PERSPECTIVE ON CODE SWITCHING IN CONTENT-BASED CLASSROOMS: GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS CONTEXT IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Teaching in Pakistan has always shown irregular policy decisions with reference to medium of instructions, and choice of language used by teachers and students. This has resulted in below average education quality in government schools. Multitude of research has been done, both internationally and nationally, on use of language for teaching and learning. Using language repertoire of a learner has been found useful and effective for development and learning (Manan et al., 2017, Liebscher & Dailey, 2005). With recent trend towards code switching by declaring EMI as a challenge (p.47, National Education Policy Report, 2017), the paper aims at mapping teachers' perspective on the policy. This is achieved through a questionnaire and series of

interviews on code switching developed on patterns of Translanguage theory (García & Lin, 2017, García & Wei, 2014). By considering translanguaging, the pedagogic counterpart of code switching, the research provides direction and suggests a solution to a national problem that is which language to use for teaching and communication in government schools for effective teaching and learning.

Keywords

Translanguage, Multilingual, Code Switching, Instructional Strategies

1. Introduction

Medium of instructions in Pakistan has seen drastic switches from all Urdu medium (L1 based) to early immersion EMI (L2 based) and finally to mother tongue-based multilingual education which is a blended approach (Zaidi & Zaki 2017; Manan, David, & Dumanig, 2015; Bashiruddin & Qayyum, 2014). Although these policy changes have resulted in improvement and development in teaching and learning practices and strategies, yet these do not take into account the ever present multilingual set-up of Pakistani society and its culture.

A child in Pakistan is born with a range of languages that are acquired at a later stage and are embedded into a child's linguistic repertoire (Karim, Saeed, & Akber; 2019). Moreover, majority of the students in Pakistan come from cultural backgrounds where they use mother-tongue at home (Kalyar et al., 2019). Consequently, they do not have frequent or constant exposure to target language (L2) which in this case is English. Therefore converting to mother-tongue based multilingual approach seems a logical step. However, in all instances official language Urdu is used instead of mother-tongue as well as early EMI immersion policy is implemented in the schools (Gulzar, & Qadir, 2010).

Considering above mentioned findings, this study aims to map perspectives of teachers (secondary stake-holders and primary resources in the classroom) on which language to use for instructions as well as for communication in the classroom. The research makes a progression towards finding a sound footing on the basis of Translanguaging theory (García et al. 2011; Garcia, 2009), statistical and descriptive analysis of the questionnaire and the interviews. It is finally proposed to use a multilingual approach to teaching, learning and communicating in the classroom.

As the study is first step towards to mapping perspectives of teachers and finding trends, therefore only a limited number of participants (N=100) were interviewed and asked to fill in a questionnaire. Similarly, the research is localized in its context relating to schools in Punjab. However, on the basis of the findings and the results, the research can be replicated not only nationally across Pakistan but also internationally across various multilingual countries and nations.

2. Code Switching and Translanguaging : The Connection

Code switching and translanguaging are two different multilingual phenomena which are can be counterparts in a pedagogic context.

Code switching is a bilingual activity in which the speaker interchanges or mixes L1 and the target language. This mixing of languages could be intersententially or intrasententially depending on the context (Park, 2013; Reyes, 2004). Although previously considered to be result of lack of knowledge of a language, now the researchers believe that code switching usually takes place when bilinguals use and exploit their language repertoire meaningfully for communication (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Reyes, 2004). Consequently, in pedagogic setting code switching is the optimal use of language by teachers and learners and it aids teaching and learning process.

Translanguaging, on the other hand, is referred to as shuffling of language for pedagogic purposes. It is a process that involves such conversational practices where learners incorporate different languages, which are part of their language repertoires, in learning and cognitive mechanism. This is mainly done by "by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitudes, beliefs and performance" (Wei, 2011, p. 1223). Garcia (2009), in fact, consolidates the term translanguaging as the act of creating a social space for the learners where they have flexibility to permeate different learning spheres through porous overlapping language bubbles that connect different languages in a multilingual learner's repertoire.

It can, therefore, be stated that translanguaging is code switching in strict pedagogic sense (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012; Wang & Wu, 2016) which is actually beneficial for the learners. A study based on 25 Valencain Kindergarten students revealed the positive impact on students' language learning process when they were allowed to use their L1, L2 and L3

constructively in their classroom for learning and communication (Portolés & Martí 2017). In fact, translanguaging is seen as the "hetero-glossic language ideology" (MacSwan, 2017) that supports a multilingual repertoire in a pedagogic set-up.

Creese & Blackledge (2010) describe two case studies of Chinese and Gujrati bilingual schools and recommend flexibility in language use advocating bilingual instructional strategies in pedagogic set up. The former relied on observation and interviews for compiling case studies, whereas present research uses questionnaire and interview for mapping perspectives.

Another study (Liebscher & O' Cain, 2005) mapped the perspective of learners in relation to their attitudes towards using more than one language in the classroom. It was evident through the study that the learners considered classroom as a bilingual space where they could practice and promote cultural integration. Consequently, translanguaging would help support learning in low-income government schools of Pakistan where learners come from a diversified cultural background and speak a range of languages (García & Lin, 2017; García, & Wei, 2014).

Therefore, in this study when we talk about mapping teachers perspective in code switching, we, in actuality, consider the usefulness of translanguaging in pedagogic strategies and implication which could in turn help learners not only acquire a language but also aid subject matter cognition (Wang, 2019; Chimbganda, & Mokgwathi, 2012)..

3. Methodology

In order to map the perspective of teachers, current study interviews and puts forth a questionnaire to 100 Expert Trainers from all over Punjab, Pakistan.

Expert Trainers are government teachers who teach different subject and levels. They are hired by the government to train fellow teachers as well as newly inducted teachers from time to time. The reason for selecting these participants is that all trainers have been recruited through a similar process; they have all been trained as per certain and equal standards and they all work with British Council Lahore (Punjab) for various teacher development activities.

Government schools are selected on the grounds that they provide a natural base for multilingual language stores of the learners as learners socially and culturally belong to different groups, sects and ethnicities with lesser exposure to L2 and more practices of mother tongue or L1.

Participants were sent out a questionnaire based on classroom practices. Moreover, these expert trainers were also interviewed for qualitative analysis. Therefore, the study is a mix method approach mapping perspective of government teachers on code switching in the classroom for instructions and communication.

4. Analysis and Results

Out of all 100 teachers who were given the questionnaire and were interviewed, majority (43.62%) had been teaching for 5 years. Number of years of experience is significant because majority of the teachers who were seniors had the perspective that English should be part of the curriculum in English medium schools. However, the same teachers were found to be using trilingual approach to teaching in their classrooms and on asking they reported that "it was more beneficial to the students". The statistics for this are shown in table 1.

Table 1: *Tabular Presentation of Range of Experience of Teachers*

Years of Experience	n	Language (for teaching)
0-5	43	Both (English /Urdu)
5-10	24	Both (English / Urdu)
10-15	19	Both (English / Urdu)
15-20	5	English
20 and above	9	Trilingual (with Punjabi)

N=100

It was further revealed that 87.76% teachers used both language in the classroom and the reason stated for this choice was better understanding and comprehension by the students. It can be represented in a tabular form as in table 2.

Table 2: *Tabular Presentation of Choice of Language used by the Teachers*

Choice of Language	n	%
Urdu	5	5%

Mother-tongue (Punjabi, Sairaiki)	1	1%
English	1	1%
Both (English and Urdu)	86	86%
Trilingual	7	7%

N=100

It is therefore evident that code switching is a common phenomenon. Another interesting value that comes up is use of three languages (7/ 100). Although this number is very small and negligible, still it is more compared to other values and shows the range of languages in linguistic repertoires of students and teacher in a classroom. Consequently, neglect of such a range of languages eventually stops at teacher or a learner from using a language that can be used as an effective tool.

As participants from this area were teachers who taught different subjects, therefore we further narrowed the results by finding out if they used a particular language for a particular subject. On investigation, it showed that 80% of the teachers code switched even for English. The reason stated was ease learners found when grasping concepts and forming connotations when things were expressed in their mother-tongue or the national language. Once this relation was established, they had no issues practicing the language or drilling it. Statistically, the range of language being used for teaching different subjects is shown in table 3.

Table 3: *Tabular Presentation of Choice of Language for Teaching Different Subjects*

Choice of Language	**n**	**Reasons**
Urdu	15	15%
Mother-tongue (Punjabi, Sairaiki)	1	1%
English	1	1%
Both (English and Urdu)	80	80%
Trilingual	3	3%

N=100

As a natural progression, the reason for choice of language was investigated. One teacher revealed that learners understood a lesson that was completely in English. However, she further

added that this was possible when learners had had lessons previously on the same topic. It helped set base for the content and hence making learning using English easier and effective. However, when starting a new topic or different content, there was always need of using Urdu (national language) as it made learning easier, fun and more motivating. The results were statistically gauged and are shown in the table 4.

Table 4: *Frequency Use of English Language for Classroom Instructions and Communication*

Range / Scale	n	%
Always	1	1%
Usually	20	20%
Sometimes	30	30%
Rarely	39	39%
Never	10	10%

N=100

Above statistics show that the range for indicators sometimes (30%) and rarely (39%) show a closer relationship compared to other indicators. In order to investigate whether this was a choice based on teachers language skills and awareness or if it concerned with the teachers, the teachers were asked which language they were comfortable using while teaching. Table 5 shows the results in.

Table 5: *Choice of Language while Teaching (Medium of Instructions and Communication)*

Choice of Language	n	%
Urdu	19	19%
Mother-tongue (Punjabi, Sairaiki)	1	1%
English	6	13%
Both (English and Urdu)	66	66%
Trilingual	8	1%

N=100

The reason for such a varied range of language choice was evident when teachers revealed that unlike private schools they had children coming from lower to lower-middle socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, most of the parents were uneducated and consequently learners either spoke mother-tongue at home or Urdu. Similarly, teachers avoided giving homework tasks which were solely in English language as learners might not get help at home.

In order to know the perspective of teacher as to what time would be best for introducing English as Medium of Instructions, 6 (N=100) teachers recommended higher primary or secondary so that learners would have a base in at least one of the languages on the grounds that "for now, learners were proficient in none of the languages and most importantly we happen to lose our languages" (Table 6).

Table 6: *Introducing Languages at Different Levels*

Choice of language	n	Level / Grade
Urdu	19	Kindergarten
Mother-tongue (Punjabi, Sairaiki)	1	Kindergarten
English	6	Primary
Both (English and Urdu)	66	Secondary
Trilingual	8	Kindergarten

N=100

5. Conclusion

The study therefore reveals that the actual practice in classroom is multilingual approach. Teachers and learners bring a variety of languages to the class. Instead of inhibiting their use, the languages should be used for effective communication and instructional strategies (Wang, 2019, Yevudey, 2013).

Consequently it can be said that if translanguaging is taken as the pedagogic counterpart of code switching then translanguaging is the ultimate medium of instructions solution for bilingual and multilingual countries like Pakistan. It is just a matter of using the optimum resources for optimum output in teaching and learning context.

5.1 Limitations and Future Recommendations

Mapping perspective of teachers is a limited study in that it considers only a limited number of teachers in its scope. Moreover, the research is based on perspective (questionnaires and interviews) and not on empirical data. Similarly, the research covers only one aspect and supposes translanguaging as the ultimate solution. Therefore, there are possibilities of variations in both procedures and results. In fact, the present study could lead to future research such as:

1. Implementing translanguaging strategies for giving instructions and language learning in a classroom and observing the results. This could provide learners with empirical data which is could be more valid and reliable compared to perspective of the teachers.

2. Semiotics can be considered as language and effect of including arts and expression as part of communication in the syllabus (these are so often ignored in Pakistan). Their impact on progress and development of the learners could be monitored.

3. A framework could be worked upon based on classroom action research that could help incorporate translanguaging into the pedagogic practices.

4. Translanguaging cannot only be a tool that supports teaching learning paradigm, but it could also be a vehicle in supporting and saving the languages that are on the verge of extinction. This would be done as learners would be encouraged to use their own language, along with other available languages, for communication within the classroom. This would help dying languages survive.

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