

Code Mixing & Code Switching

Code Mixing

Code mixing is a common socio linguistic phenomenon in multilingual speech communities. Code mixing is the combination of elements from two different languages within a sentence to form a meaningful utterance. Kachru (1982) defines code mixing as, “...*the use of one or more languages for consistent transfer of linguistic units from one language into another, which results in a new restricted or not so restricted code of linguistic interaction.*” Code mixing essentially entails transferring of linguistic units from one code to another. The resultant codes are often given names which reflect the fact that they are mixtures of two languages. During the current century code mixed varieties of English have developed in many countries. For example, in Philippines, the variety of English used in which elements of the local languages are mixed are known as ‘mix-mix’. Similarly in Singapore, where elements of other languages are mixed with English is known as Singlish.

The transfer of linguistic units from Hindi and other languages or dialects into sentences in English is becoming a fairly common phenomenon in India. Code mixing can thus be said to be one of the significant aspects of Indian English in contemporary times.

Code mixing occurs quite frequently in the spoken English of educated Indians. It can be observed to take place every now and then in their everyday informal conversation in English. While in the past people strove to adhere to the norms of the native speaker of English, in recent times the tendency to intersperse a sentence which is basically in English, with words and larger units from Hindi or some other Indian language has become fairly common. Even people who have studied at good public schools and have a native like command of English use a code mixed variety of English in informal interaction.

In the past, strict adherence to a standard native variety of English was stressed, especially in formal writing. Now code mixing is becoming quite common even in the written mode. It occurs quite frequently in articles, reports, interviews, advertisements and notices in English newspapers and magazines, as well as literary writing in English. The nature of code mixing varies in interesting patterns in these types of written English depending on the topic, tone and effect intended in the writing. Here are some characteristic linguistic features of code mixing in English, with examples from newspapers and magazines.

Linguistic Features of Code mixing in Indian English

Code mixing can occur at any point in an utterance in English with elements from Hindi or some other language being transferred to it, the assumption being that both the participants in the interaction or discourse, i.e. the speaker and the listener or the writer and the

reader, know the language. Kachru (1982) states that “*the process of mixing is not restricted to one unit, but ranges from lexical items to full sentences and embedding of idioms...*” Kachru (1983) suggests that there is, “*a cline in mixing which starts with lexical mixing and then progressively extends to higher units, the maximum being an alternate use of sentences from two codes.*” In code mixing in English in India, the transfer of words from Hindi or any other language is more common than the transfer of larger units, which occurs mainly in gossip columns, interviews, advertisements, short stories and novels. Listed below are examples of code mixing involving sentence constituents of different types:

(a) Within the Noun Phrase

- (i) The agitating employees this morning went on mass casual leave completely paralyzing the function of the *sachivalaya*.
- (ii) They took the Muslims to be aggressors, and opened fire. D.S.P. Swaroop suspected that the Muslim *baraat* had been deliberately attacked to set off a riot.
- (iii) Married women and their *devars* conduct a mock war where the brother-in-law drenches his sister-in-law with color.
- (iv) Ever since she started her English lessons, Sridevi has become proficient not in the *angrezi bhasha* but in her manners.
- (v) His heroines on the other hand, are *ekdum* scared of this *pardesi cheez*.
- (vi) These days our *desi* producers have this *qjeeb* desire to import girls from abroad for their films.
- (vii) ...the *bechari* Madhu is the most *dukhi* of the threesome.

(b) Hindi intensifier + Hindi adjective

- (i) The hero, however, is *ekdum desi*.
- (ii) Hema Malini is both surprised as well as *maha khush* to see how much her *beti* Esha enjoys going to Montessori.

(c) Hindi intensifier + English adjective

- (i) The complete unit was *maha* amused.
- (ii) I for one was *ekdum* horrified.

(d) Unit hybridization

(i) The industry *wallas* foreign fixation certainly doesn't end with perfumes, cosmetics, *kapda* and equipment.

(ii) Theatre walli...

(e) Idiom and collocation insertion

(i) Mithun still remembers the *matka* and the *daru ka addas*, he frequented those days.

(ii) That is why I really like it when, if I hit a *nehla*, the opposite person hits a *nehle pe dehla*.

(f) Clause/ Sentence insertion

(i) Of course, not. I am glad you came. *Yahan padi padi bore ho rahi thi*.

(ii) That's when I decided *kuch karke dikhaongi*.

(iii) The court exonerated me of all charges. I was honorably acquitted. *Insaaf bhi hai is duniya mein. Bhagwan sab dekhta hai. Hai na?*

(g) Within the Verb Phrase

(i) Everyone *wah-wahed* the film.

(ii) Tabassum is trying to *maskofy* and make up to him.

(iii) She can get away with anything. That is, as long as she doesn't keep *pataoing* married men.

(h) Miscellaneous

(i) The hookers were also around but weren't flaunting their availability *khullam khulla*.

(ii) The typical *behanji* type of girl.

(iii) I only hype this *bade dil wala dost*. Ramesh Behl has a *chota role* in this film for Dabs.

Motivation for Code mixing

Certain magazines seek to establish a rapport with the readers belonging to the elite English speaking class by allowing code mixing in their columns. The code mixed English helps

in creating a sense of rapport as it is the kind of English used by these readers in real informal conversation.

Sometimes the single words from Hindi become essential to use as the English equivalents to these words would not convey the same associations that the code mixed words do. Words like *devar*, *khandaan*, *namaste*, *sat sri akaal* refer to common concepts which are part of Indian culture.

In magazines and newspapers code mixing is used in advertisements quite often to establish better rapport with the readers and to generate a favorable response by evoking pleasant associations pertaining to a happy, comfortable home life. Here are a few examples:

Ye dil maange more!
Hungry *kya*?
Taste *kaamyabi ka*.
The *Josh* machine.
Life *ho to aisi*.

In dialogues in interviews, code mixing is sometimes used to reflect real informal conversation. Here is an example:

I am terrified of dialogue. I constantly fear *ki dialogue theek bol paongi ke nahin*.

In dialogue, code mixing is also used to convey the idea that although the character who is uneducated or of rural background speaks in English in the novel/story, in real life the conversation would be in Hindi or some other language. Here are a few examples:

“The Patil is not the *sawkar*. The *sawkar* is like my own *bhai*.”
(Manohar Malgaonkar: Fair Wind in Timberland)
“You wait *saale!*”
“Son of a *chamaar!*”
(M.R. Anand: Sinful Life and Death of Tinkori)

Novelists sometimes use code mixing in the descriptive passages to bring out features of the local culture and setting more graphically for Indian readers who are familiar with the culture.

Example:

“Apart from thick perfume, the apparel of Pandit Balkishan and his assistants as well as the elders of the village was impressive in its magnificence; large turbans, *sindhur* marks on the forehead, silk tunics and *dhotis*, garlands of jasmine flowers. The gods on the *mandala* were dressed in colored robes, decorated with borders of gold and silver cloth.”
(M.R. Anand: Blessed are the Learned)

Besides, code mixing is also used in newspapers and magazines in articles and reports on topics related to politics and crime and the underworld. Some words like *hafta*, *peti*, *khokha*, *supari*, *padyatra*, *gherao*, *bandh* are peculiar to these topics and belong to registers pertaining to them. The words refer to certain activities/ objects/ concepts which are specific to contemporary Indian life in some way.

Besides in certain contexts very closely related to Indian culture, there are no equivalent words in English. In such contexts as music, religion, mythology, rituals and ceremonies, a writer is compelled to use words in Hindi or another Indian language as the translation would not carry the cultural significance. Some such words are: *kirtan*, *sudarshan chakra*, *havan*, *bhog*, *Prasad*, *shudhdhi*, *gotra*, *janeu* etc.

Code mixing and Learning English

Educated Indians use code mixing as a communication strategy. When people find it difficult to recall the appropriate word in a particular context or do not know the English word for a particular word/object, they tend to fall back on the vocabulary of their mother tongue. Sometimes when they have difficulty of syntactical nature and cannot complete a sentence begun in English, they use a clause in the native language to complete it. Thus code mixing acts as a support on which a speaker can lean while communicating in English. If a language learner uses this strategy very often, it may slow down the process of language learning. So they should be discouraged from resorting to code mixing, particularly during the early stages of learning as it is likely to hamper both accuracy and fluency in the target language.

Code mixing is a socio linguistic reality in any multilingual country. The teacher cannot ban the use of code mixing in informal conversation as it would be an unrealistic demand on his pupils. The teacher can only try to curb the use of code mixing at an early stage of language learning.

Code Switching

In linguistics, **code-switching** is switching between two or more languages, or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation. Multilinguals—speakers of more than one language—sometimes use elements of multiple languages in conversing with each other. Thus, codeswitching is the use of more than one linguistic variety in a manner consistent with the syntax and phonology of each variety.

Code-switching is distinct from other language contact phenomena, such as borrowing, pidgins and creoles, loan translation (calques), and language transfer (language interference). Borrowing affects the lexicon, the words that make up a language, while code switching takes place in individual utterances. Speakers form and establish a pidgin language when two or more speakers who do not speak a common language form an intermediate, third language.

On the other hand, speakers practice code-switching when they are each fluent in both languages. Code mixing is a thematically related term, but the usage of the terms code switching and code-mixing varies. Some scholars use either term to denote the same practice, while others apply code-mixing to denote the formal linguistic properties of said language-contact phenomena, and code-switching to denote the actual, spoken usages by multilingual persons.

In the 1940s and 1950s, many scholars considered code-switching to be a sub-standard use of language. Since the 1980s, however, most scholars have recognized it is a normal, natural product of bilingual and multilingual language use.

The term "code-switching" is also used outside the field of linguistics. Some scholars of literature use the term to describe literary styles which include elements from more than one language, as in novels by Anglo-Indian writers.

Code Switching in Indian Culture

See the advertisement of BPL:

Ab BPL ke maalik jitenge bumper prizes, Country wide finance ki suvidha.

(Now BPL owner will win bumper prizes, facility of country wide finance).

In the above advertisement code-switching occurs at the end of each clause to catch the reader's attention. Thus it is their shop keeping mentality which provokes them to use simple and new type of language, whether it is Hinglish or ungrammatical or full of spelling mistakes.

The use of 'other language' words in slang or pidgin or a kind of patois is evident in speech being commonly spoken around us at every level. In the patter of school children, for instance, one comes across, "Mummy, *aaj teacher ne kaha ki itni books school mein carry karne ki need nahin hai, agar class mein study nahin karna hai to.*"

Let us consider the utterance of a college student about his friend, "*voh books borrow karne mein bahut ustaad hai but books ki lending mein maha kanjoos hai.*" "The college principal was *gheraoed* by the college *dadas* until the police *wallas* came." Thus employment of 'other language' words goes and has, for a long time, being going hand in hand with a very indigenous kind of usage.

Let us see why the English words are used rather than their Hindi equivalents.

(i) Sandwich Words: e.g. library *ki* book, seminar *ka* paper. (The informants are not switching, but are using words, which belong to the overlapping area and between which Hindi words tend to be sandwiched.)

(ii) Choice of Lexical Items: There are many English words, which have become a part of language because they have no Hindi equivalents. For example, T.V., radio, video, cigarette, diploma, flashback, furniture etc.

(iii) Common English words: Hindi equivalents of English words are uncommon, so the English words are used. For example, class, college, Vice-chancellor etc.

(iv) Economy of articulation: e.g. sorry (two syllables)—*ma:f karna:* (three syllable), best (one syllable)—*sabse accha:* (4 syllables), etc.

(v) Polite Connotations: e.g. ladies (orte), Husband (pati),

(vi) Western Concept: e.g. sweet dish (mitha:), fork (ka:nta:) etc.

Let Us Sum Up

We see that code mixing and code switching have a major contribution in the formation of Indian English. The language gradually came into contact with various culture and with the result a mixed variety of languages is produced which is used as a popular language of day to day life.

Thus, mixing and switching of codes are essentially intra group phenomena. Sociological and other background factors affect it only within a group and often individual characteristics influence the speaker's choice of language. It is clearly conditioned by topic, situation, role relationship and style of speech; it is above all verbal strategy, the choice of a speaker from his verbal repertoire, according to the principle of 'speech economy', language distance is not an absolute, it is a function of intensity of contact and social context.

While endeavors to prevent the decline of language into patois and to keep general speech pure and taintless are admirable, it may not be out of place to urge that slang is a sign of liveliness in people's expression and it rises from the impulse to speak in metaphor and simile—the impulse to communicate graphically.

Not all slang endures, but whatever does, enriches language and furthers its scope. Words used from another language are employed for quick precision and for facility in communication.

The capacity for precise speech in a language rests a great deal on its lexicon of synonyms and antonyms. The lexicon of synonyms expands in the process of incorporation and assimilation of words from other languages in course of day to day parlance. This indicates vigor and vibrancy in a language. There is nothing like absolute purity in a current language.

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