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Language Alternation in Multilingual Societies: Analyzing Bi/Multilingual Conversation

Muhammad Usman

Lecturer, University of Mirpurkhas

E-mail: Usmanthaheem90@gmail.com

Tahreem Akhter (Corresponding author)

Isra University, Hyderabad, Pakistan/Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

E-mail: tahreem@graduate.utm.my

Anum Hussain

English Lecturer, Government College University, Hyderabad

E-mail: anum.hussain@gcuh.edu.pk

Mohammad Huzaifa Siddiqui

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Malaysia

E-mail: mohdhuzaifasid@gmail.com

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Abstract

The research examines the relationship between language choice and alternation in bilingual/multilingual conversations within a multicultural/multilingual context. It builds on the principle that identity is socially constructed, i.e., it has the social nature of construction in any multilingual society. Zentella (2008) also expresses how bi/multilingualism represents their class, race, and ethnicity through linguistic practices. The study interprets that language alteration occurs in a bi/multilingual contextual society. This study analyzes everyday

discourse practices in monolingual and bi/multilingual formal education settings.

The study addresses the following research questions: (1) How does the Multilingual context of private schools influence linguistic identities, including students and teachers? (2) What factors influence language alternation in bi/multilingual conversations among students and children in private schools in Pakistan? (3) How is language choice/translanguaging perceived in formal and informal settings of private schools in Pakistan?

The participants include bilingual students and teachers from private educational institutions in Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan.

Based on qualitative research, the study utilizes Semi-structured interviews of 20 participants to collect data from students and teachers in Pakistan. The Conversation analysis (Gafaranga, 2000; Gafaranga & Torras, 2002) was used under Gumperz's (1982) "we/they code" framework and Myers-Scotton's (2000) Markedness Model to recognize the parameters/reasons for language alternation. Key findings reveal how language choice replicates linguistic identities and multilingual contextual conversations. This study contributes to socio-pragmatic theory by providing insights into discourse practices in bi/multilingual environments, highlighting the link between language and identity.

Keywords: Identity in the contemporary world, Linguistic identity, Language Alternation, Language Choice, Social identity, and ethnic identity

1. Introduction

Language is a powerful tool that shapes individual and collective identities within a society. In a bi/multilingual context, language choice and alternation are deeply intertwined with social structures, cultural values, and power dynamics. The ability to switch between languages is a language alternation. It is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a social practice that reflects identity, group membership, and societal norms (Gumperz, 1982; Zentella, 2008). Therefore, Pun (2024) defines bilinguals as people who can speak two languages at the level of conversational or native-like. Language alternation is switching the conversation to two or more than two languages in a single conversation (Younas et al., 2020).

The conflict of linguistic choices and language alternation in bi/multilingual contexts is particularly pointed out in Pakistani private education settings in this study, where languages such as Urdu, English, Sindhi, Punjabi, and Balochi coexist. Despite this linguistic diversity, dominant language ideologies often dictate which languages are valued in formal settings, including schools. For example, Urdu and English are considered the languages of education, governance, and professional communication, while regional languages are often confined to home and informal conversations. This clash raises critical questions about how language choices shape social interactions and identity formation.

Research has highlighted the role of language alternation in constructing and negotiating identities in bilingual and multilingual contexts (Ochs, 1996; Myers-Scotton, 2000). However, there is a need for more empirical studies that examine how individuals in Pakistan navigate linguistic boundaries in educational and non-formal discourse settings. Understanding these dynamics can provide insights into the broader sociolinguistic landscape and the challenges associated with language preservation and identity construction.

This study explores the role of language alternation in bilingual conversations within private educational institutions in Hyderabad, Sindh. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

(1) How does the Multilingual context of private schools influence linguistic identities, including students and teachers?

(2) What factors influence language alternation in bi/multilingual conversations among students and children in private schools in Pakistan?

(3) How is language choice/translanguaging perceived in formal and informal settings of private schools in Pakistan?

This study contributes to the discourse on language and identity in multilingual societies and employs qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and participant observations. Its findings will provide a deeper understanding of the social and cultural implications of language alternation.

It offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and linguists interested in language planning, multilingual education, and identity construction. Ultimately, this research highlights the complexities of linguistic choices and the need for inclusive language policies that

recognize and support linguistic diversity.

1.1 Understanding 'Identity and Linguistic Identity'

The study of identity is a complex and evolving field. It is a recent development from the latter half of the twentieth century (Edwards, 2009). Here, identity is understood to be plural, dynamic, non-fixed, and socially constructed (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Edwards, 2009; Lemke, 2008; May, 2008). For as Lemke (2008) observes:

> 'We are always ourselves, but who we are, who we portray ourselves as being, who we are construed as being, changes with interacting ants and settings, with the age of life. Identities develop and change, they are at least multi-faceted if not in fact plural. Their consistency and continuity are our constructions, mandated by our cultural Notion of our community's normal and abnormal selves.' (p. 19, emphasis added)

Bernard-Rau, B. (2024) also supports the concept of plural and hybrid identities. He suggests a dynamic perspective of human groups. His idea challenges the concept of fixing the nature of identities and proposes the evolving nature of identities in the multilingual context of society.

Identity in language serves as a tangible reflection of one's existence within societies. People require psychosocial 'anchors'; they are that straightforward (Edwards, 2009, p. 2). And one such anchor, a powerful one, can be language. Indeed, as Joseph (2004) notes,

> 'Any study of language needs to take into consideration identity if it is to be rich and meaningful because identity is itself at the very heart of what l Language is about how it operates, why, and how it came into existence. and evolved as it did, how it is learned, and how it is used every day, by every user, every time it is used.' (p. 224).

Language is fundamental to a particular ethnic or cultural identity because it is believed to "encode" a cultural worldview and traditional forms of knowledge (Bunge, 1992; Fishman, 1991; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Kangas & Dunbar, 2010). However, scholars debate whether language serves as a vital identity marker or merely a behavioral trait that can be replaced without altering one's core identity. Some linguists argue that language is a conditional marker of identity (Edwards, 2009; May, 2004, 2008), while others suggest that identity remains unchanged even when a language is substituted (Eastman, 1984).

Pietikäinen, K. S. (2021), in his research on the contextual influence on translanguaging in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) setting, focuses on how multilingual speakers draw upon their linguistic repertoires to express identity in various interactional contexts. He indirectly describes that identities in multilingual contexts involve individuals who navigate their linguistic resources to construct and negotiate their social, cultural, and professional identities. He suggests that translanguaging, i.e., linguistic identities, is not solely for linguistic proficiency but also for performing linguistic identities. For instance, in educational settings, individuals may represent their culture by incorporating words from their native languages, showcasing their cultural affiliation. Academics or educational settings serve as formal/professional contexts for identities. Within this layer of context, language alternation

is often employed to signal formal identity, aiding in navigating the hierarchical structures of academic discourse. The article demonstrates that identity in multilingual contexts is deeply intertwined with language alternation practices and contextual factors. Furthermore, in the contemporary world, "Identity is perhaps one of the most widely used words in today's world" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 5). It is emphasized that material possessions and symbols, among identities, play significant roles in various societal aspects, i.e., context. Even though barriers and tensions ultimately transform, they still impact the actions of everyday life among individuals. For example, alternation illustrates cultural transformation or the blending of different cultures, prompting changes in individual identities that ultimately influence social behaviors. Language alternation compels individuals to communicate in ethnic terms or dominant languages. This highlights a distinct difference among identities in official behavior, reflecting the influence of the dominant culture. Consequently, the native identity within such multilingual or multicultural societies is adversely affected. Multilingual Context and Its Effect on Language Alternation Bi/multilingual contexts play a vital role in shaping individual identity, particularly for students and teachers, as it directly influences language alterations drawn from their respective contexts. Schools as multilingual environments influence both students and teachers in various ways. For example, a transitional bi/multilingual education system in schools aims to shift students from their native language to the dominant language of the country. This is where contextual discourse takes place, encompassing external settings where interactions occur. In this context, external social changes can affect interactions among participants. The context provides specific meanings for all types of actions performed for any social identity. It can even reinforce the sense of significance among identities. Goodwin and Duranti (1992), in their socio-pragmatic approaches, define context as a socially constructed setting. They argue that interactions cannot be fully understood without their frame of reference, i.e., where they take place. For example, teacher-student conversations may differ between formal and informal school settings, depending on contextual factors. These factors shape the language choices of both teachers and students. According to Pietikäinen, K. S. (2021), context is inherently unmeasurable through empirical means. Therefore, it is essential to observe the external settings of interactions, considering participants' moment-by-moment emotional orientations to understand the contextual aspects that influence language alternation. Haberland, Lonsmann, and Pereisler (2013), while exploring language ecology in the education sector, pointed out: "At the macro level, the linguistic ecology of a particular society plays an important role in determining language practices in educational institutions" (p. 13). They further claimed that the role of English in the bi/multilingual context of society represents a significant aspect of the linguistic ecology surrounding international universities and the introduction of English-taught courses. The introduction of English courses across different countries fosters linguistic diversity. However, this diversity often evolves within already linguistically varied settings. In this scenario of multilingual societies, language alternation and language choice are not merely between local languages and English but encompass various local, regional, international, and national languages. The classification of languages as regional, national, or international remains contested, as language choices are deeply intertwined with identity, power structures, and the socio-political context.

1.2 Social Actions in Terms of Language Alternation

Social actions occur in daily discourse. For example: bilingual conversation (Maria-Carme Torras & Joseph Gafranga, 2002). On the other hand, Auer (1984, 1988, 1995) and Gafranga (1998, 1999, 2000) in their studies argue that bi/multilingual conversation or language alternation among bilingual speakers is a practical social action. This allows us to come up with the issue of finding the relationship between social actions and language alternation. Social actions raise numerous concerns in the context of education settings and language preferences. Auer (1998) defines language preference as consisting of "interactional processes of displaying and ascribing predicates to individuals", rather than a psychological concept (p. 540). Torras (2004) states that by preference-related switching, a speaker may want to avoid the language in which insecurity occurs and speak the one in which they have greater competence. Yet preference-related alternation may also be due to a deliberate decision based on political considerations. However, what surfaces in conversation will be the same sequential arrangement of language choices (Auer, 1995, p. 125). According to my view, the reason people prefer talking in their language is that it makes them realize the completion of their identities in their own culture.

Norton (1997) stated, "The questions we ask necessarily assume that speech, speakers, and social relationships are inseparable. Such questions include the following: Under what conditions do language learners speak? How can we encourage language learners to become more communicatively competent? How can we facilitate interaction between language learners and target language speakers? In this view, every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (p. 410).

Gafranga (2000) argued: "As a consequence, some researchers (e.g., Meeuwis & Blommaert, 1998) investigate bilingual interaction from the assumption that language alternation is "a variety in its own right". The issue, therefore, is which of these two positions leads to a "faithful" account of language alternation, an account which is "true of" the world it accounts for" (Sharrock & Anderson, 1993, p. 17).

1.3 Bi/multilingualism and Language Choice

Kamwangamalu (1998) argued: "It is noted that socio-political changes and the subsequent evolution of power relations in South Africa have brought about the various identities that are now associated with English, and that these identities reflect the status of the language before, during, and after the apartheid era" (p. 278). They reflect the status of their dominance among the diversifying cultures of Pakistan. Tsiplakou (2009) presents an analysis of online language alternation or multilingual conversations between English and Greek. His qualitative analysis reveals that expressions of affect and evaluative comments are primarily conveyed in English, while Greek is reserved for transmitting factual and referential information. Gafaranga (2002) argued that bilingual conversations typically occur when a person speaks to someone who doesn't share the same language; they will communicate in either language A or language B and may interchangeably use chunks of both languages. This

often occurs between individuals with different native languages who meet for a common purpose or task. As Gafranaga (2000) discussed: “In a bilingual conversation, the separation starts from a common-sense conception of….”

Considering the rapidly growing research and attitudes towards language alternation and language choice, Myers-Scotton suggests that overall language switching often constitutes the unmarked choice among bilingual peers; she notes that this form of code-switching “could be said to function as a type of interaction similar to monolingual language use” (Tsiplakou, 2009).

The aim is to strengthen an ethnomethodological perspective and to revisit the relationship between language alternation and social identity. Sebba and Wootton (1998) describe the relationship of language alternation or language choice in their “identity-related” accounts. According to Gumperz (1974, 1982), the languages of a community can be grouped into two main categories: ‘we-codes’ and ‘they-codes’. Kamwangamalu (2005) defines ‘we-code’ as the language of home and family bonds, used for informal activities and interactions with in-group members, while 'they-code' refers to the language associated with socio-economic advancement, the language used in more formal, rigid, and less personal out-group relations.

Bloomart (2014) discusses the relationship between the global language of English and local speech repertoires or speech communities.

2. Literature Review

The multilingual context of private schools in Pakistan significantly affects the linguistic identities of both students and teachers. In such environments, the interplay of languages shapes how individuals perceive and express their linguistic identities.

2.1 Influence of Multilingual Context on Linguistic Identities in the Classroom

Conversations between student-teachers and teacher-teachers in bilingual or multilingual classrooms and outside of them represent broader social and cultural contexts. This interaction influences literacy practices both within and outside the classroom. A study by Javed and Rasul (2021) found that social class significantly affects interactions between teachers and students, often leading students to communicate with their instructors in the preferred English language, even in informal situations. This highlights the role of societal norms in shaping linguistic identity.

2.2 Factors Influencing Language Alternation

Several sociolinguistic factors influence code-switching among bilingual students in Pakistani classrooms. Research by Zia, Batool, and Qureshi (2024) identified key factors such as linguistic competence and proficiency, ethnicity and cultural identity, community and peer group norms, social identity, power dynamics, the classroom environment, and teachers' influence. These elements collectively contribute to when and why students switch between languages during conversations.

2.3 Perceptions of Language Choice and Language Alternation

The perception of translanguaging as a strategy that incorporates multiple languages for instruction varies in formal and informal settings within Pakistani private schools. A study by Batool, Shahzadi, and Khan (2022) revealed that students favor the use of their first language by English teachers in the classroom, suggesting a positive attitude towards translanguaging, as it may enhance comprehension and learning. Conversely, Khan et al. (2023) found that while teachers understand translanguaging concepts, they often do not apply them systematically, indicating a gap between theoretical understanding and practical implementation.

Additionally, the language policies of elite private schools significantly influence students' language practices and identities. Jamshaid and Naqvi (2022) observed that these schools often prioritize English, leading students to feel ashamed of speaking their mother tongues, thereby affecting their linguistic identity.

3. Research Methodology

The present study describes the methodology of this study, which falls into the category of qualitative research methodology for data collection. One is conversation analysis and class observations.

3.1 Research Techniques

Observations are made based on semi-structured interviews and analysis of the conversations of the chosen population (2 to 4 participants in each 5 groups) in the educational sector.

It will all be drawn upon ‘conversation analyses’ in non-formal talks.

The analysis of conversation in language will further proceed as practical social action in the field of multilingual talks. Drawing on the same conversation analytic perspective, Gafranga (2000), and Gafranga and Torras (2002) view language alteration as consisting of four activities.

1) Medium selection
2) Medium Repair
3) Medium suspension
4) And bilingual medium.

One way to understand the relationship between language alternation and social identity is to identify medium selection. However, language alternation does not necessarily contribute to medium selection; it can also involve medium repair (Gafaranga 2000). Gafaranga and Torras (2002) and Gafaranga (2000) highlight two methods of medium repair: (i) medium repair serves as a strategy employed by bilingual speakers to address a word problem, and (ii) during medium repair, participants utilize a language other than the current medium while treating this other language as a repairable matter. The third context where language alternation can be observed is medium suspension, as detailed in Gafaranga and Torras (2002).

This type of language alternation is defined as a temporary departure from the current medium

that is not oriented to a repairable problem. Medium suspension is not repaired precisely because, in the talk where it occurs, it serves some communicative function.

3.2 Use of the Models in Research for Validity of the Research

The models are adopted to prefer the work of integration, i.e., Gafaranga (2000), who stated that language, like any other social phenomenon, can be approached from either of two positions: it can be approached with an attitude of indifference or from a normative framework (p. 66). Torras's (2002) approach to the role of language in social identity construction. Furthermore, research will be based on the following models.

3.2.1 Gumperz Dichotomy We/they Codes

Gumperz describes the concept of we-code and they-code. The dichotomy explains the majority versus minority groups in multilingual talks.

We-code is the native or mother language of a person, whereas they-code is the language of the socio-economic scenario. The dichotomy between we-code and they-code reflects power relations among various identities and creates the status of language among them in general. Identities seemed wrapped in the framework of linguistic choices and code-switching. The linguistic capital has gripped the participants in particular speech situations. Hartshorne (1995) said that language was used to divide, rule, and protect minority privilege and power socially, economically, and politically.

According to the Africans' view that English was an instrument of domination, a view reiterated by the African National Congress (ANC) as recently as 1992, when the organization referred to English as a shackled language.

3.2.2. Markedness Model by Myers-Scotton

According to Myers-Scotton (1993), all linguistic choices, including code-switching, are manifestations of social negotiations of rights and obligations existing between participants in a conversational exchange. People intend to alternate their language due to reasons that have socio-economic roots within society, or they alternate their language codes for the sake of ethnicity. The alternation of language also depends upon some salient features among the participants during the conversation, such as the status of the participants or the context. They may determine the linguistic choices. It is one of the code-switching models, explaining the distinction between unmarked and marked language alteration.

Meeuwis and Blommaert (1994) note that there are studies of language choice in which the political and language-ideological dimensions of code-switching are stressed (e.g., Heller 1992; Meeuwis & Blommaert 1997).

Myers-Scotton maintains that all linguistic choices, including code-switching, are indexical of social negotiations of rights and obligations. Heller (1992) concludes in her study that to understand the role and significance of code-switching (as a political choice) it is essential to understand not only its distribution in the community but, more importantly, how that distribution is tied to the way groups control both the distribution of access to valued

resources and how that value is assigned.

3.3 Sampling

Secondly, the observations are performed based on semi-structured interviews with 5 groups of 2 to 4 participants in each group at one of the popular private schools where students and teachers of different languages co-exist. The purpose of choosing that school is that it is a good place for subcultural people. The context is suitable for data collection. Furthermore, the purpose of semi-structured interviews is described in detail below.

The recordings ensure the language alternation and choice of medium between the speakers. Specifically, the researcher records the talks of students and teachers, inside the campus area, friends, and so on, who speak the language of their own choice, i.e., one is Sindhi and the other is an English speaker.

3.4 Ethical Issues

Researchers are human; they can make mistakes in dealing with ethical issues (Cohen et al., 2000). Dealing with ethical issues in research is of chief importance. However, it is a very difficult and strenuous process (Busher & Clarke, 1990). Fox and Busher (2002) further said that the ethical codes are not the same everywhere and differ from person to person and from culture to culture.

The names and designations are hidden with alternative names or symbols. The researcher was obliged to act appropriately with participants to minimize errors in finding the data.

Cohen et al. (2000, p. 49) remark that a researcher needs “to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in the pursuit of truth, and their subjects’ rights and values potentially threatened by the research”.

3.5 Procedure

For the semi-structured interviews, the conversations were recorded while participants were talking to each other on a given topic. It was a discussion topic. They were given some open-ended questions to narrate and discuss their point of view. Moreover, they were told that, meanwhile, there will be recordings of their conversations

Students and teachers who spoke a linguistic code of their own choice. Initially, the conversation started then they were fully informed about the purpose of the recording.

3.6 Instruments

Instruments used for data collection are based on qualitative methodology, such as questions for semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, interviews are not conducted in a formal setting because the researcher does not gather much relevant information about the research questions in a formal context. The data would be driven by conversation analysis. Generally, questionnaires have become one of the primary tools for collecting data on the thesis topic.

3.7 Conversations Analysis

The conversation analysis is based on medium selection, medium Repair, Medium Suspension, and Bilingual medium of Gafaranga (2000) and Gafaranga and Torras' (2001, 2002). This section analyses the Bi/multilingual interactions in private schools in Sindh, Pakistan. Using Gafranga's (2000) and Gafaranga and Torras' (2002) framework, the analysis will provide a deeper understanding of the research questions. This comprehensive approach examines how language choices reflect linguistic identities, language alternation, and power dynamics in formal and informal settings of the school.

Conversation Analysis (CA) of language Choice perceived in formal and informal settings of private schools in Pakistan with Medium selection and Medium Repair

Scenario:

Extract 1: Language Use in Formal Settings

Scenario: Students spoke about their language choices in formal situations

P1 (ENG**):** In formal situations, I speak only English or Urdu because it is expected.

P2 (ENG): No involvement

P3 (ENG): Yes, our school policies discourage speaking Sindhi in formal settings, so I don't speak in my mother tongue much.

P4 (ENG): English is necessary for professional growth, so we use it in serious discussions like debates.

P5 (ENG): I even use English in casual conversations because it helps me practice.

Analysis:

The analysis encompasses medium selection, institutional pressure, and the linguistic prestige of English.

Medium Selection: The participants select English as their medium to maintain the formal setting and follow school policies.

Institutional pressure: P3 acknowledges that the Sindhi language is discouraged in formal contexts.

Linguistic Prestige: P4 and P5 emphasize the professional importance of English.

Extract 2: Language Mixing in Informal Settings

Scenario: Language mixing during the discussion between English and Urdu.

P2 (ENG): We mix languages outside the classroom.

P4 (ENG to UR): Sometimes, I start in English and alternate to Urdu or Sindhi for ease.

P1 (UR): Han, school ke bahir Sindh ya Urdu chalti hai. Akhir kitna English bolein gai (.)

haha. (Yes, we speak our languages outside the classrooms. We can't hold ourselves in English all the time. Haha)

P3: (SIND to ENG): par class mein srif English (.) waha koi Sindhi nahin sunta. (But in class, only English (.) No one listens to Sindhi.)

Analysis:

Medium Selection: P2 begins in English, consistent with school standards.

Medium Repair: In informal situations, P4 transitions to Urdu/Sindhi to foster peer comfort through code-switching.

Contrast in Contexts: P3 points out that Sindhi is excluded in class, emphasizing the distinction between the They-Code (English) and We-Code (Sindhi/Urdu).

Extract 3: Temporary Language Suspension in Classroom Interactions

Scenario: A student finds it challenging to explain a concept in English and temporarily switches to Urdu for better clarity.

P1 (ENG): The science teacher asked me to explain Newton's Law, but I forgot how to say it.

P1 (ENG to UR): Acceleration ka matlab tha (.) umm, wo force jo speed change karti hai na? (Acceleration means (.) umm, that force which changes speed, right?)
P3 (ENG): Ohh, yes, force acting on mass.

Analysis:

Medium Suspension: P1 momentarily pauses English to articulate the explanation in Urdu before reverting to English, illustrating a practical need-driven language switch.

Cognitive Ease: The use of Urdu for better understanding highlights how bilingual students depend on their first language for grasping complex academic material.

Social Adaptability: The return to English indicates that the student acknowledges its significance in the educational context, aligning with school expectations.

Extract 4: Bilingual Medium in Peer-to-Peer Communication

Scenario: Two students discuss their weekend plans in a mix of English and Sindhi.

P1 (ENG-SIND): Are you coming to the football match? It's gonna be *mazedaar!* (fun!)

P2 (SIND-ENG): Ha (Yes)! But I have assignments due. Thori dair main achi wendam! (Later, I will come)

Analysis:

Bilingual Medium: This is an example of "fluid code-mixing", where English and Sindhi are treated as a unified system rather than separate entities.

Identity Marking: The choice of Sindhi words like 'mazedaar' signals group identity and

familiarity.

Hybrid Linguistic Identity: Students use a hybrid language that reflects both local and global influences, showing a modern multilingual identity.

Extract 5: Teacher-Student Interaction in a Formal Classroom Setting

Scenario: A teacher corrects a student's response in class.

Teacher (ENG): What is the capital of France?

Student (UR to ENG): Umm... Paris hai. I mean, Paris.

Teacher (ENG): Good but try to answer fully in English next time.

Analysis:

Medium Repair: The student begins in Urdu but quickly self-corrects to English in response to classroom expectations.

Institutional Influence: The teacher reinforces English as the expected medium, guiding students toward language conformity.

Code-Switching for Confidence: The student initially relies on Urdu for ease but adapts to English due to formal academic pressure.

3.7.1 Findings Based on Models Use

This section analyzes bilingual and multilingual interactions in private schools in Sindh, Pakistan, based on Gafaranga's (2000) framework and Gafaranga and Torras' (2001, 2002) model. The analysis examines how language choices, alternation, and power dynamics are reflected in both formal and informal settings through the four core activities of language alternation:

Medium Selection: Participants use their primary language and switch during

Medium Repair: Participants switch languages due to communication barriers.

Medium Suspension: Some Participants had a temporary departure from the chosen medium.

Bilingual Medium: participants use two languages as a single communicative system.

Participants supported the Gumperz we-code model and they-code when they indicated that in a formal setting, the English language is the dominant, while Urdu and Sindhi were reflected as recessive and unofficial in an informal setting. Many participants reported that learning English is a necessity due to its professional and academic environment, supporting Myers-Scotton (1993). Some students expressed discomfort in using their mother tongue because it is forbidden in official settings like education institutes, reinforcing the perception of English as a High-status language (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Some participants were noted as that they use English or Urdu when speaking with friends of different linguistic backgrounds, the role of language choice in social integration (Gumerz on we-code and Them code).

3.8 Findings and Conclusion

The data analysis highlights the role of language alternation in shaping linguistic identities in private schools. The findings indicate that English dominates formal settings due to institutional norms and professional aspirations. The findings reflect that Urdu and Sindhi appear more in informal settings but remain marginalized in academic discourse. Students in Pakistani private schools exhibit flexible bilingualism, i.e., switching between languages based on context, peer comfort, and communicative efficiency. Medium selection and medium repair are common in private schools in Pakistan, while medium suspension is strategically used for better comprehension. These understandings reinforce the impact of institutional language policies, social hierarchies, and linguistic prestige in determining students' language choices in multilingual settings. Future research could explore how teachers' perceptions of language alternation affect classroom dynamics and students' bilingual competence in academic subjects.

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