Abstract
English is the most widely used language in the world of academia, and it is true for the reason that the past few years have witnessed an increase in teaching through English at all levels in Pakistan. Besides, the influence of the local languages can be traced-out in the interaction between teachers and students in bilingual classrooms, as Pakistan is a multilingual country and educational institutions are essentially bilingual. Moreover, both trainers and trainees are bilinguals and they code-switch from English to Urdu in the natural flow of classroom discourse. Therefore, this paper has tried to investigate the role of code-switching and L1 in the bilingual classroom discourse with special reference to Pakistani teachers/experts’ perceptions. Also, the main purpose of this study was to examine the issues related to language choice and use. For this purpose, investigative methodology was adopted to study the opinions of the educational experts and data were collected through interviews of the experts. Analysis of the recorded interviews shows that the teachers’ purpose-oriented code-switching is acceptable by the experts in most of the cases. It is also found that there is a need to devise clear language policy about the issues of language(s) choice and use at different levels (i.e. grade) of education.

Keywords: Language policy; Bilingual context; Classroom discourse; Code-switching; use of L1

I. Introduction
English is taught as a main/compulsory subject in Pakistan and is used as a medium of instruction at school and college levels and teachers do code-switch while teaching this subject in the classroom. Keeping this situation in view, the paper has attempted to examine the teachers’ perceptions by interviewing them about the use of language(s) in the bilingual classroom discourse. Traditional concerns with foreign and second language education have been with instructional methodology; curriculum based on need assessment, and, occasionally, studies of acquisition. However, in recent years, Applied Linguists working in the area of classroom discourse have significantly expanded the scope of their research to address crucial areas of classroom practices in relation with acquisition/learning of English. Moreover, it has significant implications for educational research and bilingual classroom discourse alike. Language alternation,
which is also referred to as code-switching, is defined as the bilinguals’ ability to alternate between the languages in their linguistic repertoires (Zentella, 1981). In Pakistan, insufficient attention is paid to the dimensions of bilingual classroom discourse and, now, it is significant to develop more understanding in the context of Pakistani bilingual classroom discourse. As Martin-Jones (1995: 7) asserts:

We need to know how code-switching in bilingual discourse is shaped by the social conditions operating in different types of classrooms and how differing views about the values and purpose of bilingual education are manifested in bilingual discourse practices.

**Objectives of the study**

The following are the objectives of the paper:

i. To focus on the ways in which teachers/experts believe that code-switching/use of L1 helps in improving the performance of the teachers.

ii. To examine the issues related to language choice and use in bilingual classroom discourse.

iii. To investigate the role of L1 as a bilingual aid in the EFL classrooms.

**Research questions of the study**

The following research question provided guidance in different phases throughout the research work:

Q.1. What are the experts/teachers’ opinions about the use of code-switching and L1 in the context of Pakistani classroom?

**II. Nature of the Research Design**

The researchers explored the experts’ voices and experiences regarding the issue of language choice and use, and its influences on the classroom discourse. Qualitative research utilizes the experiences of the respondents and produces descriptive data in their voices. Moreover, this paradigm perceives the researcher and the researched as two equally important elements of the same situation (Minichicillo, Aroni, Timewells & Alexander, 1999), which suits the research question and the objectives of the study. Therefore, participants’ interviews were selected as relevant tool to be used. It is generally believed that multiple realities exist which are not observable and can only be assessed through talking with the participants. Dell Hymes (quoted in Tarone, 1994: 324) contends that “the participant’s own explanations and conceptualizations of their behaviour’ should be added”. The researchers selected semi-structured interviews that provide the room to modify or alter the sequence of the questions in order to go deeper into the thoughts of the respondents (see Robson, Cohen et al. 2001, Patton 1990). Thus, the researchers in the present study preferred to use semi-structured interviews to gain useful insight from the respondents.

**Data Collection**

The researchers used interviews as main tool for obtaining data. It is important to mention here that a total number of the interviews were ten (Dr. K.S, Dr. I.Z, Dr. A.S, Mrs. A.N, Mr. S.T, Mrs. W.R, Dr. M.R, Dr. M.G, Dr. S.S, and Dr. S.F) and recording of each interview was about twenty to twenty five minutes. The process of data collection took one month and the researchers collected the views and opinions of the informants.
from different regions of the country (Pakistan). The Interviewees included seven experienced eminent Ph.D. scholars and three of them were an M.A in linguistics from U.K. The views of these eminent scholars were integrated in the descriptions to make the voices of these teachers audible in the analysis of the data. According to Eisner (1991) “note–taking and audio–taping are crucial tools in conducting any qualitative research because they provide the researcher with reminders, quotations, and details for both descriptions and interpretations”.

**Data Analysis**

At the stage of analysis, all the collected data was read thoroughly and especially questions, and answers to the questions. The digitally recorded interviews were transcribed, coded, and then categories were developed from the interviews. These categories helped-out the researchers to produce themes which later on facilitated data analysis and then, finally conclusions were inferred on the basis of developed themes. The following themes emerged as the crux of the discussions after the categorization process:

i. Teachers’ perception about the judicious use of mother tongue
ii. Code-switching improves the teaching performance of the language teachers
iii. Code-switching is a necessary technique in the EFL classroom
iv. Importance of knowing the reasons for code-switching in bilingual classroom

**III. Discussion of Results and Implications**

The findings of the interviews highlighted the issues related to code-switching, language policy, medium of instruction, and role of competence in bilingual classroom discourse. In the following sub-sections, the above mentioned four themes are discussed.

i. **Teachers’ perception about the judicious use of mother tongue**

The interview of the experts revealed that different approaches about medium of instruction(s) are used by the different teachers in the EFL classrooms.

One of the experts Dr. I.Z defines the matter of judicious use of mother tongue in the following words:

Of course, I do agree with this idea that teacher should make judicious use of mother tongue while teaching for language, otherwise the whole idea of teaching in holistic way will disappear.

Another teacher Mr. S.T defines the judicious use of mother tongue:

Well, if you are talking about the Pakistani context. I do think that it means the judicious use of mother tongue in teaching target language. Because most of the teachers use bilingual teaching because they find it convenient to speak to their students and communicate their ideas to their students through bilingual teaching rather than using the target language only it will be difficult for them to get their message across because of their competence in most of the cases is not good enough, is not strong enough.
Dr. S.S defines the same matter in these words.

I don’t know, I am not sure should we call it bilingual teaching. Our target is English. English will be taught through English and Urdu will be taught through Urdu. There is no policy as such, I think judicious use, and I don’t know whether again judicious use is a relative term.

Interviews revealed that most of the teachers were not clear about the use of language(s) in the classroom and, moreover, the above mentioned views of the experts could not establish the uniformity about the use of language(s) in the EFL classrooms. Most of the teachers confirmed the idea of judicious use of mother tongue and Dr. K.S substantiated this situation in the following words:

I personally think that there are some misconceptions about mother tongue, I personally think both of these approaches, GTM and Direct Method, were two extreme positions.... And mother tongue can be used in judicious manner in teaching target language.

Butzkamm (1989:125) expresses the same kind of opinion in his “mother tongue as a pathfinder-hypothesis”, which states that “keeping the languages in watertight compartments is psychologically unsound especially in situations where learners with an established mother tongue are to acquire a foreign language.”

The experts during the course of the interviews showed general agreement with the careful use of CS and L1. As Dr. M.R identified the use of L1 and said:

I think that use of L1 sometimes helps teacher make concepts clear to the students because the class has mixed ability learners, all of them are not of same level to understand English. So, it is only for some time not all the time.

Dr. K.S further clarified the situation of classroom in relation with Pakistani education policy and medium of instruction in these words:

If your look at the documents of education policy in Pakistan there is not much written on language policy you can see straight remarks on medium of instructions. But it is not to say right or wrong on language policy. I think the outcome of the students should be that they should be proficient in target language. So, I think I would not endorse teaching English in Urdu, because you would not be producing students proficient in English language. But as I said earlier there is no harm in using mother or native language occasionally in order to clarify certain concepts.

It was found during the analysis of the interviews that the issue of code-switching and use of L1 is not properly addressed at the level of the policy makers. For that matter, the teachers have complete freedom to code-switch and to use L1 in the target language classroom without knowing the limitations. The experts during the interviews could not develop consensus about these issues and they could not provide any policy about it. This should be the foremost priority of the policy makers as Merritt et. al. (1992:25) define difficulty in the determination of language choice and code-switching from the view point of the legislation and claims that “determinants of language choice and code-switching in the classroom are necessarily more complex than can be ‘legislated’ by
language policy on medium of instruction.” Undoubtedly, this is a difficult decision but the developed countries have organized different kinds of bilingual education programmes to encounter these problems and the interviewees also stress on this point. Secondly, the experts/interviewees disclosed that there was no set pattern to decide the percentage of the use of code-switching and use of L1 in the classroom. For that reason, some of the experts did not agree with the haphazard use of code-switching or L1 in the language classroom even to the minimum extent. As Dr. A.S said:

This is the dilemma of our students that the teachers use code-switching at times and students also do the same.

But Jacobson (1983:19) claims that “code-switching in order to be educationally effective, four criteria must be met: (1) the languages must be distributed at an approximate ratio of 50/50, (2) the teaching of content must not be interrupted, (3) the teacher must be conscious of her alternation between two languages, and (4) the alternation must accomplish specific learning goals.” At this stage, the researchers believe that ratio of 50% is too much, especially at the level of balanced bilinguals and the same opinion is endorsed by the experts in the following representative examples. Bourne (2001 in Mackay in 2007:24) suggests that “students make covert use of their languages to accomplish learning tasks set in classrooms, often mixing and sharing terms from each other’s language. This implies that the students are not passive pawns in the socialization process and that their resilience can be expressed through a covert intercultural discourse. Schools merely need to embrace what is already happening naturally.” In the same manner Atkinson (1993) defines that every second spent using the L1 is a second not spent using English and every second counts. However, he also suggested four factors to achieve a balance in the use of L1: the students’ previous experience, the students’ level, the stage of the course, and the stage of the individual lesson. This is an important point to create a balance between the use of target language and mother tongue in the EFL classroom but this balance should be recommended in accordance with the level and requirement of the students. As Dr. K.S also explained this sophisticated situation in these words:

Well, I think, the moment you cross the percentage of mother tongue usage then it is not productive. So the key lies in the judicious use of code-switching.

It does not mean the quantity of mother tongue is greater while teaching target language.

ii. Code-switching improves the teaching performance of the language teachers

It was evident in the interviews of the experts/teachers that they showed general agreement with the fact that CS improves teaching performance of the teacher. Though there was slight disagreement on the issue that it enhanced students’ learning or teachers’ performance. As Dr. M.R said that:

I would not say teacher’s performance rather say student’s learning will be speeded-up to provide them equivalent and all that but teacher again will be, you know, loosing his attention from teaching English.

This was a unique opinion in the sense that it gave a new dimension to the theme under discussion. But Dr. M.R accepted the fact that this might be helpful to enhance the students’ learning in the classroom. According to Dr. K.S:
I would say, yes because if, this saves a lot of time on the part of teacher and if there is a concept, it is difficult for teachers to teach and for students to comprehend. So I do not see any harm in it, to code switch even, because it saves the time and clear the idea.

With regard to the fact that CS improves the teaching performance of the teachers, Dr. S.F defined the whole situation with a different view point in the following words:

………I am a bilingual, I use the resources of the two languages as, when, I want and therefore, it is an extra resource. So one thing that is you are using to cover inadequacy, the other thing is to being fluent in two languages that code-switching use an extra resource.

Dr. S.S. elaborated this theme from the teachers’ point of view and said:

The teachers have satisfaction that by code-switching students may understand it. Then in that context, I think teaching performance can be improved.

All the teachers/experts emphasized this point that CS improved the students’ understanding and well-judged use of code-switching was considered helpful for the students especially while explaining new concepts in the classroom. As Dr. S.S said that:

I was teaching and telling about spaghetti, I told it’s a Chinese food, they didn’t understand, I told a sveaina (Urdu word means spaghetti). I used this word and the students said it is like Falooda (a Pakistani food like spaghetti eaten with milk and cream). I mean in this context and situation code-switching is required.

Mr. S.T asserted the different view about CS and according to him:

Well, I don’t agree with this opinion but it can have some practical advantages. Because we are allowing the students with opportunities to communicate in the native language and the teacher can develop a habit of switching over to native language.

Similarly, there are some researchers who also present a different opinion e.g. Atkinson (1993:221) points out: “it can lead to students feeling that they have not understood a new item until it has been translated or students using L1 in performing communicative activities when the point is for them to be done in English.” But Skiba (1997) explains this phenomenon from different view point and claims that code-switching is not language interference on the basis that it supplements speech. According to his point of view, code-switching should be viewed from the perspective of providing a linguistic advantage rather than an obstruction to communication.

Thus, it can be inferred from the above discussion that code-switching in the classroom is not always an obstacle or hurdle in learning a language if the purpose is to decode the message in a clear manner and to make the students understand the instructions. All the interviewees in this study collectively agreed that code-switching improves the teaching performance of the teachers because it is a handy tool and an extra resource at the disposal of the teacher. According to the interviewees, this extra resource
should only be applied at the time of urgency. Only one teacher, Mr. S.T, totally denied the importance of this idea that CS improves the performance of the language teachers and students.

iii. Code-switching is a necessary technique in the EFL classroom

During the analysis of the interviews, it was found that the interviewees did not agree with the idea to recognize the use of code-switching as a technique in the EFL classroom. Talking about CS as a necessary technique in the EFL classroom, a very senior teacher, Dr. I.Z. agreed to this description but with the change of a word and this change of one word suggested a new dimension to the whole description when he said:

I don’t think it’s necessary or essential as such, I think it’s important. It is relative, the teacher can code-switch whenever it is appropriate.

Another teacher Dr. S.S showed no difference of opinion about this function of CS and showed her support about the importance of this technique in the following words:

I do code-switch when I see that they don’t understand anything, I would try to explain in English very slowly, then, I code-switch but again terminology would be in English.

Crystal (1987), Berthold, Mangubhai and Bartorowicz (1997) define that switching occurs when a speaker needs to compensate for some difficulty, express solidarity, convey an attitude or show social respect. It has also been outlined that code-switching may facilitate language development as a mechanism for providing language samples and may also be utilized as a teaching method for teaching second languages (Cook, 1989; 1991 in Skiba 1997). Mr. S.T. in answer to this question showed some sort of leniency about his firm viewpoint about CS in the following words:

I mean, rather than struggling to explain a particular idea for many hours, for two hours, three hours would be better for the teacher to employ the native language to explain that answer quickly and efficiently to the students. But the teachers most of the time should avoid this practice.

Dr. M.R. substantiated the views that ‘CS is a necessary technique’ and he said:

I think to some extent I agree with that, to bring students out of monotony, to speak English language all the time. There are sometimes when teachers and students are not able to express their feelings properly in English, they tend to use L1. There are some words in our culture, we do not find equivalent words in English then we try to give them in our own language…………….. And then I think, once a while it’s good and helpful to use this, but I would say we should not be over using of L1 in the classroom.

Higgs (1982 cited in Polio & Duff 1994) also supported this idea as a transition language teaching technique in the following words:

Code-switching should be used principally as a transition language teaching technique to eventually all English instruction (Higgs, 1982).
Therefore, the above mentioned views of the experts clarify that there is no inclination on the part of the Pakistani experts to establish the use of code-switching as a technique or strategy in the classroom at the level of the productive bilinguals. As Ellis (1985: 180-189) explains very loudly that “L1 use in the classroom needs to be handled with care exactly because it exerts a powerful influence on the learning process, as it seems that learners tend to treat it as the obvious starting point when learning a new language, and is a popular communication strategy.” Some of the respondents also agreed to the above mentioned description in a very precise manner as Dr. S.S said:

Again there is no one recipe for it. I think depends on the level, depending on the target group taught by the teacher but I would prefer less code-switching unless it is essential otherwise no need to code-switch.

One senior and experienced expert, Mrs. W.R acknowledged the use of code-switching and said:

I think in concept building sometimes it may help because concepts are abstract and it is very difficult for young learners. So at that time a quick code-switching can help a lot.

Cummins (1989), Wolfe (1992), and Wong-Fillmore (1991) asserted that “during the first five years, children are learning their primary language at a rapid pace. Because language and thought are interdependent, a firm command of the native language is vital for conceptual development.” During the course of interviews, it was observed that the experts were divided by and large in their views about the use of code-switching as a necessary technique in EFL classroom. Though there was also consensus about the judicious use of code-switching and L1 amongst all the experts, yet they did not support the idea of developing code-switching as a technique in the EFL classroom. This delicate issue has not been defined in the education policy and this division amongst the interviewees actually reflects the deficiency in the education policy of the country.

Though some of the foreign experts proved the use of CS as a transition language teaching technique to eventually all English instructions the moment students achieve required proficiency in the target language. As Cook (1989, 1991) defines that “code-switching may facilitate language development as a mechanism for providing language samples and may also be utilised as a teaching method for teaching second language”. He further defines that scope for code-switching to cause interference in a language exists if it is not utilised carefully as a teaching method. Macaro (2001) and Levine (2003) define that this is a challenge to conceptualize code-switching as a resource for L2 acquisition and to identify and formulate pedagogically meaningful uses of the L1 to foster L2 acquisition. Thus, it can be claimed that the recognition of CS as a technique is a sensitive issue and it should be dealt with care in the language policy to facilitate the teachers in the sensible use of CS.

iv. Importance of knowing the reasons for code-switching in bilingual classroom

There was complete agreement amongst all the interviewees that proper studies should be planned to know the reasons for code-switching. There was not even single teacher/interviewee who opposed the idea of knowing the reasons for CS. Mr. S. T. shared the importance of this function of CS and said:
Yes, if you want to be a good teacher, successful teacher you need to understand why students use code-switching in English language classrooms. It will give you an insight into how students think. How they feel about the target language, about their own language.

Talking about knowing the reason for CS Dr. M. G. said:

I think it would be very advantageous that teachers are aware of the different functions of code-switching. It would be very useful for them.

A senior teacher Dr. I.Z welcomed the idea of knowing reason and said:

Yes, very much I do think that they should have proper research on this aspect. It is very important for the teachers to understand the reasons for teaching practices in the classroom.

Dr. K.S also defined dynamics of classroom interaction between teachers and students and importance of knowing the reasons for CS. He further consolidated his view point about the above mentioned points in these words:

I think it’s not just important, it’s crucial also for us, for the policy makers and planners to see that, teaching is not just the input ad output process that what you teach and expect. If there are number of students who have got their own thinking, there are so many processes between teacher and student. So, I think, the researcher, planners and teachers who want to understand the classroom dynamics and behaviour of teachers. For instance, if you go to a class, teacher code-switching, instead of passing the judgment that teacher is not proficient; I think we need to understand why the teacher is code-switching.

The experts further defined that the teachers switched code in the EFL classrooms and it was mostly the student centered because they catered for the needs of the students through it. In answer to the same question, Dr. F.S highlighted this issue from different perspective and emphasized that the teachers should be trained in the use of two languages. She said:

I think that the teacher must have been trained in, made aware of the use of two languages. How they can use Urdu or the local language to help and facilitate the learning of English. They would probably be not aware of it and I don’t think many people in Pakistan get that kind of training.

In the light of the above mentioned discussion, Dr. F.S’s suggestion seems suitable that the teachers’ training for the judicious use of two languages in EFL classroom should be made compulsory for the language teachers by policy makers.

**IV. Conclusion**

The evidence indicated that most of the interviewees were of the opinion that the flaws in the education policy about the medium(s) of instruction were mainly responsible for the present undetermined use of language(s) in the EFL classrooms. It was also claimed by the experts that no co-ordination was found about the medium(s) of instruction amongst policy makers and English language teachers. It was also noticed during the interviews that some of the experts even being at the same university
expressed different views about CS and use of L1 in the classroom. Similarly, the interviewees showed partial agreement that CS improved the teaching performance of the teacher. Majority of the teachers agreed to the well-judged use of CS and L1 and they also emphasized the need of purposeful use of CS only. Majority of the teachers provided justification that the use of CS made abstract concepts clearer and its handy use saved time. Furthermore, it was considered as an extra-resource that could be used by the teachers at the time of difficult situations. Contrary to it, one of the experts warned about the repercussions of habitual use of code-switching. Moreover, general agreement could not be developed about the use of CS as a technique or strategy and the experts strongly opposed its use as a necessary technique in the EFL classroom. On the other hand, some of the foreign experts have referred to CS as a technique or strategy in the classroom. Unfortunately, a true understanding of language alternation behaviours is a phenomenon still not well understood by professionals in education and it may be perceived as a controversial issue (Cheng & Butler, 1989; Reyes, 1995). However, it is the consensus of many in the field of bilingual education that it is a normal occurrence, and its use as a language choice in instruction is perfectly legitimate (Brice, 2000a, 2000b; Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 1999; Cheng & Butler, 1989; A. Ortiz, personal communication, October 16, 2000; Reyes, 1995). The major recommendation given by the interviewees was the importance of knowing the reasons for CS. A few of them also expressed that code-switching was an extra-burden on the part of the teacher because it is hectic to repeat the same message twice (in two languages: target language and mother tongue) and they get distracted from the main target. But the majority of the respondents also recommended simple and effective use of English as a strategy to avoid CS in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the experts asserted that the teachers are not fully competent in English and they should be trained to use the English language in the academic domain to deal with the demands of the classroom interactions. Consequently, a clear language policy should be devised to facilitate both teachers and students to promote an effective teaching-learning situation in the EFL classrooms. The findings of this study can be helpful to originate the new pedagogies for classroom interactions in accordance with the native situation (Pakistani situation). Keeping in view the recommendations of Pakistani teachers/experts, strategies to use language(s) in the classroom should be revisited as it is more advantageous to think of bilingualism in terms of pupils who require extra-support for learning due to linguistic and/or cultural differences. For this reason, CS/L1 should be used only at required level particularly while teaching to the bilinguals and not at the teachers’ or students’ desired level. The researchers agree that teachers should not consider the use of CS by themselves or learners a sin, and CS does have a place in ELT methodology. Thus, it can be claimed on the basis of the results that both learners and teachers need to be made aware of the limitations and pitfalls of CS in the classroom as unprincipled use of L1 can have long-lasting negative repercussions on the learners’ awareness and production of the target language.

References


Appendix-1
Semi-structured interviews
(For Teachers/Experts)

Note: This semi-structured interview is being conducted to identify the teachers’ attitude towards the implementation and use of code-switching in bilingual classroom discourse.

Age: __________________
Gender: ________________
Qualification: ______________
Teaching Experience: ______________
Institution: _______________

Q.1 Do you think that bilingual teaching means the judicious use of mother tongue in teaching target language?
Q.2 Do you think that bilingual style of teaching is necessary in the EFL classroom?
Q.3 Do you think that teachers’ use of code-switching does not hinder the process of learning a target language?
Q.4 Do you think that use of CS can lead to practical advantages in learning a target language?
Q.5 Do you think that CS can improve a teaching performance of the bilingual teacher?
Q.6 Do you think that it is important to understand the code-switching reasons for the students in the bilingual classroom?
Q.7 Do you think that CS in bilingual EFL classroom should be increased or reduced to make students proficient?
Q.8 Do you think that code-switching is a necessary technique in EFL classroom?
Q.9 Do you think that your students do agree with your conversational patterns of code-switching?
Q.10 How do you respond when your students code-switch during the class time?
Q.11 Do you make a conscious effort to code-switch?