only an academic tool, but it was also a sign of a perceived professional identity. Using the English language gave students the opportunity to occupy a projected future self that was coincidental to the institutional legitimacy and socioeconomic mobility. In this respect, language performance served as identity rehearsal, which embodied investment in the social positioning that was expected of a person.

4.4.2 Pashto as Authentic Self

Conceptualising the English language as a symbol of aspiration, Pashto obtains the positions of emotional underpinning and cultural firmness. Students always claimed Pashto to be the language where they feel most natural, free, and connected with the rest of the world. One of the participants said:

"*When I speak Pashto, I feel natural. I don't think about grammar or pronunciation. It's just me.*"

Another said:

"*English is for class, but Pashto is who I really am. With Pashto, I don't feel pressure.*"

All these utterances are aimed at suggesting that Pashto is a linguistic one-way of psychological comfort and relationship closeness. Whereas in English one is required to perform and monitor oneself, Pashto allows spontaneous expression under evaluative anxiety-free conditions. The

interactions between peers where the participants switch to Pashto are often to be accompanied by the instances of humour, emotional focus, or solidarity, which makes it one of the reasons why the language of belonging is assigned that name.

As a result Pashto does not work as a competing code to English but instead is an anchoring resource of identity. Whereas English implies aspiration and institutional legitimacy, Pashto swears against falsification and cohesiveness. Hence, code-switching between these linguistic systems signifies identity navigation between symbolic spaces instead of linguistic turmoil

4.4.3 Urdu as Middle Ground

The Urdu was often used as a compromising repertoire, neither as close as Pashto nor as prestigious as English. Learners used Urdu as a linguistic medium of uncertainty between the aspirational speech of English and the familiarity of the loving familiarity of the Pashto.

One of the interviewees explained:

"*Urdu is the language we all understand. When I need to explain something important but not in English, I use Urdu. It's not too formal, but it's also not too casual like Pashto.*"

Another respondent noted:

"*In class, I speak English. Among friends, I speak Pashto. But sometimes, when I want to be clear but not too serious, I use Urdu.*"

These responses demonstrate that Urdu lacked the emotional or cultural weight as that of Pashto, and did not represent the professional ambitions with which English was linked. Otherwise, it served a linguistic mediatory role, therefore, helping to communicate in a space that mediates the demands of formal education and those of informal social interaction.

4.5 Negative Cases

Not all participants celebrated switching.

A minority expressed concern that:

"*Too much mixing stops improvement.*"

This indicates internal variation. The dataset did not produce unanimous endorsement of multilingual practice. This strengthens analytic credibility.

5. Discussion
5.1 Reframing Code-Switching Beyond Deficit Narratives

The present results challenge the longstanding deficit-based definitions that have traditionally defined code-switching in English-based higher learning. Rather than indicating linguistic incompetence, the observed multilingual alternation between the student population of the Bachelor of Science course in English in District Buner was a form of information organised systematically, intentionally and socially. The data show how the switching was strategically used at times of conceptual complications, interactional adaptation and identity positioning. This is in accordance with the initial interactional sociolinguistic propositions (Gumperz, 1982) which view code switching as a means of communication and not a mistake. Further, the current research adds to this viewpoint with placing of this type of interactional behaviour in a rural Pakistani higher learning environment, which is characterised by strong symbolic hierarchies.

Notably, the students did not forsake English even in instances of switching. English was always in a dominant position of legitimising academic frame. The switching took place not beyond the framework of English discourse, but within it, which implies that multilingualism practise in such a condition did not pose to the domination of English, on the contrary, it helped students to cope with its requirements. Therefore, instead of being detrimental to the proficiency in English, the frequent switching maintained the interaction with the English as the medium of instructions.

5.2 Cognitive Scaffolding and Participation

The finding demonstrates that code-switching occurred on a regular basis at conceptual edges - points at which abstract literature or theoretical material needed to be grounded. This fact reinforces

pedagogical thesis according to which the controlled first-language use is able to increase the comprehension (Lin, 2013). However, the existing evidence is beyond mere scaffolding explanations. Switching was not only a lexical translation means but was also a meaning-reconstructing mechanism in culturally highly sensitive terms. Pashto and Urdu empowered the students to locate the abstract academic concepts in the lived experience.

No less important is the relation between participation and switching. Increase in silence was witnessed due to intensification of English-only norms. The respondents claimed to eke out the speech as a result of apprehension of making a mistake and being ridiculed by their peers. Conversely, those conditions that enabled multilingual tolerance encouraged participation. This detail makes the arguments of input-maximisation (Macaro, 2018) more difficult since it proves that participation is a condition, without which exposure will be pointless. Although silence is likely to increase the English input, it does not necessarily lead to deeper learning.

Therefore, the evidence is that strict monolingual classroom instruction can have unintended negative effects of inhibiting interactions especially where there is strong local linguistic identity of students.

5.3 Language Ideology and Symbolic Hierarchy

The internalised hierarchy of the English language among the participants of the study is the most analytically salient discovery, as they always related the language to prestige, professionalism, and mobility in the future. Such perception can be described as the notion of linguistic capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1991), in which dominant languages are taken to be symbolic resources that provide the access to social and economic power. In accordance with David Block (2010), the English in District Buner was not only an academic subject but a dream tool associated with perceived possibilities in the world. However, interviewees at the same time felt guilty in making a code-switch, although it was a pragmatic communicative benefit, and as such, the psychological impact of an English-only mentality. This stress is consistent with the assertion by Robert Phillipson (1992) that the prevalence of English enhances the monolingual ideals, and the concept of the monolingual habitus, introduced by Ingrid Gogolin (1994), in which institutions institutionalise monolingual performance despite the presence of more than one language. Nevertheless, symbolic capital did not eliminate emotional affiliation to Pashto instead, participants still referred to it as the language of authenticity and emotional safety hence supporting the argument by Aneta Pavlenko (2005), that first languages have more profound affective connotations. As a result, the language switching in this case cannot be understood as a misunderstanding of the codes but, instead, a compromise with the identity and institutional demands which is reminiscent of the theory of investment and identity in language learning by Bonny Norton (2013). In this respect, the English-only ideology did not eradicate the multilingual practise, but rather transformed the emotional and moral experience of the multilingual practise.

5.4 Identity Negotiation and Investment

The findings are very much in line with the theory of identity and investment, which Norton (2013) has. Language preferences expressed future mobility between present social selfs and prospective professional destinies. Speaking English was an indication of investing in academic legitimacy and upward mobility and speaking Pashto, solidarity and authenticity. Urdu was often used as a mediating language, and it soothed tense relations between the two opposites. Switching was, therefore, the mediation of identities. Participants did not sit back and receive the linguistic structures but went on symbolic journeys, having to balance between aspiration and belonging, prestige and comfort, and authority and relatability. These results refute the simplistic explanations of bilingual identity as either divided or continuous fluidity but rather, identity is a negotiated compromise that is both influenced by institutional authority and cultural grounding.

5.5 Code-Switching and Translanguaging Debate

Current results are subject to the extant arguments between traditional code-switching theories and the phenomenon of translanguaging. Although the concept of translanguaging theory argues that fluidity

and integrated repertoires (Garcicia and Wei, 2019) can be considered important, the existing evidence suggests that the symbolic barriers between instances of language are still socially significant. Even the participants themselves identified English as separate to Pashto in regard to prestige and institutional power. Thus, despite the fact that multilingual practise involved fluidity in interaction; it went about stratified ideological frameworks. It implies that a fluid repertoire does not necessarily erode hierarchy, and translanguaging can be viewed only through symbolic economies favouring this or that code. In line with this, the analysis confirms a critical synthesis, namely that multilingual discourse is both fluid and stratified in practise and value, respectively.

5.6 Cross-Case Variation and Institutional Culture
The experience of switching was institutional-level and was influenced by institutional culture. The fact that switching in the formal interaction had decreased with the increase in pressure to speak English, however, did not eliminate the switching in the peer conversation. Such tendency means that ideology plays its role in visibility and not presence of multilingual practise. The participants also learned to strategically adjust their behaviour to evaluative situations. This type of variation demonstrates the necessity of contextualising multilingualism instead of linking similar dynamics in the classroom across various institutions.

5.7 Theoretical Contributions
The paper contributes to the theory by incorporating interactional sociolinguistics, identity, and investment theory into a rural context of higher-education. Interactional theory describes functioning of switching in the discourse whereas identity theory describes emotional and symbolic meaning of switching. A combination of these frameworks demonstrates that code-switching is neither structural nor ideological in its nature; it is an academic practise which is organised on a socially level because of cognitive demand, need to participate, symbolic capital and institutional hierarchy.

5.8 Implications for English-Medium Instruction
The results indicate that policies of English-medium instructions in bilingual or more environments need to shift away of extreme monolingual anticipations. Monolingual scaffolding in the control of the language can be used to increase English comprehension and involvement, without compromising on the development of the English language. Nevertheless, pedagogical reform also needs to act upon internalised reform-related switching stigma. Promotion of ideological reflection on language in English-major programmes can help students figure out a way to reconcile the ideology of multilingual practise to academic legitimacy.

5.9. Limitations and Future Research
This paper provides a more subtle qualitative analysis of the process of code switching in BSE students in District Buner; although, a number of limitations contribute to the generalizability of the results. The sample size was also rather limited containing 26 participants representative of four institutions in one district, thus limiting the generalizability of findings to other sociolinguistic contexts, especially urban or/and linguistically mixed. Though there was the introduction of classroom observations and the data of interviews, the analytic scheme never used any fine-grained conversation-analytic methods which could have identified the other micro-interactional processes. More so, the study gave preference to student points of view, but the representation of teacher insights could have provided a holistic explanation of the ideology of institutional language. The aspect of variability of English proficiency between the participants was not taken care of systematically which could have been a factor that could alter the patterns of language alternation. Future studies ought to focus on rural to urban designs, teacher attitudes, longitudinal studies, and use the micro-discursive methodology to explain the roles of code-switching in the layered institutional and identity systems.

Conclusion

This current study illustrates that the multilingualism classroom discussion among BS English learners in District Buner is a structured and social-contextual academic process as opposed to a language insufficiency indicator. The paper presents the findings of a qualitative multiple-case study, which will be based on Interactional Sociolinguistics and Identity and Investment Theory, in terms of choosing the most appropriate language: the study demonstrates that students switch between languages strategically in order to cope with conceptual complexity, maintain participation, control affective risk and negotiating symbolic hierarchies in relation to English and local languages. English will always establish itself as a language of academic authenticity and prospective, against which Pashto and Urdu are sources of cultural anchoring and immediacy in communication. The results are characterised by the salient tension, i.e., the students are using the multilingual practises as a means to understand and feel confident about themselves but, at the same time, internalise the English-only notions of the ideology that reduces the latter to something that might be deficient. This ambivalence highlights the effects of lingual hierarchism that has continued to be present in English-based higher education. The foregrounding of student voices in a Pakistani rural setting and the analysis of the students in this context make the study relevant to the overall sociolinguistic discourses of multilingualism, identity, and institutional power and argueues that multilingual resources should be treated as part-rather than periphery-based of academic meaning-making.

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