

## CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING BETWEEN BANGLA AND ENGLISH: UNDERGRADUATE PRIVATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN AN INFORMAL SETTING

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**Abstract:** The focuses of this paper is on code-switching and code-mixing by undergraduate students of private universities in informal setting in Bangladesh. It examines the reasons behind different types of code-switching and code-mixing among them. The attitude of the students towards code-switching and code-mixing has also been considered. The study reveals an ambivalent attitude of the participants in their using of code-switching and code-mixing between Bangla and English.

**Keywords:** code-switching, code-mixing, functions and reasons, ambivalence.

**Introduction:** Bangladeshi people tend to switch and mix between English and Bengali in informal settings and it is visible in their speech. English is the medium of instruction in most of the private universities and also these universities provide at least two basic English language courses to the students. The English-medium-educated urban and upper class youth and those acquiring their tertiary level education from private universities of Dhaka city are among those who tend to code-switch and code-mix between Bangla and English. The aim of this paper is to find the functions of code-switching [(hereafter CS) and code-mixing [(hereafter CM) in private university students' conversation in informal settings. It is also concern with identifying the attitude of the students towards CSand CM between Bangla and English.

**Literature review:** Paplock (2000) defines CS as the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent (as cited in Abbas et al.).Valdes Fallis (1976) referred to CS as "the alternation of two languages at the word, phrase, clause, and sentence levels" (as cited in Abalhassan and Alshalawi, 2000).Muysken (2000) defines CM as cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence. Kachru (1983) CM refers to the transfer of linguistic units from one language into another and the units may be morphemes, words, phrases, clauses or sentences (as cited in Abbas, Aslam & Rana, 2011).

Rahman (2005) says that the emergence of private universities in Bangladesh and use of English in those private universities has given English an extra emphasis in the private university education system.

Hoffman (1991) provides some reasons for which a speaker switches or mixes codes (as cited in Chakrawarti, 2010). These are: Quoting somebody else, being emphatic about something (express solidarity), interjection (inserting sentence fillers or sentence connectors), repetition used for clarification, to soften or strengthen request or command, because of real lexical need, spontaneous shift, to draw attention, to show off status, to impress

for professional purpose, to impress the opposite sex, to alienate a particular group or person from conversation, lack of appropriate translation equivalent in Bangla, euphemism, to accommodate, to avoid taboo and slang, to adopt the popular culture.

Alam (2006) found that Bangladeshi people have a complicated attitude towards CM .According to her a group of people who sees mixing of two languages as humiliating. She says that some people are ready to accept mixing of Bangla and English only in the office. She also says that majority of the intellectuals are against CM because it will reduce the use of Bangla. On the other hand there is another type of people who feel comfortable in mixing both languages (Alam, 2006).

According to Mamun (2012), majority of the people in his study showed positive attitude towards CSand girls are more in favor of CS than boys. But more than half of the participants felt that CS does affect Bangla negatively. Mamun (2012) says that this contradiction shows that people are aware and conscious about the negative effect of switching between Bangla and English but they are practicing it with positive attitude. He claims that this result means people are accepting the destruction of their mother tongue in a conscious mind.

**Methodology:** The data was collected by interviewing the participants based on the three questions from the questionnaire. These are:

1. Do you do code-switching and code-mixing between Bangla and English in your conversation in an informal setting?
2. Can you mention some of the reasons behind your use of code-switching and code-mixing between Bangla and English?
3. Do you take the use of code-switching and code-mixing between Bangla and English positively or negatively? Why?

The data was collected from East West University, North South University, American International University Bangladesh and Brac University. There were total of 19 participants from these universities.

The data was also analyzed by Hoffman's (1991) different reason for CS and CM (as cited in Chakrawarti, 2010) and Alam's (2006) different reasons for CM.

**Finding and Discussion:** The interviews were analyzed to identify the reasons and that they think are behind their use of CS and CM between Bangla and English and what attitude they show towards CS. The interviews were also analyzed to understand their attitude towards CS and CM in Bangladesh.

**Reasons behind CS and CM mentioned by the speakers:** All the participants reported that they were aware of their CS and CM between Bangla and English. They provided various reasons for doing it. According to them they did CS and CM between Bangla and English because they cannot find appropriate Bangla words at the right time. Another reason mentioned by those who were from English medium schools is that they use CS and CM between Bangla and English because they have less competence in Bangla. Majority of the participants have studied at Bangla medium schools and due to the education system of these schools, they have become bilingual. They are also exposed to English through their class lectures at the university. They are sometimes bound to communicate with the teachers in English. This is causing them to become less competent in Bangla and more fluent in English. That is why they tend to do CS and CM between Bangla and English. It is also mentioned by them that there is a reduced amount in reading of Bangla literature that people used to read before. But the reading habit has gone down and it has resulted in less exposure to Bangla. That is why students have no choice but to use English words to express their feelings to others as they do not know the appropriate Bangla meaning of many words. Many participants said that they were fascinated by English language. Which made them to develop a reading habit of English books. They also like to watch English movies. Their exposure to English through the movies has allowed them to learn English vocabulary. These English words sometime occur in their Bangla conversation. As a result CS and CM between Bangla and English take place. Majority of the students who took part said that they code-switch and code-mix between Bangla and English just because it is their habit. From their childhood they have seen everyone to talk like that. Some students said that they use English words, phrases and sentences to "show off" their status. English holds the prestige and only the educated class can use it and that makes them feel like they belong to educated class who has the capability to use English. Privacy is another reason mentioned by some students for CS and CM. As everyone does not

know all the words in English, it gives them privacy from people around them while talking in a crowd.

**Attitude towards code-switching and code-mixing:** The attitude towards CS and CM between Bangla and English varies according to the speaker. Majority of the participants felt that CS and CM between Bangla and English create a negative impact on the Bangla language in various ways. According to them, very essence of Bangla language is getting spoiled. There are some words that they no longer use for everyday conversation in Bangla like Bangla translation of the word chair which is "kedara". They said that as they are becoming multicultural in a globalized world, Bangla is getting "adulterated". This adulteration is the result of CS and CM. According to them CS and CM are making them to forget about the proper way of using Bangla grammar and words. They no longer speak in grammatically correct Bangla language using only Bangla words. As a result media is also using CS and CM between Bangla and English to target them as audience. They feel that value of Bangla is declining due to CS and CM and people no longer find it easy to speak in pure Bangla. They also said that people will make fun of anyone who would speak in pure Bangla. They feel that as Bangladeshi they should not be proud of it and they should try to avoid mixing and switching between Bangla and English. One student said CS and CM are "creating a deviated form of Bangla" and it is being widely used by those belonging to his generation. They strongly feel that many Bangladeshi gave their lives for Bangla language and when we try to mix another language with it we are not justifying it right. Few of the students felt that there is no negative impact on Bangla due to CS and CM. They think that Bangla is our first language and mixing English language with it will not cause any harm to the purity of Bangla. English is learned language and we acquired Bangla from our childhood. There is no way that an acquired language can be harmed by a learned one. Some participants said that Bangla is in its pure state and used in pure form by many people in books and written official documents at government level. It is not easy to influence a language like Bangla just by mixing some words from English with it.

These findings show that the students expressed a certain degree of ambivalence on their use of CS and CM between Bangla and English. On the one hand they felt that mixing and switching between Bangla and English making Bangla language to lose its essence. They think that CS and CM are making Bangla to get adulterated. On the other hand they showed a continuous use of CS and CM in their informal conversation. They felt a certain kind of need to do CS and CM between Bangla and English in their conversation due to various reasons like lack of appropriate words, quoting someone else, to

accommodate etc. They also have done CS and CM without any reason in a spontaneous manner. Messing (2009) claims in a bilingual society youth are in the middle of a connection of multiple ideologies of indigenusness and modernity which is influenced by globalizing forces. This multitude of ideologies causes to develop ambivalent perspectives towards their language use. The students in this study do CS

and CM between Bangla and English for their ideology of modernity which is being shaped by globalizing forces. But the students show a negative attitude towards this CS and CM due to their ideology that has been developed by the identity of being a Bangladeshi and patriotism. As a result students show ambivalent attitude towards their use of CS and CM between Bangla and English.

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